

Twists And Turns
In Nigeria's
18-Year Digital
Switchover Journey



Why Africa Must
Harness Cocoa,
Chocolate's Global
Market Expansion



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MD/CEO, Nigeria Export Processing Zones Authority, NEPZA, Dr. Olufemi Ogunyemi (fifth right) RE-ELECTED to the Board of Directors of the World Free Zones Organization at its annual congress in Panama. STORY ON PAGE 37

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News

From Terhemba Daka, Abuja

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu has signalled that his administration will deepen ongoing economic reforms ahead of a possible second term in office, insisting that the tough decisions already taken were beginning to stabilise Nigeria's economy and lay the foundation for long-term growth.

Speaking during an interview session at the just-concluded Africa CEO Forum in Kigali, Rwanda, Tinubu said his government remained committed to difficult but necessary reforms aimed at resetting the economy and improving governance. Asked what his focus would be if re-elected, the President responded: "Do more work. More challenges are there. The world won't wait for anybody. You have to continue to reset and rethink, challenge our intellectual curiosity as a government."

He said the guiding philosophy of his administration was built around decisive leadership and the willingness to act in the interest of citizens, even when such decisions were unpopular.

"The hallmark of a transformative leader is the ability to take decisions, do what you will do, at the time it has to be done, on behalf of the people," Tinubu stated.

The President strongly defended the removal of fuel subsidy and the unification of the foreign exchange market, describing both measures as painful but unavoidable steps needed to prevent economic collapse.

According to him, the old subsidy regime encouraged corruption, smuggling and waste while placing

Second Term: Tinubu Vows More Reforms

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enormous pressure on public finances.

"It is a fake life to think you can, in a global economy, continue the subsidy that is wasteful. It's an encouragement to falsification of papers, smuggling, and that is a very critical situation for the country," he said.

Tinubu recalled that before the reforms, many states struggled to pay salaries and meet basic obligations. "Of the 36 states, 27 of them were unable to pay salaries. Where is the money? You are oil-producing, you are earning, you are given fuel, yet you have no refinery that is functional. It is not possible to continue that trend," he said.

He, however, acknowledged the hardship caused by the reforms, likening the pains to labour before childbirth.

"It is difficult; it is painful, but it is just like the human reproduction process. A woman carries a pregnancy, endures the pain of labour, and smiles when she sees a live child," he stated.

The President also defended taxation as an essential instrument for development, arguing that citizens who demand quality infrastructure and public services must be prepared to contribute through taxes.

"Nobody wants to pay taxes ordinarily. Every human being expects development, but the question they don't answer is: How do you pay for

it?"

Tinubu maintained that recent reforms were already yielding results, saying the economy had become more stable and predictable.

"Today, there is a very bright light at the end of the tunnel; the economy is stable, the naira is stable and predictable. Planners can prepare reasonable budgets and people can plan their lives better," he said.

He disclosed that the administration was implementing direct cash transfers to vulnerable households while also supporting indigent students with grants and allowances.

"For students who ordinarily would stay out of school because their parents cannot afford fees, they are now in school. I'm even giving them al-

lowances and upkeep," he added. On industrial policy, Tinubu said his administration would continue supporting businesses capable of creating jobs and boosting local production.

He cited the Dangote Refinery and BUA Group as examples of indigenous enterprises deserving government backing.

"What should my government do? Support him, encourage him," the President said in reference to the Dangote Refinery.

He explained that the government approved the sale of crude oil to the refinery in naira to ease operational difficulties and reduce pressure on foreign exchange demand.

Tinubu also defended the ongoing Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway project, describing it as part of a broader agenda to strengthen national integration and unlock tourism and

investment opportunities.

"My philosophy is Nigeria first," he declared, adding that locally produced cement and steel were deliberately prioritised for the project to stimulate domestic industries.

On national unity, the President urged Nigerians to embrace diversity as a source of strength rather than division.

"This country is ours. We must build it together," he said.

Speaking on regional security and diplomacy, Tinubu stressed the importance of collaboration with neighbouring countries and global partners, insisting Nigeria remained strategically important within West Africa and across the continent.

"In ECOWAS, Nigeria is a big brother; in Africa, we are the fat lady. We must sing the tune and sing the right tune for others to pay attention to," he stated.

2027: Court Rebukes Plaintiff, Lawyer In Suit Against Jonathan

From Ameh Ochojila, Abuja

THE Federal High Court in Abuja, on Friday, rebuked Johnmary Jideobi, the plaintiff, and his lawyer, Ndubuisi Ukpai, over lack of diligence to pursue the suit filed to stop former President Goodluck Jonathan from contesting the 2027 presidential election.

Justice Peter Lifu, who described the plaintiff and his lawyer's attitudes, which had continued to stall proceedings in the case, as "unacceptable," awarded a N1 million fine against the plaintiff in favour of the ex-president.

"I have carefully and painstakingly considered all the submissions and prayers of the learned counsel in this matter. As this court had earlier ruled and ordered that this case has a character of politics.

"I have taken judicial notice of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)'s timetable.

"The duty of this court is to ensure that political cases are given accelerated hearing and disposed of expeditiously. In that wise, and as earlier stated, this court reiterates the provisions of the National Judicial Policy in case management.

"I hereby orders as follows: The plaintiff, who filed this suit in October 6, 2025, and has not deemed it fit to serve, is hereby granted grace of two hours from now, that is 10:30 am, to serve all the processes to the 2nd and 3rd defendants (INEC and AGF) unflinching.

"The 2nd and 3rd defendants are hereby ordered to file and serve their responses, if any, before 11 am on Monday, May 18, 2026.

"By consent of counsel, this suit is adjourned to May 18, 2026, by 12 noon for definite hearing of the originating summons and all pending applications," Justice Lifu said.

Awards Nlm Fine

The judge expressed surprise that Jideobi had yet to serve INEC and the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF), the 2nd and 3rd defendants, six months after filing the suit.

Besides, he observed that counsel for the ex-president (1st defendant), Chief Chris Uche (SAN), told the court on May 8 when the case came up that they got the information about the suit in the media and decided to file and serve their processes.

The judge equally observed that on May 11, neither Jideobi, who is also a lawyer, nor Ukpai was in court despite fixing the hearing time at 2pm at the instance of the plaintiff's lawyer on May 5.

He further noted that though Uche asked for a N5 million cost, the request was not granted in the interest of fair hearing.

Earlier when the case was called on Friday, neither Jideobi nor Ukpai was in court. However, lawyer to the former president, Uche, and AGF's counsel, J. D. Esho, were in court.

Esho, who told the court that her office was served with the ex-president's response to the suit on May 11, said they were yet to be served with the originating summons of the plaintiff.

The registrar also confirmed that though INEC was served with hearing notice of today's sitting, the commission had not also been served with the plaintiff's processes.

Midway into the case, Ukpai entered the court and apologised for his lateness. "My lord, I am sorry. I am for the plaintiff. Our vehicle broke down on the way," he begged.

After taking submissions of all the lawyers, the judge adjourned the matter until May 18 for definite hearing of all pending applications and the substantive suit at 12noon.



Arch-Bishop of Lagos Province, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), Dr Michael Fape (left); Secretary to the Lagos State Government, Bimbola Salu-Hundeyin; Bishop of Lagos West Diocese, Rt. Revd. James Odejeji; his wife, Dr Lydia, and father of the Diocese, Chief Olusegun Osunkeye, during the 3rd session of the 9th SYNOD of the Lagos West Diocese, at the Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral, Ikeja, Lagos...on Friday.

PHOTO: MARVELLOUS OBASA

Nigeria's Inflation Rises To 15.69% In April

From Joseph Chibueze, Abuja

NIGERIA'S headline inflation, which showed steady moderation last year, has resumed an upward trajectory, rising from 15.38 per cent in March 2026 to 15.69 per cent in April.

On a year-on-year basis, this is lower than the 26.82 per cent in the same month of the preceding year (April 2025).

The rise in headline inflation, the second consecutive month in 2026, reflects the effects of the crisis in the Middle East and the high fuel prices which has affected the cost of transportation.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), which announced this on Friday, also said that the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures the rate of changes in the average prices of goods and services commonly purchased by consumers relative to a base period, also increased to 138.3 points in April 2026, reflecting a 2.9-point increase from the preceding month when it was 135.4. After CPI rebasing in 2025, shifting the base year from 2009 to 2024, the headline inflation declined considerably from 34.8 per cent in December 2024 to 24.48 in January 2025 and dropped consistently for eight months. The drop, however, did not ease the high cost of living in the country, as the effect of subsidy removal ensured Nigerians continued to suffer.

It had maintained a deceleration trend since then. But following the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East and the sharp rise in the price of fuel, it went up in March and again in April.

The NBS also reports that the food inflation rate in April 2026 was 16.06 per cent on a year-on-year basis, lower than 24.68 per cent recorded in April 2025. On a month-

on-month basis, the food inflation rate in April 2026 was 3.63 per cent, down by 0.54 per cent points from the March 2026 figure, which was 4.17 per cent.

NBS attributed the drop in food inflation to the rate of change in the average prices of millet whole grain, yam flour, ginger (fresh), beef, garri, yam tuber, pepper (fresh), cray fish, cassava tuber, beans, Irish potatoes, tomatoes (fresh), wheat grain (sold loose), soy beans, guinea corn, plantain, carrots (fresh), among others.

In April 2026, Sokoto State recorded the highest inflation rate on a year-on-year basis with 25.74 per cent, followed by Bauchi, 22.52 per cent and Zamfara, 22.03 per cent, while Edo, with 5.91 per cent, Borno, 6.72 per cent and Jigawa, 7.04 per cent recorded the lowest rise in headline inflation on a year-on-year basis.

On a Month-on-Month basis, however, April 2026 recorded the highest increases in Niger, 5.66 per cent; Kano, 4.50 per cent and Plateau, 4.39 per cent; while Bayelsa, 0.64 per cent, Enugu, 0.98 per cent, and Rivers, 1.02 per cent recorded a decline in the month-on-month inflation.

The report shows that on a year-on-year basis, food was most expensive Enugu, with food inflation rate of 32.67 per cent, followed by Kwara with 30.77 per cent, and Adamawa with 30.14 per cent, while Borno, with 1.67 per cent, Jigawa with 6.17 per cent and Taraba with 7.19 per cent recorded the slowest rise in food inflation on a year-on-year basis.

On a month-on-month basis, however, April 2026 food inflation was highest in Niger with 8.53 per cent; Bauchi, 6.78 per cent and Kogi, 6.72 per cent, while Kebbi, 0.23 per cent; Katsina, 0.47 per cent; and Bayelsa, 1.29 per cent recorded a decline in food inflation on a month-on-month basis.

New FX Operational Guidelines Take Effect From June 1, Says Cardoso

From **Collins Olayinka**, Abuja
A NEW Foreign Exchange (FX) manual that spells out operational behaviours in the Nigerian foreign exchange market will take effect on June 1, 2026, the governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Olayemi Cardoso, has said.

The governor, who disclosed this in Abuja on Friday while unveiling the fourth edition of the CBN Forex Manual, said the newly revised foreign exchange manual reflects the apex bank's commitment to reforms aimed at promoting macroeconomic stability, transparency, accountability, and sustainable economic growth in Nigeria.

Speaking on the theme, 'Building Confidence in Nigeria's FX Market: Revised Framework for Transparency and Accountability,' Cardoso described the foreign exchange market as a critical pillar of every modern economy, stressing that its effectiveness depends on clarity, consistency, compliance, and public confidence.

He noted that the revised manual comes at a strategic moment in Nigeria's economic reform journey, as the government implements fiscal and non-fiscal measures to stabilise the economy and reposition it for growth.

2027: SDP Writes INEC, Submits Adebayo's Details As Presidential Candidate

By **Opeyemi Babalola**

THE Social Democratic Party has formally submitted the name of its presidential candidate, Adewole Adebayo, to the Independent National Electoral Commission ahead of the 2027 general election.

In a letter addressed to the electoral commission following the party's national convention and presidential primary held in Bauchi on May 9, 2026, the party, through its secretary, Dr. Olu Agunloye, said it was officially forwarding the details of its elected presidential flag bearer for the 2027 presidential poll.

The SDP stated that the convention and direct primary election were conducted peacefully and successfully at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Stadium, Bauchi, where Adebayo emerged as the sole aspirant and secured majority support from delegates and party members.

According to the letter, titled "Submission of the Name and Other Details of SDP Presidential Candidate," the party informed INEC that "the presidential candidate nominated by the Social Democratic Party for sponsorship in the 2027 presidential election is Prince Adewole Ebenezer Adebayo."

According to him, the revised framework became necessary following structural changes in the domestic economy, increasing global economic uncertainties, inflationary pressures, and ongoing reforms in Nigeria's foreign exchange market.

Cardoso said the manual, last reviewed in 2018, was developed through extensive consultations with banks, regulators, and other stake-

holders to ensure that diverse industry concerns were adequately reflected.

He announced that the new FX manual will take effect from June 1, 2026, emphasising that the successful implementation of the framework would require the cooperation of authorised dealer banks, exporters, importers, regulators, ministries, departments and agencies, as well as the broader private

sector.

He declared that stability in the foreign exchange market is a shared responsibility between the regulator and market participants.

The CBN governor stated that the apex bank would continue to strengthen its monitoring systems to ensure consistency, fairness, accountability, and compliance across the foreign exchange ecosystem.



Rivers State Deputy Governor, Prof. Ngozi Odu (left); wife of the Rivers State Governor, Valerie Fubara; wife of the Chief of Staff to the President, Salamatu Gbajabiamila, and representative of the wife of President and former Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Better Edu, during the handing over of food items to Mrs Valerie Fubara for Vulnerable Groups in Rivers State, donated by the wife of the President through Renewed Hope Initiative Social Investment Programme, at Government House in Port Harcourt.

PHOTO: NAN

Chinese Govt Highlights Media's Role In Advancing China-Nigeria Cooperation

From **Bridget Chiedu Onochie**, Abuja

CHINESE government has expressed the crucial role of the media in advancing China-Nigeria cooperation.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Seminar for media practitioners in Beijing, China, the Deputy Director, Education and Training Centre of China International Communications Group (CICG), Mr. Li Hengtian, said the news media and commentators remained the stone arches that build the bridge of understanding, and the clear breeze that dispels

the mist of prejudice.

While China and Nigeria may have achieved great results since the commencement of their relations, he insisted that the people of the two countries still desire to understand each other more deeply.

He, therefore, tasked the media on effective communication that breaks down barriers of single narrative.

Citing Nigeria's renowned author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Hengtian described "stories" as the highest form of human communication capable of telling China's stories accurately and writing a new

chapter of China-Nigeria friendship.

Economically, Hengtian described Nigeria as China's largest engineering contracting market, second-largest export market, third-largest trading partner and a major investment destination in Africa.

"From the Lagos Light Rail to the Abuja Rail Mass Transit, and from the Lekki Deep Sea Port to the Zungeru Hydropower Station, monuments of China-Africa cooperation have risen one after another across the African continent."

PUTTRU Offers Pathway To End Gas Shortage In Nigeria's Power Sector

By **Sullyat Tella**

AFRICA'S frontline platform providing expert financing solutions to the continent's energy sector, PUTTRU, has urged the new Minister of Power, Joseph Tegbe, who promised to prioritise availability of gas on assumption of office, to consider restructuring the current system into a commercially managed vehicle where private investors step in at the level of the system to take an active position in future gas supply and settlement.

PUTTRU gave the advice through its founder, Monica Maduekwe, who noted that the sector is not suffering from gas shortage but a com-

mercially viable system of sustaining gas supplies to the Generating Companies (GenCos) in the country.

Maduekwe noted that over the past decade, gas has been supplied into the power sector under increasingly uncertain settlement conditions.

She said: "Generation companies procure on credit. Payments are delayed. Debts accumulate. Suppliers, in turn, scale back or redirect supply to more reliable buyers, including export markets. The result is predictable: gas flows away from the power sector, not toward it.

"Rather than asking government to carry these obligations, the outstanding pay-

ment claims within the gas-to-power value chain, anchored primarily at the generation level, can be restructured into a commercially managed vehicle, where private investors step in at the level of the system, not individual counterparties, to take an active position in future gas supply and settlement.

"In practical terms, this means creating a structure that steps into these validated payment obligations, working alongside existing market operators to restructure and manage them over time, backed by identifiable cash flows within the system."

UIVC, Don, Adesina Call For Ethical Journalism

From **Rotimi Agboluaje**, Ibadan

THE Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, Prof. Kayode Oyebo Adebawale; Head of the Department of Political Science of the university, Prof. Dhikru Adewale Yagboyaju, and former Special Adviser to the President on Media and Publicity, Femi Adesina, have underscored ethical journalism and responsible communication as critical pillars for sustaining democracy and strengthening governance in Nigeria.

They made the call at the POS 353 Media-State Dialogue Series held at the Large Lecture Theatre, Faculty of the Social Sciences of the university.

The dialogue themed, 'From Newsroom to Aso Rock:

Inside Media-State Relations in Nigeria,' brought together students, academics, media practitioners and policy communicators in an interactive academic engagement aimed at bridging theory and practice in media and governance studies.

Among them were Prof. Rashid Aderinoye, Prof. Remi Aiyede, Dr. Taiwo Adisa, Mr. Dapo Falade, Dr. Kingsley Ogunne, who is the Course Coordinator, and a host of others.

The dialogue session featured robust engagement between students and speakers, with discussions focusing on statecraft, media ethics, political communication, and the evolving responsibilities of journalists in the digital age.

NBA, CIFCFIN Unite Against Forgery In 2027 Elections

By **Oludare Richards**

THE Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and Chartered Institute of Forensics and Certified Fraud Investigators of Nigeria (CIFCFIN) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to eradicate forgery and safeguard the integrity of the 2027 general election.

Speaking during the signing ceremony at the NBA Headquarters, Abuja, President of NBA, Mazi Afam Osigwe (SAN), decried the harmful effects of using forged documents to facilitate fraudulent transactions, money laundering, and other criminal activities.

He cautioned members of the legal profession to ensure that documents emanating from them are authentic.

"We must not use our profession to introduce forged documents into public

records or court systems, thereby misleading the public," he warned.

Referencing an earlier meeting with CIFCFIN in February on the partnership, Osigwe said forensic science can strengthen the country's judicial system, enhance institutional credibility and safeguard Nigeria's democracy, especially as Nigerians look ahead to the 2027 general election.

"Issues such as certificate forgery and document manipulation have repeatedly embarrassed our institutions and weakened public confidence. We must gate-keep more effectively," he said.

Osigwe described the partnership between CIFCFIN and NBA as very timely, strategic and necessary to build a country where integrity is verified, systems are trusted and fraud is prevented before it takes its root.

Youth Party Begins Grassroots Mobilisation Ahead Of National Convention

By **Joe Onyekwere**

YOUTH Party has launched what it described as a nationwide grassroots mobilisation campaign ahead of its ward, state and national congresses, declaring that it is positioning itself as an alternative political movement focused on governance and community engagement.

At a stakeholders' engagement ahead of the congresses, party officials said the mobilisation drive was aimed at building a new generation of political leadership and expanding participation across communities nationwide.

According to the timetable released by the party, Ward and Local Government Congresses will hold on May 16, State Congresses on May 20, while the National Convention is scheduled for May 23, 2026.

Speaking during the engagement, a party official, Solomon Oyekunle, said the party was determined to chart a different political direction from what he described as the "old order" in Nigerian politics.

"We are not here to ask for a seat at the table of the old order. We are building a new table," Oyekunle said. "The Youth Party is not a waiting room for 2027. It is the emergency room for Nigeria right now."

He stressed that the party should not be viewed strictly as a platform for young people, but as a movement driven by competence and accountability.

"We are not a retirement plan for career politicians looking for a softer landing. This is a platform for builders, for people who solve problems—whether they are 25 or 55," he added.

Special

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Twists And Turns In Nigeria's 18-Year

Nigeria's 18-year Digital Switchover (DSO) journey – transitions from analogue to digital broadcasting – has been a rollercoaster of ambitious deadlines and stark realities. Launched with an immense promise to unlock spectrum and revolutionize the media landscape, the initiative has instead been bogged down by a complex web of policy inconsistencies, funding deficits, and bureaucratic bottlenecks. What was envisioned as a swift leap into modern broadcasting became a protracted saga of missed targets and structural delays. Despite sporadic rollouts in key cities, the journey remains a telling case study of the challenges in executing large-scale technological infrastructure projects within the country. There is however, a renewed drive by the Federal Government with the June 17, 2026 target. ADEYEMI ADEPETUN, in this report, examines the journey so far...

FOR 18 years, Nigeria's digital switchover (DSO) programme has been a story of ambition, setbacks, and renewed promises. Conceived in 2008 to align with the International Telecommunications Union's (ITU) directive for countries to migrate from analogue to digital terrestrial broadcasting, the initiative has endured missed deadlines, funding controversies, and bureaucratic inertia. In fact, over the last one decade, the process in Nigeria, has seen systemic breakdown, not a single cause but a cascade of failures.

Now, with a new target date of June 17, 2026, the government insists the nation will finally complete the transition, amid several obvious challenges.

Global push and Nigeria's early commitment

IN 2006, the ITU set a global deadline of June 2015 for member states to switch from analogue to digital broadcasting. Nigeria formally adopted the policy in 2008, with the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) tasked to lead the transition. The promise was clear: digital broadcasting would deliver sharper signals, expand access to channels, and free up valuable spectrum for telecommunications.

Nigeria's early enthusiasm was evident. Pilot projects were announced, and billions of naira was earmarked for infrastructure, set-top boxes, and signal distribution. Yet, despite the optimism, the country missed the ITU's 2015 deadline, joining several African nations that struggled with implementation.

Checks showed that as of today, countries including Mauritius, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi, Botswana, Namibia, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Gabon, and Eswatini, have successfully completed the DSO process in the region.

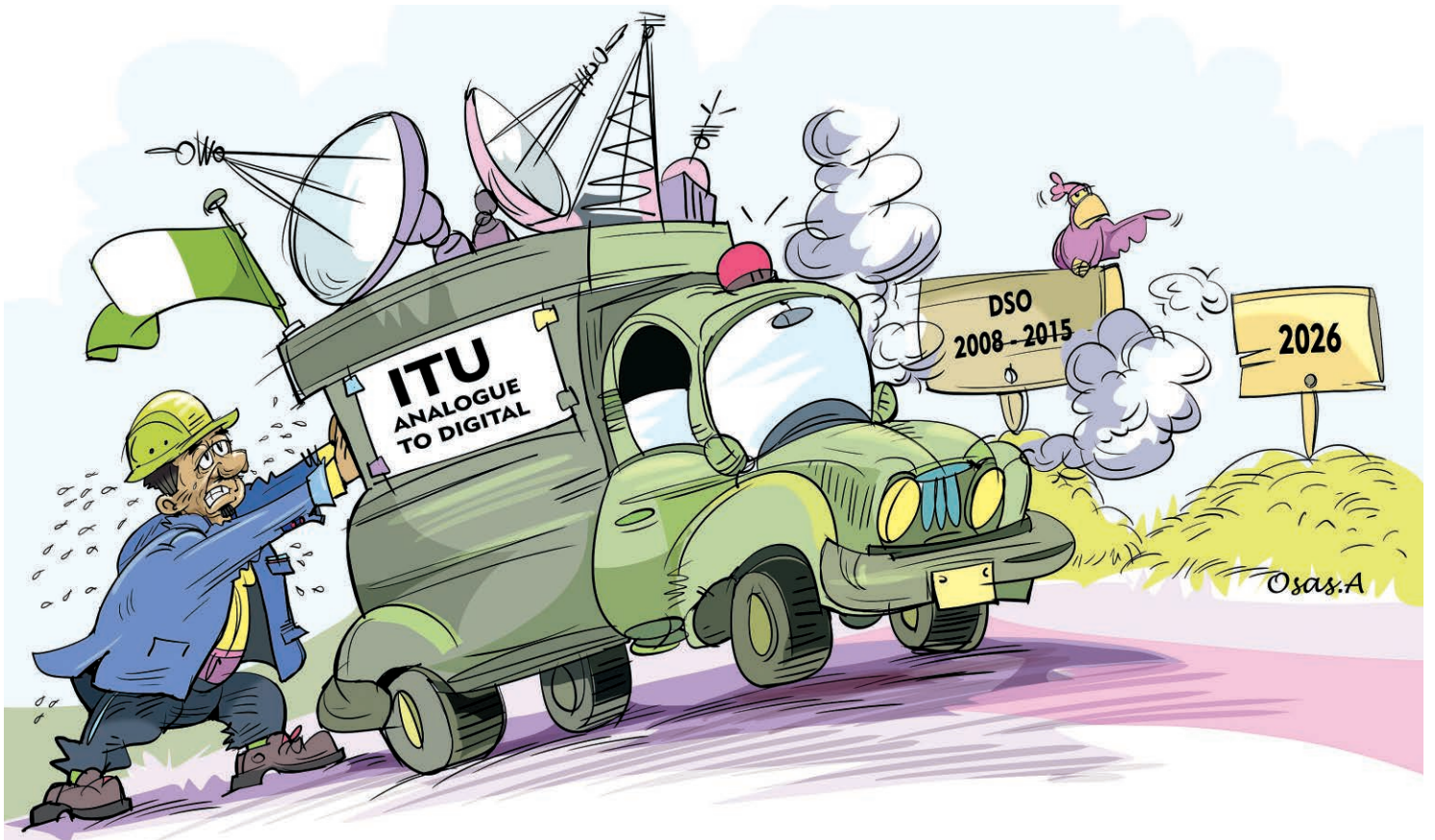
Almost all of Europe has transitioned. Luxembourg was the first country to complete its switchover in 2006. Early adopters also included Sweden, the Netherlands, and Finland. Other notable completions include the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Ireland. In North America, the United States completed its digital switchover for full-power television stations in 2009, and Canada completed its transition shortly thereafter.

For emphasis, Nigeria's digitisation playbook took-off on October 13, 2008, when the late President Umaru Yar'Adua inaugurated a Presidential Advisory Committee (PAC) on Transition from Analogue to Digital Broadcasting.

The panel took about nine months to present its first report on June 29, 2009, but there was no follow-up until April 4, 2012, when the Federal Executive Council (FEC) claimed it released a White Paper on the report. Earlier in 2007, the Federal Government also approved June 17, 2012, as Nigeria's transition date, three years ahead of the ITU mandate. The NBC had promised to use the three years (June 17, 2012, to June 17, 2015) to address every hiccup that might arise from the switchover and perfect the mechanism before the final date, but bureaucratic bottlenecks set in.

In June 2017, former Information Minister, Lai Mohammed, said the country would switch over from analogue to DSO in six states across the six geo-political zones by July of the same year.

Fast forward to 2023, only eight states—Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Rivers, Kwara, Enugu, Osun and



Plateau had partially transitioned under a phased rollout plan. This remained the status quo till date. The Federal Government is however, eyeing June this year to rebuild the entire process with the hope to among others, to democratize television access, improve connectivity and boost the country's landscape.

Nigeria's television landscape

DATA from *satelliteworldtoday.com*, while relying on insights from Intelsat and PwC reports, estimated the number of TV households in Nigeria to be between 23 million and 24 million.

Out of roughly 42 million households nationwide, the television penetration rate remains roughly 50 per cent to 55 per cent. However, this varies drastically by region, with southern urban centres seeing penetration as high as 75 per cent, while rural northern areas can be as low as 23 per cent.

The Nigerian market is currently dominated by Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) with 11.7 million homes, and Direct-to-Home (DTH) satellite services with 9.6 million homes. Others, including IPTV and microwave, account for over 200,000 homes.

Billions spent, little to show

SINCE inception, over N60 billion has reportedly been spent on the DSO programme. The financial bleeding is staggering. According

to an NBC Financial Report, this covered 2009 to 2025, with minimal results. Meanwhile, Nigeria's total advertising market stands at N605.2 billion, but television remains severely under-monetised.

Indeed, the N60 billion went into subsidizing set-top boxes, building transmission infrastructure, and launching pilot rollouts in Jos, Abuja, Lagos, and others. But progress stalled. By 2015, Nigeria had only partially tested digital broadcasting in select cities, leaving the vast majority of households reliant on analogue signals.

Critics argued that poor planning and inconsistent funding crippled the project. Imported set-top boxes faced distribution challenges, while local manufacturers complained of being sidelined. The NBC itself underwent

leadership changes that disrupted continuity. Each administration promised renewed commitment, but deadlines kept slipping.

Missed deadlines and delays

NIGERIA'S DSO timeline is littered with missed targets: 2015: ITU deadline missed; 2016: Pilot launch in Jos, Plateau State, hailed as a success but never scaled nationwide.

By 2017 to 2020, there were multiple rollout announcements stalled due to funding and political transitions. 2021 to 2023 saw renewed efforts under successive ministers, but still no nationwide coverage, but the government now fixes June 17, 2026, as the final roll-out date.

Each missed deadline eroded public confidence. Broadcasters complained of uncertainty, advertisers lamented poor audience measurement, and viewers remained stuck with analogue distortions.

Several factors explain Nigeria's prolonged struggle. This includes funding gaps. It was obvious that budgetary allocations were inconsistent, leaving projects half-completed.

Infrastructure weaknesses also played a huge role. Signal distribution networks were inadequate, and reliance on imported equipment slowed progress.

The Federal Government's partnership with StarTimes under late President Muhammadu Buhari was also seen as a possible fillip to rewire the entire process, but bureaucratic bottlenecks stalled the expansion. Indeed, there were huge bureaucratic inefficiencies, marked by policy inconsistencies and leadership



Consultant, IBST Limited, Aderemi Ogunpitan, said Nigeria's DSO has underperformed compared to its original promise, but it is not dead, if restructured properly – aligned with satellite strategy, spectrum policy, DPI, and private-sector incentives. He said it could shift from being a delayed TV upgrade project to becoming a foundational layer for connecting millions of unserved Nigerians and accelerating digital inclusion.

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Digital Switchover Journey

changes at the NBC, which subsequently disrupted continuity.

Low public awareness also played a prominent role as many Nigerians remained unaware of the benefits or requirements of digital migration.

Renewed promise of June 2026

IN August 2024, the NBC, under the leadership of its Director-General, Charles Ebuebu, announced a nationwide expansion of digital television coverage, fuelled by a N10 billion grant approved by President Bola Tinubu.

The Federal Government June 2026 rebuild process will mark the nationwide rollout. According to the Ministry of Information and National Orientation, the new plan includes: free access to over 100 channels nationwide, improved audience measurement systems to provide advertisers with real-time viewership data, regional studios in six zones to decentralize content production beyond Lagos, Abuja, and Kano, healthy competition in TV distribution, ending monopolies and encouraging diverse content.

Analysts argued that the new roadmap is more realistic, with funding secured and infrastructure contracts awarded. The NBC has also promised aggressive public awareness campaigns to ensure Nigerians are prepared.

Satellite as DSO new game changer

RECOGNISING the urgency and importance of the DSO, the NBC and Nigerian Communications Satellite Limited (NIGCOM-SAT) jointly introduced ‘The Big Picture’, to drive the renewed DSO project.

The programme positions satellite broadcasting as a foundational component of Nigeria’s emerging Digital Public Infrastructure.

Under it, Nigerian households will gain access to high-quality digital broadcasts via affordable satellite dishes, hybrid devices, and Internet-enabled set-top boxes.

At the heart of the initiative is NigComSat-1R, Nigeria’s only communications satellite in orbit, which will play a critical role in delivering DTH broadcasts across the entire Nigerian territory.

This satellite-first approach eliminates the traditional dependence on terrestrial transmission towers, accelerating the nationwide rollout of digital broadcasting by over 65 per cent.

It also offers a scalable, cost-effective, and future-ready model for expanding digital access and promoting national storytelling.

An estimated 10 million homes equipped with DVB-S2-compatible televisions or decoders will have immediate access to free-to-air channels, while others will benefit from next-generation hybrid devices that combine satellite feeds with online streaming capabilities.

These new branded devices are designed with the country’s youth-dominated demographic in mind; over 60 per cent of the population is under the age of 25.

Beyond entertainment, the system is being designed as a multi-purpose digital platform with pre-installed apps, voice search functionality, parental controls, and seamless integration with NigComSat’s Electronic Programme Guide (EPG), offering an intuitive and engaging user experience.

Further, in a data-driven upgrade to Nigeria’s broadcasting ecosystem, the NBC is also partnering with global analytics firm GARB to introduce real-time audience measurement technology.

In a chat with *The Guardian*, MD/CEO, NIGCOM-SAT, Jane Egerton-Idehen, said Satellite technology is now the game changer in the DSO journey, stressing that by harnessing the power of the NigComSat-1R satellite, the DSO can now bypass the limitations of traditional masts and cables.

Egerton-Idehen said this means faster rollout, lower costs, and most importantly, access for

families in the most remote corners of the country, saying every household is now within reach of quality digital broadcasting.

According to her, the platform is already buzzing with activity. She said currently, viewers can enjoy over 133 channels on Nigcomsat1R Satellite, including 28 active channels on the DSO platform via NigComSat-1R. With plans to add another 70 channels this quarter, the content lineup is expanding rapidly to include a rich mix of entertainment, news, and faith-based programming.

Future versions could support emergency alerts, distance learning, agricultural extension programmes, and public information campaigns for rural communities.

“But the DSO’s ambition doesn’t stop at television. It is being built as a piece of Nigeria’s core digital infrastructure. Imagine a system that not only entertains but also broadcasts emergency alerts, delivers educational programmes to students in rural areas, and provides a direct line to public information. The future DSO will integrate with the National Identity Number (NIN) for secure access and connect with digital payment systems, allowing citizens to seamlessly pay for services or access government portals—all through their television. Thanks to Nigeria’s Data Protection Act, this interconnected system is designed with security and privacy at its core,” she stated.



Yomi Bolarinwa...in charge as DG when the DSO began in 2008



Emeka Mba... Continued the ‘race’ when he took the baton in 2013



Ishaq Kawu Modibbo... pushed up the project significantly

Consultant, IBST Limited, Aderemi Ogunpitan, said Nigeria’s DSO has underperformed compared to its original promise, but it is not dead, if restructured properly — aligned with satellite strategy, spectrum policy, DPI, and private-sector incentives.

He said it could shift from being a delayed TV upgrade project to becoming a foundational layer for connecting millions of unserved Nigerians and accelerating digital inclusion.

According to him, because analogue hasn’t been fully switched off, many broadcasters’ still carry dual costs, while pay-TV platforms and Internet streaming have expanded faster than the state-led DSO platform.

Ogunpitan submitted that instead of treating DSO towers as simple broadcast masts, they could become multi-service digital hubs. He said each site could combine digital TV transmission, satellite backhaul (NigComSat and LEO providers like Starlink), community Wi-Fi or fixed wireless access and enable DPI services such as NIN enrolment, digital payments, e-health and e-learning portals.

He said the above to say that integration is key, saying DSO platforms must link directly into Nigeria’s identity (NIN) and payment systems via APIs. He said TV platforms should allow citizens to access government services securely — using token-based authentication and existing banking rails — without turning STBs into complex KYC devices.

Possible impact on Nigerians

WHILE so many are still in the dark about the entire process due to poor awareness, telecom expert, Kehinde Aluko, disclosed that the benefits of digital switchover are significant, especially when people get to know its importance. He said: “The process comes with clearer TV signals. Digital transmission eliminates analogue distortions. It comes with more channels as over 100 free-to-air stations at launch.

“There is cheaper access. Government subsidies reduce reliance on costly encrypted boxes. It enables better advertising as real-time audience measurement helps brands target effectively. There will also be content diversity, where regional studios empower local creators.”

For ordinary Nigerians, Aluko said the switchover promises more choice, better quality, and cheaper access to information. For broadcasters, he said it offers new revenue streams and fairer competition.

Risks and challenges ahead

DESPITE the optimism, challenges remain; there is the issue of sustainability. Analysts are concerned about future funding beyond rollout. Corruption also stirs the process in the face. Past mismanagement raises fears of renewed inefficiencies.

There is also infrastructure maintenance scare because signal distribution must be consistently upgraded.



Charles Ebuebu... has a date with history



Information Minister, Mohammed Idris

Analysts warn that without sustained political will, Nigeria could once again fall short. The real test will be whether the government can deliver beyond pilot projects and ensure nationwide coverage.

Already, and as part of throwing a spanner in the works, the Association of Licensed Set Top Box Manufacturers of Nigeria (STBMAN) has accused the NBC of undermining due process and stalling the DSO project.

It warned that continued disregard for industry concerns could further erode investor confidence.

In an earlier statement, signed by its chairman, Godfrey Ohuabunwa, the group expressed frustration over what it described as persistent “abuse of power and processes” by the commission, alleging that regulatory decisions had consistently worked against the interests of local manufacturers and investors.

The association said recent concerns raised by the Independent Broadcasters Association of Nigeria (IBAN) reflect the broader challenges that have plagued Nigeria’s transition from analogue to digital broadcasting since discussions began in 2008.

According to STBMAN, despite nearly two decades of engagement, the DSO initiative has failed to achieve meaningful progress, with Nigeria lagging behind countries that once looked to it for guidance.

Central to the dispute is the alleged plan by the NBC to approve the importation of hybrid set-top boxes from China, an idea the manufacturers say contradicts the Federal Government’s local content policy and threatens domestic investments.

The group referenced President Bola Tinubu’s “Nigeria First” policy, arguing that prioritising imports over locally manufactured products undermines national economic objectives and discourages indigenous enterprise.

STBMAN also raised legal concerns, pointing to an existing court order in Suit No. FCT/HC/GAR/CV/442/2024, which claims that the commission’s actions could render it ineffective. The association stressed that adherence to the rule of law is critical to sustaining investor trust and maintaining the integrity of the regulatory environment.

Last word

NIGERIA’s digital switchover journey is a cautionary tale of ambition undermined by inefficiency. Eighteen years of twists and turns have left the nation lagging behind peers. Yet, if the June 17, 2026 rollout succeeds, it could transform broadcasting, democratize access to information, and finally deliver on a promise first made in 2008.

The coming months will determine whether Nigeria’s digital switchover story ends as a triumph of persistence or another chapter in the country’s long history of unfulfilled promises.



Social Democratic Party (SDP) National Chairman, Professor Sadiq Umar Abubakar Gombe (left); SDP 2027 Presidential candidate, Prince Adewole Adebayo, and member of the party's National Working Council (NWC), Senator Ugochukwu Uba during Adebayo's acceptance speech in Bauchi.



Former Managing Director (MD)/ Editor-in- Chief (EiC), *The Guardian*, Martins Oloja (second left); former Deputy MD/EiC, *The Guardian*, Kingsley Osadolor (second right); former Editor, *The Guardian on Sunday*/host of the reception, Mr. Fred Ohwahwa; the newly appointed Vice-Chancellor (VC) of Baze University, Abuja, Professor Abiodun Adeniyi (fifth right) and others at the reception organised for him in Abuja.



Vice-Chancellor, University of Leicester, Professor Sir Nishan Canagarajah (left) and Awardee/Chairman, Caverton Offshore Support Group, Mr. Aderemi Makanjuola when Makanjuola received Lifetime Achievement Award from his Alma Mater, University of Leicester, at the ceremony held at The National Space Centre, Leicester, United Kingdom



Deputy Head of Mission - Ghana High Commission, Dr. Gladys Mansa Yawa Feddy Akyea (middle - front) with some counsellors and a cross section of students.

Metronotes

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Wema Bank Targets Digital Banking Growth With 5for5 Season Five

By Kehinde Olatunji

WEMA Bank has unveiled Season Five of its 5for5 Reward Scheme aimed at promoting financial inclusion, rewarding customer loyalty and encouraging increased adoption of digital banking channels across Nigeria.

Tagged "Evolve with Wema 5for5," the new season of the initiative will run from May to December 2026 with a total reward pool of over 170 million for customers nationwide. The bank said the latest edition introduces a more structured and merit-based reward system designed to recognise customers based on their financial activities and engagement across youth, women and mass market segments.

According to the bank, beneficiaries in the youth and student category will enjoy tuition support, laptops, pocket money and a grand Star Student reward, while women customers will benefit from empowerment grants, wellness packages and impact awards targeted at entrepreneurs.

Customers in the mass market category are also expected to receive daily cash rewards, monthly incentives and a grand prize of 5 million for the most consistent participant during the campaign period.

PWDs Demand Elective Offices, Launch Able2Run Campaign

From Lucy Ladidi Ateko, Abuja

THE Founder of The Albino Foundation, Jake Epelle, has called for greater political inclusion of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs), saying Nigeria's democracy remains incomplete without their active participation in elective positions.

Speaking at the launch of the

"Able2Run - Electability Campaign" in Abuja, Epelle said the campaign was designed to encourage PWDs not only to vote, but to contest and emerge as leaders at all levels of governance.

He lamented that despite constituting an estimated 35 million people in Nigeria, PWDs remain largely excluded from

political representation. "The time has come for persons with disabilities to move from the margins of political participation to the centre of democratic leadership," he said.

According to him, the population of PWDs in Nigeria is larger than the number of votes that brought President Bola

Ahmed Tinubu to power in the 2023 presidential election. "The democracy in Nigeria is currently missing nearly 35 million voices. The community of persons with disability is much more than the votes that brought in President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Yet, we don't have proper representation," he stated.

NGO Marks Eight Years Of Fighting Against Drug Abuse In Nigeria

By Paul Adunwoke

AS Nigeria grapples with the rising tide of drug abuse, Stampout Drug Abuse Initiative (SODAI), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) has commemorated its eighth-year anniversary, calling for urgent

collective action to address this national crisis.

According to the organisation, substance abuse affects 14.3 million Nigerians between the ages of 15 and 64, who use psychoactive substance for non-medical purposes. Furthermore, one in

every four drug users in Nigeria is a woman, and one in every five persons who use hard substances is facing certain drug use disorders.

Speaking at the event in Ikeja Lagos, Executive Director, Stampout Drug Abuse Initiative, Member

International Society of Substance Use Professionals, Mr. Oluwafemi Silas, said "SODAI underscores the need for a united front among government, communities, religious bodies, families, schools, and stakeholders to curb this epidemic.

NECA Seeks Stronger Collaboration Between Public, Private Sectors In Enugu

ORGANISED Businesses in Enugu State, led by the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) South-East Geographical Zone, paid a courtesy visit to Enugu State

Governor, Peter Ndubuisi Mbah, as part of efforts to strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors.

The President, NECA, Dr. Ifeanyi Okoye, expressed

appreciation to the governor for hosting the delegation and commended his transformative infrastructure drive and far-reaching economic reforms.

Chairman, NECA South-East

Geographical Zone, Dr. Ugochukwu Chime lauded Governor Mbah's visionary leadership, describing his administration as a model of purposeful governance and economic revitalisation.

Firm Unveils Project To Enhance Clean Cooking In Nigeria

By Sunday Aikulola

GREENPLINTH Africa has unveiled its 80 million Clean Cookstoves Project geared at transforming the lives of Nigerians who are affected by the harmful effects of traditional cooking practices.

Speaking during roadmap

presentation, manufacturing agreement signing, and unveiling of its strategic partners in Lagos, President and Group Chief Executive Officer of Greenplinth Africa, Olawale Akinwumi, disclosed that the project is the firm's Agenda 2030.

"Today, we will be signing a

manufacturing agreement with Allgreen Energy NV for the first 24 million clean cookstoves. "We are also pleased to announce that Allgreen Energy NV and its partners will be supporting the 80 Million Clean Cookstoves Project in Nigeria with an investment of \$10 billion within the next 18

months," he said.

He stated that the provision of free clean cookstoves, and free briquettes as fuel, will transform the lives of millions of Nigerians, particularly women and children, who are disproportionately affected by the harmful effects of traditional cooking practices.

Academic City University Deepens Strategic Partnerships In Nigeria

ACADEMIC City University, Ghana, has reiterated its commitment to transforming tertiary education in Africa through innovation, industry collaboration, and skills-driven learning at stakeholder engagement sessions held in Lagos and Abuja.

The engagements brought together policymakers, education leaders, industry experts, civil society organisations, parents, and prospective students to deliberate on strategies for reshaping higher education and strengthening workforce readiness across Africa. The sessions form part of Academic City's broader vision to expand access to world-class STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) and entrepreneurial education beyond Ghana.

Speaking at the event, Vice President, Academic Affairs at Academic City University, Dr. Sena Agbodjah, emphasised the university's mission to bridge the gap between academia and industry across the continent.

"Academic City was established to challenge the traditional model of higher education by embedding innovation, entrepreneurship, and real-world problem-solving into every aspect of learning..."

ICOPA President Seeks Support For N10b Endowment Initiative

By **Gbenga Salau**

THE National President of the Igbobi College Old Boys Association, Mr. Yomi Badejo-Okusanya, has urged alumni to prioritise legacy-building and collective development, calling on members to support the association's N10 billion endowment initiative.

He made the call at the 2026 ICOPA 90s Decade Reunion themed "Reconnecting and Strengthening the ICOPA 90s Decade," where stakeholders emphasised unity, relevance, and long-term impact.

He said: "It's a huge pleasure to be here. Everywhere you go, you are carrying a torch. The question you must always ask yourself is whether you are representing the values of the college in your decisions and actions."

Badejo-Okusanya stressed that alumni engagement must go beyond social interaction. "We are here to make a difference and im-

pact lives. The greatest sign of a noble individual is the ability to give and to create a future that others will benefit from. What are you building that you may never see, but generations after you will benefit from?" he asked.

Badejo-Okusanya noted that the association is targeting N10bn in funds and plans to take the campaign to the diaspora.

"If you put your money in the endowment, it is forever. Your name will be part of the legacy. We are building not just for ourselves, but for the future; we are targeting N10bn," he added.

The president disclosed that ICOPA had secured over N1bn in cash and pledges towards its endowment fund, with Chapel Hill Denham engaged as fund managers.

"We have agreed with Chapel Hill Denham as fund managers, and they are also putting in a significant sum into the endowment fund," he said.

National Theatre Unveils May Season With Stage Play, Animation Festival

By **Suliyat Tella**

THE National Theatre, Lagos, has announced its "May Season", a cultural showcase aimed at blending traditional storytelling with digital innovation through theatre and animation.

Scheduled for May 30, the event will hold at the main bowl of the newly renovated National Theatre.

The showcase will feature the stage production *I Wish, I Wish* alongside *Toontopia 2.0: Children Animation Festival*.

According to the organisers, the initiative is designed to reconnect audiences with live stage drama while also introducing younger audiences to opportunities in animation and digital storytelling.

The organisers described 'I Wish, I Wish' as a production focused on reviving professional theatre performances at the National Theatre and restoring interest in live storytelling in Lagos.

They also said *Toontopia 2.0* would serve as a platform for young digital creators, combining entertainment with technology-focused learning and highlighting the growing economic potential of Nigeria's animation and digital content industry.

Speaking on the concept behind the season, the organisers said the programme represents "a season of revival" for the National Theatre as it seeks to attract both traditional theatre audiences and younger, digitally inclined families.

Rotary Honours Osunkeye With Prestigious 'Service Above Self' Award

By **Chris Irekamba**

ROTARY International District 9111 has honoured Nigeria's foremost philanthropist and statesman, Chief Olusegun Osunkeye with the prestigious "service above self" award, Rotary's highest individual honour.

The award was in recognition of Osunkeye's over five decades of dedicated service, including being the highest single individual donor to Rotary District 9111's polio eradication initiatives across Nigeria.

Since launching the Polioplus programme in 1985, Rotary International has mobilised volunteers, raised billions of dollars, and partnered with governments, the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foun-

dation, and others under the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI).

The effort has reduced polio cases by more than 99.9 per cent globally with Africa certified free of wild poliovirus in 2020, a milestone made possible through relentless vaccination campaigns, surveillance, and community engagement, in which Nigerian Rotarians have played a frontline role. Osunkeye's sustained contributions have directly powered District 9111's polio immunisation drives, outreach programmes, and supportive health infrastructure projects, helping protect millions of Nigerian children from this debilitating disease.

In his address at the event, Rotary International President, Rotarian Francesco Arezzo, represented by Past District Governor Rotarian Francisco Ssemwanga from Uganda emphasised Africa's rising influence in Rotary while calling for greater accountability.

Arezzo urged African Rotarians to continue to push their weight among global community of Rotarians.

He said: "We must care for one another and ensure that our donations are followed up rigorously so that their impact becomes sustainable and far-reaching."

District Governor, Prince Henry Akinyele, who formally presented the award, eulogised the awardee's extraordinary legacy, urging others to emulate his example.

Akinyele said: "Chief Osunkeye's remarkable strides in service to humanity, especially through donations to activities of this district are legacies worth celebrating." He added that the awardee's contributions not only strengthened the district, but has helped them to forge ahead.

Osunkeye, in his acceptance speech, appreciated the gesture and renewed his call for service.

He said: "I accept this award, not as a personal achievement, but as a recognition of the efforts of those who have journeyed with me.

"The challenges confronting our world today, poverty, illiteracy, diseases and social division remind us that service to humanity is no longer optional, it is an important imperative," Osunkeye added.

As a past President of the Rotary Club of Ikeja, Osunkeye has blended corporate leadership with impactful philanthropy. He was the first Nigerian Managing Director and CEO of Nestlé Nigeria Plc, and chairman of several major corporations.

The award is granted only to a select few Rotarians globally each year, especially as Rotary closes its final chapters of polio transmission across the world.

COFFHA Launches N300m Skill Acquisition Campaign, Announces New President

By **Opeyemi Babalola**

THE Committee of Friends for Humanity (COFFHA) has announced two significant developments that mark an important and promising chapter in the organisation's continued service to humanity, a N300 million skill acquisition campaign and investiture of the new president.

In a statement titled 'Build the Future today' COFFHA said it is delighted to announce that on Sunday, June 14, 2026, Mrs. Augustine Igbokwe will be formally invested as the new President of the Committee of Friends for Humanity. "This investiture marks a proud and historic milestone for the organisation, and COFFHA looks forward to the fresh vision, energy, and dedication she brings to this esteemed role.

"Mrs Augustine Igbokwe's appointment reflects COFFHA's unwavering commitment to purposeful and compassionate leadership. Her wealth of experience and deep passion for humanitarian service position her exceptionally well to guide the organisation into its next phase of growth and impact," the statement said.

On the N300 million skill acquisition campaign, the statement said: "Alongside this leadership transition, COFFHA is officially launching a fundraising campaign to complete the construction and full equipping of its Skill Acquisition Centre, a facility purpose-built to provide practical vocational training and economic empowerment to youth, women, and underserved members of the community."

Igbokwe said that COFFHA is calling on individuals, corporations, philanthropists, faith-based organisations, and all well-meaning members of society to partner to raise the money for the project.

According to her, "Once fully operational, the Centre will equip beneficiaries with marketable skills, foster self-reliance, and create pathways out of poverty for countless families. Every contribution, no matter the amount, is a direct investment in the lives of people who need it most. When communities come together, transformation follows," she added.

ICF Nigeria Advocates Influence-driven Leadership At Coaching Conference

By **Isaac Taiwo**

THE President, International Coaching Federation Nigeria Chapter, Charles Okeibunor, industry leaders and government officials, have advocated influence-based leadership as against authority-driven leadership. They also stated that coaching is a critical tool for national growth, corporate transformation and effective governance.

Speaking at the opening of the International Coaching Week in Lagos themed, "From Authority to Influence: Coaching as a New Leadership Currency," Okeibunor said coaching remains central to decision-making, strategic thinking and leadership development in organisations and government

institutions.

The event attracted chairmen of companies, chief executive officers, senior executives, government officials and aspiring professional coaches from different sectors of the economy.

According to Okeibunor, the conference, which is simultaneously taking place across 140 countries and 99 chapters worldwide, was designed to deepen awareness on the importance of coaching and professional standards in leadership development.

He noted that coaching promotes influence rather than authority as the ideal model for effective leadership in modern organisations.

"Today, we are here for a con-

ference that ushers us into coaching week to set standards for both training and accreditation of professional coaches across the world. Coaching is germane to decision-making, problem-solving and strategic thinking," he said.

He added that leaders in both public and private sectors require coaching support to function effectively, especially when occupying positions of authority and influence.

He urged organisations to deliberately allocate time for coaching as part of staff capability development, stressing that professional coaching should enjoy the same level of attention given to training programmes.

RYLA Organisers Partner Lagos On Leadership Development

By **Jelilah Bilal**

AS part of preparations for the Rotary Youth Leadership Academy (RYLA) 2026, the Chairman of RYLA 2026, Rotarian Jide Ogunleye, alongside members of the planning committee, paid a strategic visit to the Lagos State Commissioner for Youth & Social Development, Mobolaji Abubakre Ogunlende.

The visit which took place at Ministry of Youth and Social Development, Alausa had fruitful engagement which include discussion on collaboration opportunities, youth development and the endorsement of the Lagos State government during the event.

The commissioner assured of Lagos State's commitment to activities and programmes that encourage the youth in pathways to positive leadership.

He expressed appreciation to committee for the visit noting that efforts at improving status of Lagos youth are of priority to his ministry.

The Planning Committee Chairman, Ogunleye thanked the commissioner for hosting the team while promising positive youth engagement during Rotary Youth Leadership Academy 2026 coming up in Lagos between August 1 and 9, 2026 at Sea School Island, Apapa.

Ogunleye, in his address, said: "We are excited by the commissioner's commitment to supporting this impactful initiative, RYLA 2026 and his passion for ensuring that more young people across various councils in Lagos State benefit from this transformative leadership experience.

He informed the commissioner of the desire of the committee to obtain the endorsement of the RYLA programme by Lagos State government.

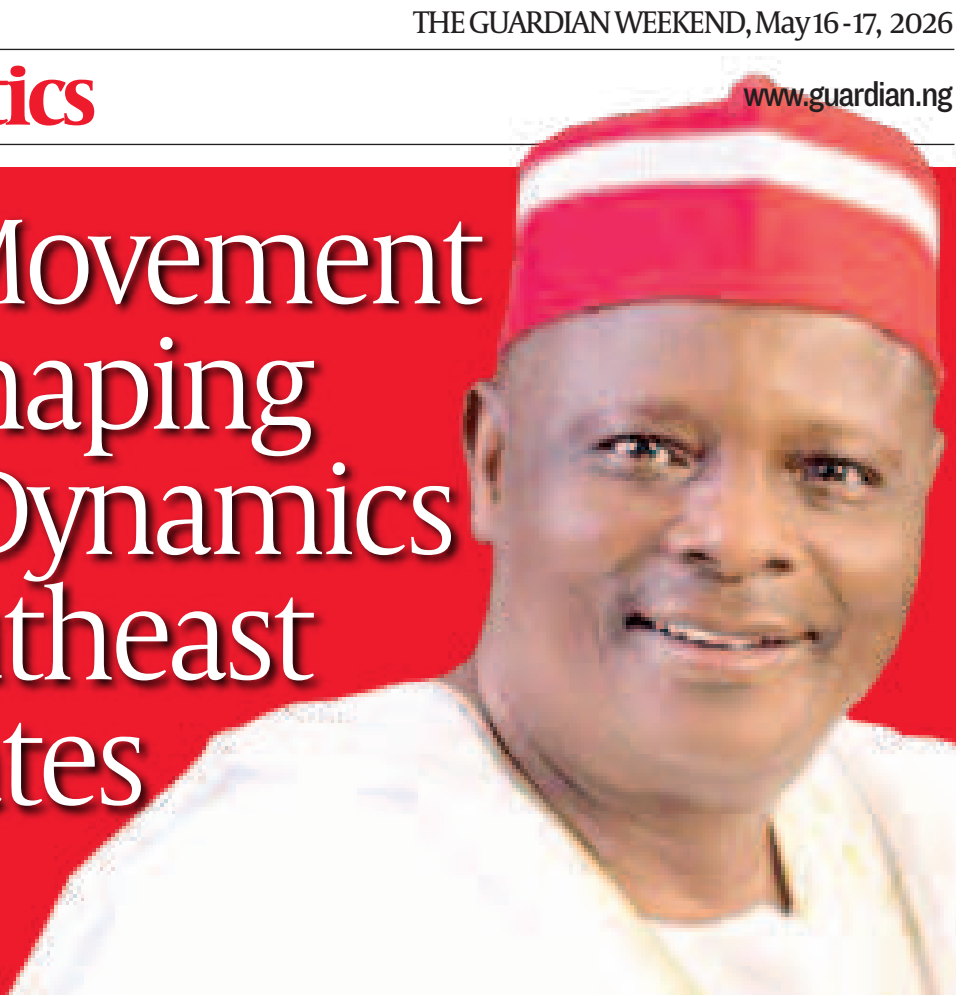
Also present at the meeting were: Rotarian Ben Dare, immediate Past President, Rotary Club of Akowonjo; Rotarian Dr. Racheal Adeyemi, Chair, Fundraising Sub-Committee, and Rotarian Fatoyinbo Ade-tayo, Secretary, RYLA 2026 Committee.



Olusegun Osunkeye displaying his awards



How OK Movement Is Reshaping Political Dynamics Of Southeast States



Ahead of the 2027 elections, the Obi-Kwankwaso Movement (OK Movement) is gradually reshaping the political dynamics of the Southeast region, LAWRENCE NJOKU writes.

It was almost granted that the All Progressives Congress (APC) would make a smooth sail in the Southeast region in the 2027 elections following its penetrations until the defection of the presidential candidates of the Labour Party (LP) and the New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) in the 2023 polls, Peter Obi and Rabiul Kwankwaso respectively, to the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC)

Obi and Kwankwaso's defection to the NDC, with the duo expected to emerge as the presidential and vice presidential candidates of the party, has birthed what is now known as OK Movement. Members and non-members of the NDC are embracing this movement, a development that is seriously challenging the power dynamics of the Southeast region.

With two fingers lifted and imposing pictures of Obi and Kwankwaso, several platforms in the region now read, "Enugu is OK; Imo is OK; Anambra is OK," among others. Obi and Kwankwaso have become household names in the politics of the country since the conclusion of the 2023 general election. Aside from being governors in Anambra and Kano States at different times, the duo had run against each other during the 2023 presidential election on different party platforms. While Obi, who flew the flag of the Labour Party in the election came second, Kwankwaso came fourth running on the platform of the NNPP. Many analysts believed that the failure of the duo to coalesce and confront the APC during the last elections contributed to their failures.

However, in the build up to the 2027 elections, Obi and Kwankwaso have agreed to work together on the platform of the ADC with an eye on the Presidency. They were together at the African Democratic Congress (ADC), but moved to the NDC when it was glaring that the leadership crisis in the party could jeopardise their ambitions.

Since crossing over to the NDC, the party has continued to witness an unusual popularity and vigour in the Southeast, Obi's geo-political zone. It has suddenly become a beautiful bride. Politicians are trooping into the party to register and campaign for its ticket with a view to contesting in the coming elections.

The APC, which currently controls three states in the region including Enugu, Imo and

Ebonyi States, had mouthed how it would win elections in the region because of President Bola Tinubu's achievements and the internal crises rocking other major political parties in the country. It had taunted the opposition as not serious and leveraged its influence as the ruling party to woo political heavyweights into its fold. But under the current political atmosphere, the ruling party would have to contend with the NDC for votes in the region.

But Obi and Kwankwaso's defection to the NDC is also unsettling the party in almost all the states of the Southeast region. Aside from the tendencies of those who want to leverage the platform to contest elections, the party has become unstable as a result of leadership squabbles.

In states such as Enugu, Imo, Abia and Ebonyi, members of the party are locked in bitter quarrels over the authenticity of offices. In Enugu, the party had its congresses and elected its leadership before the entry of Obi and Kwankwaso. However, since they joined with several of their followers, those who emerged from the congresses have not been inaugurated. Pained by the delay in the ratification of the congresses held in the state, the Enugu State Working Committee wrote to the national leadership asking the leadership to either inaugurate them or face a court action.

The petitioners expressed anger that days after a successful congress, the national secretariat was allegedly planning to hold a fresh congress in the state, and cautioned that such action could be detrimental to the party's future.

While recalling the efforts put in place towards building the party after their meeting with Senator Seriake Dickson sometime in April this year, they said things took a different turn when "one Ibuchukwu Obeta threatened Dr. Johnpaul Anih and other members of the party, citing that the party in Enugu State as his personal property with which he will deal as he pleases."

"His threats led him to inviting police officers for the purpose of arresting the Southeast Zonal Vice Chairman, Chief Teddy Odeh. It took the intervention of some leaders of the party at the national level to quell the chaos orchestrated by Ibuchukwu Obeta," they

said.

The members insisted that they would resort to court if their request for the inauguration of the state leadership was not carried out in a matter of days.

In Abia State, the party is still finding it difficult to settle down. Some bigwigs such as Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe, who joined the party earlier, have left over alleged inability of the party to accommodate the deluge of politicians joining the platform.

The situation is similar in Ebonyi and Imo states where there are contests for party offices and individual scrambles for the tickets of the party.

Despite these contentions, what is lifting the party is the name of Obi and Kwankwaso, otherwise known as the OK Movement. Several platforms are springing up in support of the OK Movement in the region with the sole aim to deliver both men at the election.

A senatorial aspirant of the NDC for Enugu West, Ogochukwu Onyema, a lawyer, told *The Guardian* that the movement has taken off, stressing that their meetings had always been well attended.

"Southeast is OK. We have done it before even without preparation and we will do it again. The OK Movement will achieve maximal input in the region. I am confident that it will take the overall seats in the National Assembly. We have embraced it and we are very comfortable with it," he stated.

Onyema, popularly called OAU, insisted that Obi and Kwankwaso meant a lot in the drive to reposition Nigeria for greatness, stressing that the party was lucky to have them in its fold. He claimed that the collective interests of Nigerians is to support them attain the Presidency in 2027 irrespective of the political platform.

Last week, after a summit in Enugu that drew members from the region, the movement stated in a communique that it was committed to "practically championing" the ideals of the Obi-Kwankwaso alliance, which it noted centres on inclusiveness and equal opportunity, where "the son of a nobody can rise to become somebody without knowing anybody."

The movement further expressed confidence that an administration led by the duo would prioritise transparency, accountabil-

ity, and prudent management of public resources.

It added that such a government would focus on production-driven policies, quality education, improved healthcare delivery, and human capital development.

As part of its political strategy, the movement directed its coordinators at state, local council, ward, and polling unit levels to commence aggressive grassroots sensitisation and membership mobilisation under the NDC, particularly across the Southeast.

Reaffirming its optimism, the movement declared that "with Obi-Kwankwaso, a new Nigeria is possible in 2027."

The communiqué was jointly signed by the Southeast Zonal Director-General, El-Shaddai Ikeh; National Legal Adviser and Southeast leader, Okere Kingdom Nnamdi; and state coordinators from Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia, and Ebonyi states.

Meanwhile, the Obi-Kwankwaso Village Boys are further strengthening the movement in the zone.

Led by former National Chairman of APGA, Maxi Okwu and National leader of Njiko Ndigbo, the Rev. Christopher Okechukwu, the group said it was created to ensure that Obi and Kwankwaso emerge as the president and vice president of Nigeria in 2027.

"We urge every citizen of the Southeast zone that is 18 years and above and possessing a PVC, living within Southeast and outside, to be highly mobilised and sensitised to come out and vote massively for Peter Obi and Kwankwaso on the 13th of January, 2027.

"We applaud this ticket because the Presidency should be in the South for another four years and then return to the North for eight years.

"We understand and believe in the heterogeneous structure/nature of Nigeria; where every tribe and religion will be recognised, respected and given a chance to express freely her existence and potential as citizens of Nigeria. Hence, we support the Christian/Muslim ticket that comes with Peter Obi (Christian) and Rabiul Kwankwaso (Muslim)," they wrote.

The hope of many that have embraced the NDC is that the Obi wave, which uplifted the LP and its candidates in 2023, would be replicated in 2027, through the OK Movement. But many analysts think it would be an uphill task looking at the fact that the current challenge is against incumbents who are desirous of retaining power as well as a political party that is not ready to lose control. So, whether the efforts of the OK Movement would materialise to victory for all those who have identified with it, especially those gunning for offices in the 2027 elections, or would amount to a mere conjecture remain to be seen.

The APC, which currently controls three states in the region including Enugu, Imo and Ebonyi States, had mouthed how it would win elections in the region because of President Bola Tinubu's achievements and the internal crises rocking other major political parties in the country. . . But under the current political atmosphere, the ruling party would have to contend with the NDC for votes in the region.

2027: How Fresh Alignments, Horse-trading Is Shaping Race For Oyo Governorship Poll

Ahead of the forthcoming general election, a succession war that will determine not only who governs Oyo State from May 29, 2027, but also which political coalition emerges dominant in the post-Governor Seyi Makinde era, is silently ongoing, ROTIMI AGBOLUAJE writes.

ALIGNMENTS ahead of the 2027 elections are already shifting political calculations in Oyo State, with quiet negotiations, internal party tensions and strategic defections redefining the contest for the Agodi Government House.

Unlike previous electoral cycles largely dominated by the two major political parties, the unfolding political climate in the state reflects an unpredictable landscape. Across the major parties and even among smaller political platforms, there are visible cracks, succession intrigues, competing ambitions and growing calculations over who succeeds Governor Seyi Makinde in 2027.

Ahead of 2027, the scramble for the soul of the Pacesetter State is between competing tendencies, coalitions and personalities seeking relevance in a dynamic political environment. It is no longer between parties.

At the centre of the unfolding calculations is Governor Makinde himself, whose growing national political profile and alignment with the coalition platform of the Allied People's Movement (APM) have significantly altered the traditional balance within the state's political architecture.

For many, Makinde's evolving political direction has introduced a fresh layer of uncertainty into Oyo politics, especially regarding the future of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) structure that brought him to power in 2019 and secured his re-election in 2023.

Head of the Department of Political Science at the University of Ibadan, Professor Dhikru Adewale Yagboyaju, described the current political atmosphere as typical of pre-election politics in the state, characterised by intrigues, horse-trading and strategic realignments.

According to him, political contests naturally generate conflicts and competing interests, particularly during candidate selection processes. "The political climate in Oyo State is as normal as it used to be ahead of general elections. Intrigues, horse-trading and realignments are all involved and this is normal," he said.

Yagboyaju, however, warned that the major challenge for political parties would be managing post-primary grievances, especially amid debates over consensus candidacies and direct primaries.

"Whichever option is adopted, direct primary or consensus, there is a high probability that there will be postscripts after the exercises. Therefore, internal conflict management mechanisms of the various political parties must be prepared for reconciliation so as not to go into the general election with divided houses," he stated.

His position reflects growing concerns within major parties where aspirants and their supporters are already quietly mobilising ahead of the primaries. Within the APC, the succession debate has become highly contentious following the emergence of multiple governorship aspirants and disagreements over alleged attempts to impose a candidate notwithstanding that the party has opted for direct primaries. Although party leaders have repeatedly spoken about unity, it was gathered that underground rivalries persist among competing blocs loyal to different political heavyweights within the party.

A Political Science lecturer at the University of Ilorin, Professor Gbade Ojo, noted that Oyo politics remains unique because no single political godfather completely controls the state's electoral direction.

"The political climate in Oyo State currently is boisterous. It demonstrates that the state's politics is indeed unique. The state is divided into zones with each having unique political attributes. Thus, there is no overriding godfather," Ojo, a former Chief of Staff to the late Governor Abiola Ajimobi, said.

Yet, according to him, Makinde has gradually emerged as the dominant political figure in the state.

"For now, Governor Seyi Makinde has emerged as the overall political figure in the state. If he can use his influence to deliver the state to APM, op-

position elements must have been politically castrated," Ojo added.

That possibility is already generating anxiety among opposition figures who fear Makinde may deploy incumbency influence and grassroots networks beyond the PDP framework.

Several political actors who once aligned with the PDP are already exploring alternative platforms, including Accord, Social Democratic Party (SDP) and APM, amid uncertainty surrounding future party alignments.

The quiet movement of politicians across party lines has further reinforced perceptions that the 2027 contest may become one of the most fragmented governorship races in Oyo's recent political history. A major feature of the unfolding political scenario is the growing relevance of smaller parties, particularly Accord.

Regarded as a fringe platform, Accord is attracting politicians, technocrats and younger political actors such as Solomon Emiola, Ishola Adeyemi, and others seeking alternatives outside the dominant APC and PDP.

The entrance of notable figures into the party has strengthened speculation that Accord may become a major third force capable of influencing the outcome of the governorship election.

Former Lagos Commissioner of Police and one-time Special Adviser on Security Matters to Governor Makinde, Fatai Owoseni, recently aligned with Accord shortly after resigning from the Makinde administration.

An Ibadan-based broadcaster, Oriyomi Hamzat has also emerged as one of the notable figures linked with the party's governorship calculations.

The development has heightened discussions around protest voting, grassroots populism and the possibility of voter fatigue with traditional political establishments.

Veteran broadcaster and former Nigerian Ambassador to the Philippines, Dr. Yemi Farounbi, argued that the political space has become increasingly muddled due to judicial interventions, electoral disputes and shifting party loyalties.

"In the past, it was easier to predict the political landscape consisting of two major political parties and several smaller ones. But with the narrowing of the political space through judicial interventions, INEC interventions and alleged subterranean presidential interventions, the landscape is muddled," he said.

Farounbi noted that the PDP's internal uncertainties and Makinde's coalition politics have significantly weakened the party's traditional dominance.

"APM is the haven for GSM (Governor Seyi Makinde) and his faction of PDP. Given his generally acclaimed performance, APM cannot be written off. It can give APC a really good fight," he observed.

He also described Accord as an "up-swelling of the common people," although he cautioned that electoral success would depend on organisational capacity and grassroots mobilisation.

For many, the real battle in Oyo may eventually revolve around structure, reconciliation and voter mobilisation rather than merely popularity.

Dr. Stephen Lafenwa of the Political Science Department, University of Ibadan, also believes the present political climate reflects growing tension and heightened competitiveness.

"With the declaration of Governor Seyi Makinde's interest to contest under the coalition between APM and PDP, internal party crisis in APC arising from emergence of different strong aspirants, and many political defections to minor parties such as Accord and SDP, the political climate is tense and highly competitive," he said.

According to him, voters themselves are becoming confused by the complex political manoeuvrings, zoning calculations and coalition arrangements unfolding across parties.

Indeed, zoning has quietly emerged as another sensitive issue shaping the succession debate. Ibadan politicians continue to rely on the city's voting strength and demographic advantage, while other zones insist power rotation and political inclusiveness should shape the 2027 contest.

The silent succession war within the ruling camp has also become more pronounced. Though Governor Makinde has not publicly endorsed any successor, political actors believed to enjoy his confidence have become visible across strategic political engagements.

Among such figures is former Commissioner for Finance, Bimbo Adekanmbi, whose growing consultations and public appearances have intensified speculations about his governorship ambition.

Adekanmbi has repeatedly pledged to sustain the sectoral legacies of the Makinde administration, especially in infrastructure, workers' welfare, education and economic expansion. His recent meetings with influential stakeholders, including media entrepreneur Yinka Ayefele, were widely interpreted as part of broader consultations ahead of 2027.

Yet, not everyone within the Makinde-led PDP fold appears comfortable with the succession calculations. Some loyalists believe the process is gradually narrowing political space within the party, while others fear that unresolved ambitions may trigger defections before the election.

Political analysts warn that mishandling candidate selection may create deep divisions capable of weakening even dominant parties. Farounbi specifically warned that the APC could face internal implosion if its selection arrangements are poorly managed.

"APC claimed to have a consensus candidate even before nomination started. Thereafter, several persons collected nomination forms. In a top-driven party like APC, disqualification can be used to arrive at their candidate. There may be implosion arising from failure of the party to reach consensus through negotiated agreement among all aspirants. This may lead to rebellion by unhappy aspirants," he said.

Aside from elite politics, there are growing concerns over possible tensions and violence as political activities intensify. The Inter Party Advisory Council (IPAC) has reportedly raised concerns about the possibility of political violence if parties fail to properly manage their supporters and internal disputes.

Lafenwa stressed the need for security agencies to remain proactive before, during and after the elections.

"It is imperative for security agencies to maintain law and order before, during and after the 2027 general election," he said.

The unfolding scenario also reflects broader national political uncertainties. The weakening ideological boundaries between parties, increasing coalition politics and widespread defections have made party identity less rigid than before.

For many politicians, survival, structure and access to influence now appear more important than ideological loyalty.

In Oyo, this reality is very visible as alliances cut across party lines and former rivals quietly negotiate political understandings ahead of the elections.

Analysts say the eventual outcome may depend largely on three major factors - the strength of Makinde's political influence after leaving office, the ability of opposition parties to manage internal disagreements, and the capacity of emerging parties to convert growing popularity into electoral structures.

Another factor likely to shape the contest is voter sentiment regarding governance performance. While Makinde continues to enjoy considerable support in several parts of the state due to infrastructure development and workers' welfare policies, economic hardship and national political realities may also influence voter behaviour by 2027.

The APC, despite its internal challenges, still retains considerable grassroots presence and federal influence, while smaller parties hope to capitalise on public frustration with mainstream political actors.

What remains clear, however, is that Oyo's 2027 governorship race is already evolving into far more than a routine succession contest. It is becoming a battle over political dominance, coalition survival, regional balancing, elite negotiations and the future direction of power in one of the South-West's most politically strategic states.

For now, the horse-trading continues quietly behind the scenes. Meetings are being held in private residences. Loyalists are mobilising discreetly. Aspirants are strengthening alliances. Political camps are testing their structures. Smaller parties are gaining unusual visibility. And beneath the surface of public declarations and political consultations lies a silent succession war that may finally determine not only who governs Oyo in 2027, but also which political coalition emerges dominant in the post-Makinde era.



Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State addressing his supporters during the Unity Mega Rally in the state on Thursday where he declared his interest in the presidential race under the PDP-APM alliance.

Politics

Days to the governorship primaries of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), the widening rift between Governor Hyacinth Alia and the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), George Akume, has heightened fears that the crisis could weaken the party's hold on Benue State and open the door for the opposition in 2027, ADAMU ABUH and SAMSON KUKWA-YNOR report.

THE battle for the 2027 governorship election in Benue State is gradually evolving into a high-stakes political contest defined by defections, shifting alliances and an intense supremacy battle within the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

At the centre of the unfolding drama is the fractured relationship between Governor Hyacinth Alia and the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Senator George Akume, an alliance that delivered a landslide victory for the ruling party in 2023 but later degenerated into one of the fiercest political feuds in Benue's recent history.

The crisis has already triggered a wave of defections by key Akume loyalists to opposition parties, significantly reshaping the political landscape ahead of the 2027 polls.

Although Akume recently moved to reconcile with Alia and publicly endorsed him as the APC's preferred governorship candidate, many politicians within his camp appear reluctant to support the governor.

Instead, several influential figures formerly associated with the Akume political structure have either rebelled within the APC or defected entirely to opposition parties such as the African Democratic Congress (ADC), Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Labour Party (LP), Social Democratic Party (SDP) and Nigerian Democratic Congress (NDC).

The decision by Dr. Jeffrey Kuraun, a known political ally of Akume, to seek the APC governorship ticket has further fuelled indications that the political rapprochement between Akume and Alia remains unsettled.

Kuraun's emergence is being viewed in political circles as more than a routine governorship ambition. Analysts believe it reflects the continuing struggle for control of the APC structure in Benue State and suggests that influential blocs within the party are unwilling to concede the 2027 ticket to the incumbent governor without a contest.

By stepping into the race on the APC platform, Kuraun has effectively reopened conversations about unresolved grievances between loyalists of Akume and supporters of Alia, despite repeated public assurances of reconciliation between both camps.

Kuraun recently unveiled an economic recovery and infrastructure development blueprint, promising fiscal discipline, efficient spending and greater accountability in governance. Observers interpret the position as an indirect critique of the current administration.

The timing of Kuraun's procurement of the APC's N50 million expression of interest and nomination forms is significant, as it signals that Akume's political network still retains ambitions to influence the succession debate within the ruling party.

For Alia's camp, Kuraun's ambition represents an early test of its grip on the party structure and the governor's ability to secure the loyalty of key stakeholders ahead of the APC primaries.

For Akume's camp, however, the emergence of a loyalist in the contest may serve as strategic leverage in ongoing negotiations over political control, appointments and the future direction of the party in Benue State.

Nevertheless, the defections of political heavyweights to

Benue 2027: Defections, APC Rift Threaten Akume's Grip As Alia Gains Edge

opposition parties are steadily weakening the Akume camp, once regarded as the most formidable political structure in Benue State.

Before the 2023 elections, Akume was widely seen as the undisputed leader of the APC in Benue. Having served as governor, senator, minister and now SGF, he built a powerful grassroots political network across the state.

Akume's political machinery played a decisive role in mobilising support for the Catholic priest-turned-politician, Alia, under the popular "Yes Father!" campaign slogan.

The alliance proved effective as the APC swept the 2023 elections, winning the governorship, two senatorial seats, 10 House of Representatives seats and 26 of the 32 seats in the Benue State House of Assembly, effectively dismantling the then-ruling PDP.

However, tensions began shortly after Alia assumed office over appointments and control of party structures. Many Akume loyalists, who expected to dominate the new administration after investing heavily in the APC's electoral victory, felt sidelined.

The disagreement soon escalated into open confrontation over appointments, local party leadership, influence over the state legislature and the general direction of government.

Governor Alia, however, appeared determined to establish an independent political structure rather than operate under entrenched APC power brokers.

Eventually, the APC in Benue became sharply polarised into two rival camps, one loyal to Alia and the other aligned with Akume. Several political appointees, lawmakers and party officials openly took sides, while the crisis generated bitter public exchanges and legal battles that, at different times, threatened the cohesion of the ruling party.

While the internal crisis deepened, opposition parties quietly began capitalising on the divisions within the APC.

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) appears to have emerged as the biggest beneficiary of the realignment. Led nationally by former Senate President David Mark, the party has attracted several influential politicians and grassroots mobilisers dissatisfied with developments within the APC.

Former House of Representatives member, Herman Iorwase Hembe, and former Director-General of the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), Dr. Paul Angya, are among the notable figures now associated with the ADC.

Political observers believe the party is rapidly

becoming a safe political destination for displaced APC and PDP stakeholders, as well as aggrieved Akume loyalists.

The PDP has also gained momentum from the APC crisis. The emergence of former Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Chief Mike Aondoakaa (SAN), as the party's consensus governorship candidate has provided a rallying point for politicians seeking an alternative platform to challenge Governor Alia.

Likewise, the Labour Party (LP) received a boost following the defection of Dr. Mathias Byuan, once considered part of the APC power bloc.

Professor Terhemba Shija of the Nigerian Democratic Congress (NDC) is equally attracting attention among younger politicians and members of the *Obidient* Movement searching for alternative political platforms outside the APC and PDP.

The growing movement of Akume loyalists into opposition parties underscores the reality that the reconciliation between the governor and the SGF may not have fully healed the cracks within the APC.

Before the recent truce, many governorship aspirants and party stakeholders aligned with Akume had hoped the SGF would support one of them against Alia. His eventual endorsement of the governor therefore came as a surprise to many within his political camp.

Yet, despite the defections and internal tensions within the APC, Alia appears to be entering the 2027 race with several strategic advantages. Perhaps his greatest strength remains his grassroots popularity. Unlike many traditional politicians, Alia entered politics with an already established public image as a Catholic priest and healing minister.

Long before contesting for office, he enjoyed widespread admiration among ordinary people, particularly in rural communities. That goodwill has largely remained intact despite the elite political battles surrounding his administration. Incumbency also gives him enormous leverage.

As governor, Alia controls state structures, appointments, development projects and grassroots mobilisation networks that naturally strengthen his influence ahead of any election.

The governor also appears to have consolidated control of the APC structure in the state, especially following Akume's public endorsement of his second-term ambition. The endorsement significantly weakened anti-Alia forces within the party and forced many aggrieved politicians to either defect or quietly accept political reality.

Another factor working in

Alia's favour is the fragmentation of the opposition.

While the ADC, PDP, SDP, LP and NDC all parade credible personalities, the opposition vote may ultimately be divided among several strong contenders.

Besides, many of Alia's supporters see him not as part of the traditional Benue political elite but as an outsider challenging entrenched political interests. That perception has helped him retain sympathy among ordinary voters even during his prolonged clashes with influential politicians within his party.

Still, the race remains fluid. Political alignments and realignments are ongoing, and more defections are expected as parties consolidate ahead of the primaries.

The ADC continues to gain visibility as a rising opposition force under David Mark, while the PDP is banking on the political experience and grassroots reach of former governor Samuel Ortom.

Unless the opposition succeeds in building a broad coalition against the APC, defeating an incumbent governor with an established political structure may prove difficult.

For now, however, Alia, who is also backed by one of his predecessors, Senator Gabriel Suswam, appears to hold the advantage.

If the fragile reconciliation between him and Akume survives the coming months, and if the opposition remains divided, the task of unseating the priest-governor in 2027 may prove far more difficult than many of his opponents currently imagine.

Recall that the 2023 Benue governorship poll saw a broad coalition defeat the PDP led by Samuel Ortom. Widespread voter fatigue over insecurity, salary arrears and economic hardship weakened support for the PDP.

The APC, backed by Akume's strong political structure, effectively unified party machinery behind Alia.

The LP's strong presidential showing also split anti-APC votes, further weakening the PDP's chances. Internal PDP divisions and Ortom's strained national political battles compounded the party's decline.

Ultimately, a combination of anti-incumbency sentiment and opposition consolidation delivered a decisive victory for the APC.

Leading voices across the opposition spectrum, including the ADC, PDP, SDP and LP, argued that the APC's stewardship at both the state and federal levels has weakened public confidence in the ruling party.

The Chairman of the Benue State ADC Caucus and member of the party's Transformation Committee, Senator Emmanuel Orker Jev, said the APC had inadvertently strengthened the opposition through what he described as poor governance and deep internal crisis.

According to the immediate past senator representing Benue North-West Senatorial District, the ADC was conceived as a mass movement driven by a reform agenda aimed at addressing the economic hardship and social distress confronting Nigerians.

He argued that the APC in Benue State was "its own worst enemy," citing growing polarisation within the party and questioning its ability to effectively mobilise voters ahead of the elections.

Jev maintained that elections in Benue could not be won through intimidation or social media attacks, stressing that the ADC would instead focus on selling its manifesto directly to the electorate.

"The governing APC both in Benue and at the federal level have made the work less difficult for us as we inch towards the general election. The ADC was modelled as a mass movement with a clear and unambiguous manifesto on reforming the lives of Nigerians traumatised by the collapsed economy and unbearable suffering under APC governments at different levels," he said.

He added that the ADC remained confident that the people of Benue would embrace the party as the alternative platform capable of addressing their aspirations.

On its part, the PDP insisted that despite setbacks suffered in recent elections, it remained the most established political platform in the country and retained deep roots across Benue State.



Alia

Akume

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

Ademola Bankole is a member of the All Progressives Congress (APC) think-tank in Lagos State and a prince of Apa Kingdom, Badagry. He was a member of the Alliance for Democracy (AD), which dominated the South-West at the start of democracy in 1999. Bankole, who is also the Managing Director/Chief Coordinator, Broadcasting Talents Nigeria, was one of the stakeholders who formed the Action Congress (AC), which later became the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). In this interview with ENIOLA DANIEL, he speaks on his political career, the preparations for the 2027 general election and other national issues.

Tell us about your political journey?

I started my political life at a tender age. While others were in colleges making their marks, I was combining both with elders in politics. Many people call me Gudugudu instead of my name. Gudugudu means a leader by example. Do you belong to the Mandate or Justice Forum in Lagos APC?

I don't belong to any group. I have put so much effort and resources into politics and suffered indignation of severe form. But happily, I'm still interested in ensuring that the common man is served properly. Tinubu also faced the same issue in the AD just like the ADC is facing now. What would be your advice for the opposition?

Tinubu in 2003 was faced with the same problem having been the only governor in AD and his party was factionalised. He kept his ambition on hold completely and went on to start the Action Congress and drew other people.

Don't Seek Power If You Can't Build A Political Structure – Bankole

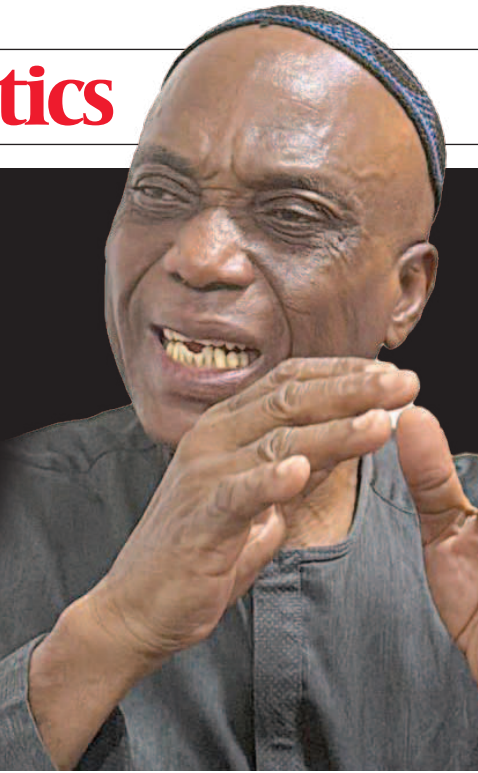
This would have been a good recommendation for Peter Obi instead of ganging up. Some people say that Nigeria is due for an alternative government; what's your take?

Sometimes you push and fight to win but you cannot win when you are sentimental. Anyone who wants to be in government must justify his or her position.

Power is not served a la carte. I won't submit what belongs to me easily. So, whatever you are doing, learn to set up your party properly. If you cannot build a political structure, don't go near power.

Is it democratic for parties to nominate candidates through consensus?

You cannot practice consensus if you are not a veritable leader. Every party has its own internal arrangement and no matter what we do, congress is always the recognised way of selection at the state level while convention is required at the national level. There could be horse trading prior to the congress but once it's taken before congress and approved, that becomes the official decision.



I came to realise that politics is a full time undertaking contrary to the belief that it's something one should do part-time. It is only those who do not understand the leadership requirement of politics that will come to say it only requires a little bit of time after spending time doing other things.

The truth is, you can't spend time doing other things and become a neophyte in politics because being a neophyte will destroy other things previously achieved.

What's your take on your party's endorsement of Obafemi Hamzat for Lagos governorship ticket?

I am from Apa Kingdom, Badagry West, a community so rich in history and so embedded in power in Lagos. We have never been anything; but if Hamzat becomes the next governor of Lagos State, he will be the second person after Babatunde Raji-Fashola that claims Apa Kingdom's origin.

Apa Kingdom is the origin of Lagos State; Lagos State is a state that does not discriminate whether a person is a child of a male or a fe-

male and it is making Lagos State a winner. Prosperity will not come if we start debating and discriminating. Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde, can also contest in Lagos because his mother is from Apa Kingdom.

There is an argument that occupying Alausa is now by coronation and not election. What's your view on that?

As someone who has played party politics extensively, it is common knowledge that all political parties must go through primary to choose a flag bearer or risk being sanctioned by INEC. Aggrieved persons may also go to court to nullify the person picked.

President Tinubu and other leaders declaring their preference for Hamzat is a way of challenging everyone who has a better candidate to come out. So, other groups can come out like during the time of Primrose and Agbalajobi groups. Primrose Group adopted Chief Dapo Sarumi while the Agbalajobi Group came out to endorse Agbalajobi and it was a hard-fought battle.

A lot of people do not understand how deeply rooted political matters should be taken. For anyone to emerge as a political leader, he or she must have gravitated towards many aspects of human endeavours. There are leaders who have aspired to be president throughout their life in Nigeria, and there are those who have been given the position easily. The former includes the likes of Atiku Abubakar who became a vice president and has fought to be president and is still fighting. Muhammadu Buhari's incursion into politics was a volatile experience; Goodluck Jonathan had a smooth ride to power; Bola Tinubu's own was a smooth fighting; he fought and conquered several times to get to where he's going. I cannot say any leader who has gone through a series of political struggles is a loser. Atiku is a national monument just like Tinubu, Jonathan, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and others. We need to study them.

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

Day RHN Stormed Lagos, Prayed For Tinubu's Re-election

By Isaac Taiwo

A MID growing political realignments ahead of the 2027 general election, the leadership of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Lagos State recently staged a massive show of solidarity for President Bola Tinubu, endorsing him for a second term amid prayers, songs and celebrations by party faithful.

The event, tagged, 'Special Congregational Prayer,' held at the historic Tafawa Balewa Square. It attracted thousands of supporters from Lagos and neighbouring states, turning the venue into a carnival-like gathering in support of the President and the ruling party.

Leading party stalwarts at the event was Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, alongside his deputy, Kadri Obafemi Hamzat, both of whom received loud cheers from supporters on arrival.

The programme was organised by the Renewed Hope Network (RHN) under the leadership of its Director-General, Mohammed Oyinlomo Danmole.

Also present were former Kogi State Governor, Yahaya Bello; Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly, Mudashiru Obasa; Convener of the RHN, James Faleke; and Lagos State Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Stephen Adegbite.

From the early hours of the day, supporters dressed in customised ankara fabrics, face caps and branded T-shirts flooded the venue in buses and convoys. Different support groups carrying banners and party flags marched through the main entrance near the Bus Rapid Transit corridor, chanting slogans and singing songs in praise of Tinubu and the APC leadership.

The atmosphere at the square was electrifying as drummers, praise singers and party loyalists entertained the crowd while awaiting the arrival of top government officials and party leaders.

One of the songs repeatedly rendered in Yoruba was 'Asiwaju, ma ba'se re lo, ise re ma ntewa lorun, Asiwaju ma ba'se re lo,' loosely

translated as 'Leader, continue your work; we are pleased with your performance.'

The chants echoed across the arena as supporters danced and waved party insignia, reinforcing the impression of a political movement already mobilising for another election cycle.

The overwhelming turnout also stretched security arrangements at the venue. Although access to the square was officially restricted to accredited persons, the mammoth crowd overwhelmed security personnel as supporters surged into the arena in large numbers.

Addressing the gathering, Sanwo-Olu thanked party supporters for their loyalty and commitment to the APC, commending them for turning out in large numbers for the prayer session and endorsement rally.

The governor praised Nigerians for their patience amid ongoing economic reforms under Tinubu's administration and urged citizens to remain steadfast in supporting the government.

In his remarks, Bello described Tinubu as a courageous and visionary leader whose political guidance significantly shaped his emergence as governor of Kogi State.

According to him, Tinubu's role in deepening progressive politics across Nigeria remains unparalleled.

"President Tinubu is a leader to be reckoned with. He is courageous, forthright and deeply committed to the progress of Nigeria. I remain grateful for the role he played in my political journey and emergence as governor," Bello said.

He added that the current administration deserved continued support to consolidate ongoing reforms and development initiatives.

Similarly, Hamzat applauded party supporters for their loyalty to the APC and urged them not to relent in their commitment ahead of future elections.

The deputy governor called for sustained grassroots mobilisation, stressing that electoral victory could only be guaranteed

through active participation and voter education.

In his welcome address, Danmole explained that the prayer gathering was organised not only to seek divine guidance for the country but also to publicly endorse Tinubu for a second term.

According to him, the administration had embarked on difficult but necessary reforms aimed at repositioning the country for long-term economic stability and growth.

"Under the Renewed Hope Agenda, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has demonstrated bold leadership through far-reaching reforms in the economy, infrastructure, education, social investment, security architecture and national productivity," Danmole said.

"These reforms, though demanding in the short term, are repositioning Nigeria for sustainable growth and shared prosperity."

Danmole also disclosed that the RHN had endorsed Tinubu for re-election while backing Hamzat as the next governor of Lagos State.

He described Hamzat as a competent administrator with the vision and capacity to sustain Lagos' developmental strides.

On his part, Obasa said the gathering represented more than a political endorsement, describing it as a reaffirmation of loyalty to leaders committed to governance and national development.

The Speaker, whose remarks drew sustained applause from party supporters, said: "We are gathered here today not only to pray, but to reaffirm our collective commitment to the future of Nigeria and Lagos State. Prayer is the foundation of strength, but action is the proof of faith. And today, our action is clear – we stand firmly behind the re-election of our leader, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and Dr. Obafemi Kadri Hamzat as the next Governor of Lagos State."

Obasa de-

scribed Tinubu as "the architect of modern Lagos," crediting him with laying the foundation for the transformation that has made Lagos one of Africa's leading commercial hubs.

"Asiwaju is not just a name; he is a movement," Obasa added. "He is the visionary who transformed Lagos into a model of progress and the leader who has rejuvenated our hopes for a greater Nigeria."

He maintained that Tinubu's re-election would guarantee continuity and consolidation of the Renewed Hope Agenda.

Obasa also endorsed Hamzat's governorship ambition, describing the deputy governor as loyal, competent and committed to the development of Lagos State.



Editorial

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Tuberculosis: Stemming The Spread, Curbing Stigmatisation

THE call to action by First Lady, Mrs. Remi Tinubu, and her emphasis on urgent measures to combat Tuberculosis, as well as eliminate associated stigmas is both timely and poignant considering the debilitating impact of the disease on the populace. Apart from the country's high TB burden, which has significant consequences for the economy, the social implications, which stem from the stigma associated with the disease, also highlight the importance of increased funding for accelerated awareness campaigns and prompt TB treatment.

The ravaging and cyclical nature of the health challenge, which hampers not just productivity, but also health outcomes in the country, can be gleaned from the 19,908 tuberculosis infections recorded last year in just two states - Plateau and Niger. This high number of infections in two states is a clear indication of the continued challenge posed by TB in the country. With TB's prevalence remaining alarmingly high even as efforts to curb its spread remain ongoing, a lot is indirect-

ly being said about the parlous state of the country's health infrastructure, as well as the grossly inadequate attention the government continually gives to healthcare. This is notwithstanding that health agencies are ramping up case detection, treatment services, and awareness campaigns, all aimed at reducing transmission and mortality rates, especially since the country has the highest tuberculosis burden in Africa, and is ranked sixth in the world.

As Mrs. Tinubu noted in her message to mark the 2026 World Tuberculosis Day: "TB remains a preventable and curable disease, yet it continues to impact countless lives. We must strengthen our response by investing more resources, supporting our health workers and empowering communities with accurate information." With the theme of this year's celebration being: "Yes! We Can End TB," underscoring the need for strong leadership, sustained political will, and active community participation in tackling the epidemic, the highly infectious nature of the disease should prompt government and devel-

opment partners to act decisively to stem the rising figure as Nigeria is yoked with the an estimated 467 cases of active infections according to the World Health Organisation.

Even though the Federal Government, through the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Control Programme (NTBLCP), gives free TB testing and treatment nationwide in an attempt to end the epidemic by 2030, a lot still needs to be done by governments at all levels, especially in the provision of improved healthcare and educating the public on ways of preventing and handling the scourge.

If estimates from the Knowledge Network for Disease Control and Vigilance (KNCV Nigeria), which indicate that about 15 Nigerians die hourly from tuberculosis, roughly 347 deaths daily, and 125,000 annually, are anything to go by, then treating matters with kid's gloves will bequeath more harm than good to the country. While the WHO has warned that Niger State may face a serious TB crisis by June if the state government fails to provide urgent funding and supplies, the Global Fund has also charged the Federal Government to ensure uninterrupted funding for TB, or else the country risks a reversal of the progress made in the fight against the infectious disease.

In addition to the prominent role played by public health policy in promoting prompt diagnosis and treatment of the infectious disease, strate-

gies for community engagement to address social stigma surrounding TB must be top-notch since high TB burden hurts the labour force, especially in sectors that require physical labour. In addition, high TB burden saddles the healthcare systems with severe strain that can overwhelm them and force a diversion of resources from other critical health services. Furthermore, a high-burden TB country will fail to attract foreign investment and tourism because it raises concerns about public health and safety.

Similarly, stigmatisation of sufferers should be addressed through extensive public enlightenment, in the same way as the disease itself is addressed. This could involve extensive public awareness campaigns, improved healthcare access, and social support systems that encourage individuals to seek help without fear of discrimination. This is so because TB-induced stigma can discourage sufferers from seeking diagnosis and treatment, a development that may lead individuals to hide their symptoms or avoid healthcare facilities, thereby exacerbating the spread of the disease.

Prolonged stigmatisation can seriously affect broader societal progress in public health. This is because persistent avoidance of treatment due to fear of discrimination could entrench TB as a public health threat, with lasting adverse implications for the economy and overall health of the population.

LETTER

Tribute: 50 Years Of Impactful Service In Broadcasting And Journalism

SIR: When Dr Is'haq Modibbo Kawu landed his first-ever job at the defunct Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), Radio Nigeria, fifty years ago, on the 1st of February 1977, he was just 16 years and 4 months old. His mother, fearing that his young age might count against him, sewed him a babanriga to make him look more mature than his age. Is'haq Modibbo Kawu actually got the job immediately after his WASC examination, through a recruitment initiative facilitated by the late Hannatu Ibrahim.

Comrade Is'haq Modibbo Kawu rose quickly by the dint of hard work and resourcefulness from the role of a studio manager (Trainee) to a Presenter, Announcer, Disc Jockey, News Reader (reading news on the National Network Service by 1980, aged under 20 years), News and Current Affairs news analyst, Sports and Ceremonials Commentator, Producer of various Programs and a correspondent for international broadcast outfits, like Radio France International and the BBC World Service. At a point in Kawu's illustrious career, he was invited to Radio Nederland International in Hilversum to be interviewed for the role of Producer and Presenter.

In 1997, Dr Moddibo Kawu landed his first top management job as the General Manager (GM) of the Kwara State Television Service. After a memorable five years as GM, Dr Kawu, in response to his innate thirst for new challenges, took an unusual plunge from broadcasting into core journalism by joining the budding Daily Trust Newspapers in May 2002 as a pioneer editor. Reminiscent of his prolific rise in the broad-

casting world, Comrade Kawu took up higher responsibilities at Daily Trust, including chairing the editorial meetings and writing as a columnist. He later moved on to Blueprint Newspaper as an Editorial Consultant.

To those of us in the trade union movement, Comrade Is'haq Modibbo Kawu represents ideological clarity, persuasion, commitment and service. At Radio Kwara, he was elected the Chairman of the Radio, Television and Theatre Workers Union (RAT-TAWU). Subsequently, Comrade Kawu was elected the Vice Chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Kwara State Council. Ultimately, he reached the echelon of his trade union calling with his election as the Chairman of the NLC Kwara State, from 1984 to 1988.

Dr Is'haq Kawu's foray into trade unionism was no happenstance. Right from his student days, Comrade Kawu was involved in intellectual unionism as a member of the militant and largely underground Marx-Leninist Movement of Nigeria (MLMN). He was acknowledged by his peers in the struggle as a progressive and committed student union leader. His spirit of activism has been evident in his broadcasting, writing, editorial board responsibilities, public policy endeavours, trade unionism, and other life callings in spaces such as the Northern Media Forum, the Arewa Consultative Forum, and the Fulbe Global and Rights Initiative.

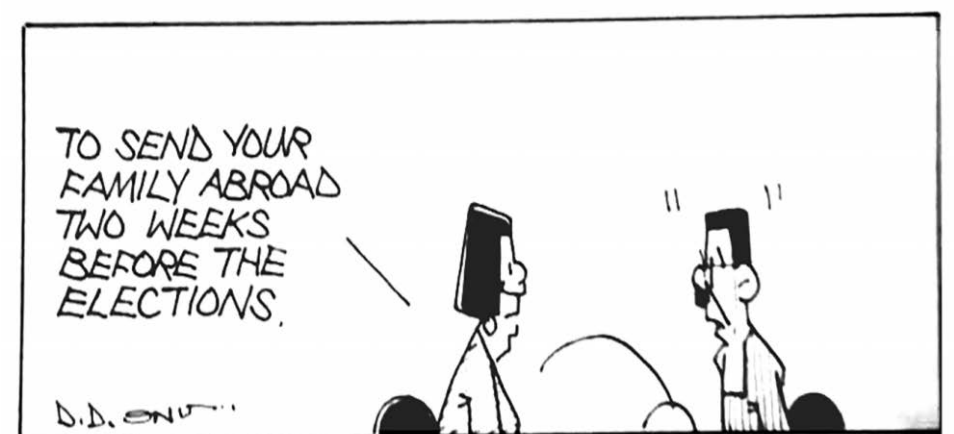
It is very difficult to summarise the life and service of Dr Is'haq Modibbo Kawu without mentioning his

attribute of courage and foresight. He displayed these invaluable qualities when he reached the pinnacle of his public service as the Director-General of the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) in May 2016. At the NBC, he removed what had become an institutionalised barrier to effective broadcasting in Nigeria by multiplying the Digital Switch Overs from a single point in Jos, to other locations such as Oshogbo, Enugu, Kaduna and Ilorin. He did this by resolving intractable squabbles and litigation among stakeholders, thus freeing up the digital space for seamless access to millions of Nigerians.

Unfortunately, his courage and achievement have attracted a lot of noise and persecution. In his ordeal, we want to assure him that Nigerian workers and trade unions stand strong behind him. We believe that history and posterity will vindicate and reward Dr Is'haq Modibbo Kawu, FNGE.

In conclusion, I must say that it is heartwarming that Dr Is'haq Modibbo Kawu, true to his nature of resilience and altruism, has risen above the distractions of naysayers to pursue and conclude his PhD work in Defence and Strategic Studies at the National Defence Academy (NDA). His dissertation on the reportage of the farmer-herder conflicts by the Nigerian Press will continue to provide rich resources to those who want to learn on how to build an inclusive, fair, productive and prosperous society.

• Comrade (Dr) Ayuba Wabba, mni, NPOM is Immediate Past President of the Nigeria Labour Congress and Immediate Past President of the International Trade Union Confederation



Opinion

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By **Rasheed Ojikutu**

ONLY God knew the mind of Flora Shaw and her reason for christening our country as “Nigeria.” Whatever the situation may be the name has come to stay and it is synonymous with a lot of indelible prints on the footprint of the sand of the chronology of mankind.

Shaw who was a British journalist and writer in the late 19th century worked with The Times of London coined the name “Nigeria” in an article published in 1897. It is widely assumed that the name was derived from the Niger River. According to literature “Nigeria” may have been a convenient way of referring to “Niger area” or the British territories around the River Niger. She later married Lord Lugard who became the Governor General of Nigeria after the amalgamation in 1914. The question is “what has become of the country a century and 12 years after?”. True to expectation, the name stuck to the chest of the country like rubber glued with adhesive called “Quick-Fix” but not without its challenges.

Today, most Nigerians do not realize that the country is not just a geographical expression nor is it a mere lines drawn on a colonial map. That it is not just a collection of states, languages, and ethnic nationalities but a living idea, a shared struggle and a restless dream.

For many Nigerians today, the dream of being Nigerian feels distant and that is the reason why citizens speak about Nigeria in homes, offices, markets, churches, mosques, motor parks, and online spaces, with tone often laden with frustration, criticism, mockery, despair, and sometimes ridicule in ways that reveal a deep crisis of confidence.

The title of this article, namely, “I pray for Nigeria” is not just an expression to our creator for divine intervention. It is a statement based on profound concern for the overall well-being of the country. It is an admission that something is amiss and that we seem to feel powerless to fix it. It is also, sometimes, a subtle resignation and an indication that many Nigerian citizens have transferred responsibility for national transformation from civic action to divine intervention.

Across different societal strata, there is a pervasive belief that Nigeria cannot work. From agitation about of electricity to jokes about governance, from frustration with public institutions to cynicism about elections, many Nigerians speak of their country as if it were destroyed and out-rightly irreparable. In everyday discussion, it has become the norm to come across, phrases such as “This is the worst country in the world”, “This country cannot change”, “Nothing works here,” “In a more civilized society”, and “Only in Nigeria”. These statements may seem harmless, but as they are encored constantly, they shape collective psychology.

Ridiculing the country has become to many Nigerians, a coping mechanism. When there is no electricity, when roads are bad, when infrastructures don’t work or when they are unavailable, we laugh. When policies fail, we create memes. When corruption scandals break, we circulate sarcastic comments. Humor has long been a powerful tool in Nigerian culture, but increasingly it has become a shield against disappointment. We mock the country as a way of expressing pain. Yet, in doing so, we may also be reinforcing hopelessness. In the lingo of the Afro Beat Maestro , “ we are suffering and smiling”

There is the emergence of a troubling pattern in the life of our people whereby Nigerians often speak more proudly and cherish other nations than their own. We celebrate anything that is foreign. We value foreign systems, foreign universities, foreign governments, and foreign passports. We compare Nigeria in a usually unfavorable manner with other countries. This comparison is entirely unjustified because there are real governance challenges

By **Ebun-Olu Adegboruwa**

Ingredients of Offence of Kidnapping

THE prosecution discharges its burden of proving the offence of kidnapping beyond reasonable doubt when the evidence adduced demonstrates the unlawful taking of the victim, against his or her wish. In order for the prosecution to succeed, it has to prove the following facts beyond reasonable doubt: (a) that the victim was seized and taken away by the accused person; and (b) that the victim was taken away against his consent or will; and (c) that the victim was taken away without lawful excuse or that the act was carried out without lawful justification.

The offence of kidnapping is complete when the victim is carried away against his wish. Therefore, the essential elements coalesce around the non-consensual deprivation of liberty through the physical removal of the person from his or her chosen location. The specific intention of the perpetrator is not a necessary element for the completion of the *actus reus* of kidnapping in all its forms. In the instant case, the kidnappers were intercepted by law enforcement officers before reaching their intended destination to demand ransom. Therefore, the prosecution was not required to prove an actual ransom demand in the light of the disruption of the crime by the police. The essential elements of kidnapping were sufficiently established beyond reasonable doubt. **The Standard of Proof of Crime and Meaning of Proof Beyond Reasonable Doubt:**

For the prosecution to establish the guilt of an

accused person, evidence must be led to prove such guilt beyond reasonable doubt. Although proof beyond reasonable doubt does not mean proof beyond all doubt or all shadow of doubt, it means the prosecution must establish the guilt of the accused person with convincing, compelling and conclusive evidence.

How to Prove Criminal Intention:

A defendant’s intention can be inferred from his conduct, surrounding circumstances and intervening events within which he acts. It is from the manifestation of his conduct that his intention can be ascertained. The most direct and compelling avenue for establishing intention lies in the individual’s own articulation. A voluntary confession, freely and unequivocally made, wherein the defendant explicitly declares his purpose, offers the clearest insight into his state of mind at the material time. However, such explicit admissions are infrequent occurrences. In the instant case, on a community consideration of the appellant’s conduct, coupled with the entire circumstances of the case as well as the events leading to the same, the making of the inference from his obvious conduct could not be speculative so as to cast any doubt on his intention. The appellant’s intention was in tandem with the particular “for purposes of payment of ransom kidnaps and takes another person hostage”.

I Pray For Nigeria

in every country of the world. However, when comparison turns into permanent self-condemnation, it erodes national self-belief and deflate positive self evaluation.

The crisis of confidence manifests in several ways. First, there is the “exit mentality.” For many young Nigerians, the ultimate dream is not to build Nigeria but to leave it. The popular expression “japa” captures this mindset . There is a widespread desire to emigrate in search of stability and opportunity even if such “utopia” is rarely available in those places. While migration is a legitimate personal choice, when it becomes a national obsession, it signals a deep loss of faith in the future.

Also, there is deep institutional distrust in Nigeria. Many Nigerians assume that there is corruption in public offices even before evidence emerges. Elections are viewed with suspicion. Government announcements are greeted with skepticism. Public officials are presumed guilty in the court of public opinion. Although accountability is necessary in public offices yet, blanket distrust can weaken civic engagement and reduce constructive participation.

The media plays a powerful role in shaping these perceptions because traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and television often prioritize sensational headlines. Negative news attracts more public attention. Hence, stories of tragedies, crime, corruption, and failure dominate front pages and prime-time broadcasts whereas positive developments, innovations, reforms, local successes rarely receive far less prominence. Over time, this imbalance creates a narrative that Nigeria is defined solely by dysfunction.

Investigative journalism is essential in a democracy, and exposing wrongdoing is a noble duty but, when coverage disproportionately emphasizes failure without equal attention to progress, the national mood becomes distorted while citizens become disoriented. Hence, people begin to internalize a one-dimensional image of their country.

In this regard, the role of social media is even more negatively complex. Platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp have democratized expression to the extent that every citizen is now a commentator and those who have no sensible words to share hold the megaphone. While this has amplified important voices, it has also accelerated negativity. Viral content often rewards outrage, sarcasm, and exaggeration. Balanced analysis rarely trends; dramatic criticism thrives.

Social media algorithms favor engagement, and nothing engages like anger. As a result, narratives of collapse spread faster than stories of resilience. Memes that mock Nigeria circulate widely. Satirical videos ridiculing leaders gain millions of views. Hashtags that predict doom trend repeatedly. The digital environment can create an echo chamber in which pessimism feels universal, even when reality is more nuanced.

A major consequence of social media is misinformation. False statistics, edited videos, and unverified claims are shared rapidly. In moments of crisis, rumors spread faster than facts. This fuels panic, deepens distrust, and reinforces the belief that Nigeria is perpetually in chaos and therefore unstable.

Yet, it is important ponder wether constant condemnation help? Criticism is necessary in any democracy, but there is a difference between constructive criticism and destructive cynicism. Constructive criticism seeks reform; destructive cynicism assumes that reform is impossible. The former energizes citizens; the latter paralyzes them.

Ironically, Nigerians themselves are globally admired for resilience, creativity, and enterprise. Nigerian professionals excel abroad. Nigerian entrepreneurs innovate under challenging con-

ditions. Nigerian artists, musicians, and writers command global audiences. This suggests that the problem is not a lack of talent but a crisis of collective confidence and systemic coordination.

To improve this situation, several steps are necessary. First, citizens must reclaim balanced patriotism. Patriotism does not mean blind loyalty or silence in the face of injustice. It means loving one’s country enough to improve it, not merely insult it. It means acknowledging problems while also recognizing progress.

Second, media organizations should consciously highlight solutions alongside problems. “Solutions journalism” focuses on responses to challenges rather than only the challenges themselves. When citizens see examples of effective governance at local levels, successful community initiatives, or innovative startups solving national problems, it broadens imagination.

Third, digital literacy must be strengthened. Citizens need tools to verify information, identify misinformation, and engage respectfully online. Schools, civil society groups, and media organizations can play a role in promoting responsible digital engagement.

Fourth, leaders must rebuild trust through transparency and accountability. Confidence cannot be commanded; it must be earned. Clear communication, consistent policy implementation, and visible consequences for corruption are essential. When institutions function predictably, public cynicism reduces.

Fifth, the education system should cultivate civic responsibility. Young Nigerians must be taught not only to pass examinations but to understand governance, citizenship, and the power of participation. When citizens feel ownership of their country, they are less likely to ridicule it and more likely to defend and improve it.

Finally, Nigerians must examine the language they use about their country. Words matter. Repeated declarations that “Nigeria is finished” shape national psychology. Instead, we can say, “Nigeria has challenges, but we can solve them.” This subtle shift changes orientation from despair to possibility.

“I pray for Nigeria” should not be a slogan of surrender. It should be a commitment to action. Prayer, for those who believe, must be accompanied by participation. For those who do not frame their hope in religious terms, the sentiment remains valid: we must care deeply about our national trajectory.

Nigeria’s story is still being written. It is a young nation in historical terms, navigating complex ethnic, economic, and political realities. The frustrations are real. The disappointments are genuine. But ridicule cannot be the foundation of renewal.

To pray for Nigeria is to hope for Nigeria. To hope for Nigeria is to work for Nigeria. And to work for Nigeria requires confidence not blind optimism, but determined belief that transformation is possible.

The future of Nigeria will not be shaped only by presidents, governors, or legislators. It will be shaped by everyday conversations, by media narratives, by online discourse, and by the collective mindset of its citizens. If Nigerians begin to speak of their country with critical honesty yet constructive hope, the psychological shift alone could be powerful.

In the end, the question is not whether Nigeria has problems. Of course, it does. The question is whether Nigerians will allow those problems to define their identity permanently. A nation mocked relentlessly by its own citizens struggles to inspire unity. But a nation challenged passionately by citizens who still believe in its promise can rise.

I pray for Nigeria, not as an escape from responsibility, but as an affirmation of faith in possibility. May that prayer be matched with courage, integrity, and action. May it inspire a new language of hope. And may Nigeria become not a punch line, but a testament to resilience and renewal.

• *Rasheed Ojikutu is Professor of Statistics (rtd), University of Lagos*

The Evil Of Kidnapping: Abanobi V The State (2)

The Proper Forum for Attack on Credibility of Witness:

The proper forum for an assault on the credibility of a witness is at the trial court, during the heat of the proceedings, and not in a written brief presented at an appellate court. In the instant case, despite the opportunity afforded, the appellant failed to meaningfully challenge the testimony of PW2. Under cross-examination, she remained steadfast in her assertion that she identified the appellant by the illumination provided by flashlights. The appellant’s attempt to discredit her in his brief of argument was a wrong tactic.

How to Establish Inconsistency in Evidence of Witness:

Inconsistency in evidence can only be established by comparing multiple pieces of evidence given by the same witness. In the instant case, the appellant contended that PW2’s testimony, relied upon by the trial court, was inconsistent. However, PW2’s extra-judicial statement, which the respondent sought to tender, was objected to by the appellant and consequently marked as rejected at the trial court. So, there was no second version of PW2’s statement on record against which her testimony before the trial court could be evaluated for contradictions. Thus, the appellant’s claim that PW2’s testimony was inconsistent lacked foundation.

The Effect of Document Marked Rejected:

Once a document is marked as rejected, it remains inadmissible for all purposes within the same trial and its defect cannot be cured in that proceeding.

The Primary Duty of Trial Court to Evaluate Evidence and Ascribe Probative Value Thereto:

A trial court, which has the opportunity to observe the demeanour of witnesses, is best suited to evaluate their credibility and ascribe probative value to their testimony. In the instant case, the trial court rightly held that the prosecution proved its case beyond reasonable doubt on the strength of PW2’s eyewitness account and the testimony of PW4, who rescued the victim from the trunk of the Peugeot 406 wagon.

Notable Pronouncement:

On Serious Nature and Effect of Kidnapping the Old and Elderly and Duty on Court to Protect the Vulnerable, Uphold the Law and Preserve Values of Nigerian Society: *Per Okoro, J.S.C. at page 610, paras. A-D:* “Kidnapping, in any form, is a heinous offence, but the targeting of a 98-year-old woman, frail and vulnerable, for the purposes of ransom, reveals a depth of depravity that is shocking to the conscience.

• *Ebun-Olu Adegboruwa is a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN)*

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L-R: Pasquale Fiore and Farooq Oreagba



Pasquale Fiore



L-R: Alex Koothoar, Patrick Koshoni



L-R: Sam Azoka, Pasquale Fiore, Mike Epelle, Pierre Edde



Obehi Nelson and The Serenade Band



L-R: Sam Azoka, Mike Epelle, Pasquale Fiore, Jinhwan Lee, Pierre Edde, Paolo Geri, Makram Khadij, Mike Heli



L-R: Boyin, Tiany Jack, Cynthia Patrick, Valerie



L-R: Kola Omotosho, Noble Igwe and Sheggz Olusemo



L-R: Farooq Oreagba and Noble Igwe



L-R: Farooq Oreagba and Pasquale Fiore



L-R: Jinhwan Lee and Pasquale Fiore



L-R (Sitting): Jinsung Park, Ingi Song, Jinhwan Lee (MD), Omolola Odunsi.



L-R: Andrea Schirinzi, Jinjwan Lee, Bashiru Ibrahim, Pasquale Fiore, Mike Epelle, Paolo Geri, Makram Khadij, Daniele Marini, George Al Dairy



L-R: Onyeka Precious, Mohamed Saady, George Al Dairy, Pasquale Fiore, Maria Ugorji, Makram Khadij, Mike Epelle, Stephen Job

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Labiran Mayowa:

‘As Art Director, I Let Story’s Core Emotion Dictate Palette, Texture’

By Gregory Austin Nwakunor

WITH a portfolio ranging from daily soaps like *Tinsel* to film-noir style projects like *Oloibiri*, Labiran Mayowa has designed her working approach to match the varied emotional tones of these projects.

She lets the story’s core emotion dictate the palette, texture, and lighting. “For *Tinsel*, I lean into bright, high-key, clean aesthetics to support its energetic, everyday drama while in *Oloibiri*, I shift to desaturated tones, deep shadows, and gritty textures to amplify tension and melancholy. The design becomes a silent translator—warm and open for soap, cold and constrained for dark, dramatic storytelling,” Labiran Mayowa muses.

Her work on *Wura* brought a distinct, luxurious aesthetic to the screen. What was the core visual concept she wanted to establish, and how did she execute it?

“The core concept was ‘wealth as a mask.’ I wanted every room to feel desirable but cold—like you’d love to live there but sense something’s wrong. I executed it by pairing warm, rich materials with hard, sharp lighting and slightly oversized furniture. The space doesn’t hug you; it judges you,” she reveals.

Hotel Majestic and *Hush* were intense drama series, and she tried to maintain a consistent visual language over hundreds of episodes. “I create a visual rulebook that everyone breathes. Fixed colour families for each character, a short list of approved textures, and strict prop categories. Then I assign ‘keepers’ on set whose only job is continuity. After episode 50, memory fails—systems don’t.”

Colore is a French series. How did art directing for an international audience differ from your experience with Nigerian TV and film?

“The biggest difference was pacing of visual information. French audiences are comfortable with stillness and negative space. Nigerian storytelling often wants energy in every frame. I had to learn to hold back—to let one meaningful object sit alone and breathe. That was harder than adding more. Still I let the Nigerian in me come out once in a while,” she quips.

With films such as *Kambili* and *Alakada* (comedies) versus *Zero Hour* (thriller), she changed her design process to create a good visual language. She says, “for comedy, I ask ‘what can go slightly wrong in the background?’ A tilted picture, a clashing pattern, a prop that shouldn’t be there. For drama, I ask ‘what’s hidden?’ My color palette expands for comedy and contracts for drama. Comedy is generous; drama is withholding.”

Oloibiri required a specific gritty, authentic look. Mayowa had to make decay earned, not decorated. “You can’t just throw dirt on new walls. We had to layer grime—water stains, rust, smoke damage—in a specific order that told time. The hardest part was stopping myself from over-doing it. Authentic grit has restraint,” she says.

Mayowa always tries to reflect a character’s inner life. In *Conversations in Transit* and *This Lady Called Life*, her characters feel intimate. She shrinks the world using minimal objects.

“Fewer objects, softer edges, and everything placed within arm’s reach of the character. If she’s lonely, her space has one chair, one cup, one light. If she’s hiding, there are layers—curtains, half-open doors, things stored away. The set becomes her subconscious, she says.

Her most rewarding challenge, and why?

“*Mystic River* was my most rewarding challenge, because we built the entire set in a forest and had to turn limited living space into sets nature itself was our set. The story is heavy—grief, suspicion, quiet rage—and the temptation was to make the sets feel as dark as the emotions. But I learned that true tension lives in what you “don’t” show. I designed spaces that felt almost too normal: warm kitchens, tidy living rooms, ordinary streets. The horror wasn’t in the walls—it was in how those normal spaces

suddenly felt wrong when a character walked through them carrying a secret. The challenge was trusting the audience to feel the unease without me painting it onto every surface. That project taught me that less isn’t just more—sometimes less is everything.”

She doesn’t research from a distance. She travels, sits and listens. She hires local advisors who laugh when she gets it wrong. “And I build a “never” list—patterns, colors, objects that would never appear in that real-world context. Authenticity isn’t accuracy; it’s avoiding the fake note,” Mayowa reflects.

In *Tauranin Zamani*, she led the team to meet the deadline. “We built the set in a hotel reception we had limited time and we had to make sure nothing was damaged I stripped every non-essential, pre-built modular walls we could reconfigure, and had the team paint while assembling. It was tough but it turned out really good.”

When she receives a script, she first thinks of the scene inside a character’s home. How do they live when no one’s watching? That single tells me their relationship with comfort, control, and truth. Everything else flows from there.”

To translate a writer’s words into a detailed mood board for the director and DOP, she finds four anchors: one for colour, one for texture, one for light quality, and one for emotional temperature. “Then I find real-world photographs—never other films. I present no more than 15 images. If they don’t see it by then, I haven’t understood them yet,” she says confidently.

For colour grading of the sets, particularly when creating a signature look, as she did did

for *Wura*, she paints 2x2 foot boards in candidate colours and bring them to the actual location under the actual lighting plan. Then she shifts them in-camera with the DOP before building.

“For *Wura*, we landed on a gold that reads warm on skin but cool on walls—luxury without sleepiness.”

To balance aesthetics with functionality—ensuring a set looks good, and also allows for camera movement and actor comfort, she physically walks every camera path and actor mark. “If a lens hits a wall or an actor can’t sit naturally, the design fails. I’ve learned to love negative space—emptiness looks like intention, not budget.”

On props, she assign every one a job: reveal character, advance plot, or create mood. “If it doesn’t do at least one, it’s out. Then I remove one more. A cluttered set tells me the designer

To translate a writer’s words into a detailed mood board for the director and DOP, she finds four anchors: one for colour, one for texture, one for light quality, and one for emotional temperature. “Then I find real-world photographs—never other films. I present no more than 15 images. If they don’t see it by then, I haven’t understood them yet,” she says confidently.



Mayowa

was insecure.”

Early on, she thought more detail meant more realism. Now she knowd that what you leave out is just as loud as what you put in. “I used to decorate. Now I edit.”

She incorporates sustainable or cost-effective practices into her set construction such that she rents everything that isn’t nailed down. She builds sets to break flat and store small. She keeps warehouse inventory of reusable walls and dressings.”

“I’ve become ruthless about asking “do we need to build this, or can we find it?” She often asks.

She admires Stuart Craig who showed her that nothing is impossible; locally, Pat Nebo showed her that Nigerian stories deserve global craft. “I don’t copy them,” she says, “I steal their questions.”

In an era of digital enhancement, how does she decide between physical set construction and computer-generated imagery? She answers, “If an actor touches it, breathes on it, or leans against it—build it. If it’s background, sky, or impossible scale—CGI. But I fight for practical every time. Actors act better in real rooms. Physics matters.”

A ‘self-motivated professional,’ she keeps her creative passion high when working on back-to-back, high-pressure projects. “I protect one small thing per project that’s just for me—a hidden detail, a color no one else notices. That secret keeps me curious. Also, I eat Lol. Burnout or hungry isn’t a badge of honour,” she laughs.

How does she manage the art department team—props, set designers, painters—to ensure everyone adheres to the design concept? Mayowa smiles, she suddenly breathes: “Morning huddles, written briefs with reference images, and a wall of “approved vs rejected.” I also make sure everyone knows the story, not just their task. When a painter knows why a wall is sad, they paint differently.”

At a time she had to manage a significant budget cut without compromising the visual quality of the project. She notes, “we lost 40 per cent of building budget three days into building. I swapped two custom rooms for one versatile set dressed three ways, used lighting to hide cheaper materials, and begged a rental house for last-minute favours. The director never knew. The audience saw nothing missing.”

On building a strong, trusting relationship with a new director or Director of Photography, she has this to say, “I ask them to show me their favorite frame from any film and tell me why. Then I build a small test set based on that conversation—no words, just work. Trust isn’t talked into existence; it’s built in miniature.”

How does she handle creative differences when the director’s vision clashes with hers?

She answers: “I build their version first—quickly, cheaply. Nine times out of ten, they see the problem themselves. On the tenth time, I ask “what’s the story need, not what do we prefer?” The story is the boss.”

With a goal to ‘contribute effectively to corporate objectives, she aligns her creative vision with the production’s overall financial goals. She asks questions before she designs anything. And to debunk the most common misconception about an art director, she says, “we’re just nicer decorators. No—we’re storytellers who work in three dimensions. A writer uses words; we use walls. A bad art director makes pretty rooms. A good art director makes you feel something before anyone speaks.”

On her experience working on *Wura*, she confesses, *Wura* is the first time she had to make evil feel like a promotion. “Every design choice asked: “What would power look like if it never had to apologize?” The gold, the scale, the stillness—it all said “I’ve won.” That was thrilling and uncomfortable. I loved every second the hardest fun I have ever had.”

Broadcast Content Across Borders

Compiled by Shaibu Hussein

Cannes Names Jury For Immersive Competition

THE Jury of the 2026 edition of Cannes Film Festival, which opened on May 12 and will run until May 23 have been named. The Immersive Competition Jury will be chaired by Franco-Spanish artistic director, Blanca Li, who will be joined by French director, Céline Tricart, Dutch composer and director, Michel van der Aa, English director and producer, Mary Matheson, and Taiwanese director, Hsin-Chien Huang. Dedicated to honouring the year's most innovative storytelling, the jury will present the Best Immersive Work award on May 21, at the Plage des Palmes. Franco-Spanish choreographer, dancer, actress, and filmmaker, the immersive competition jury president, Li, is a major figure on the contemporary arts scene, known for her bold and innovative approach. She moved to New York at the age of 17 to study with Martha Graham, where she discovered hip-hop before returning to Europe, where she founded her contemporary dance company in 1992. Her creations tour worldwide. She choreographs and stages ballets, operas, and musicals, collaborates with leading figures in fashion, film, and music, has directed three feature films. In 2019, she was elected to the Academy of Fine Arts. She directed Teatros del Canal in Madrid, then chaired La Villette until December 2025. She created *Le Bal de Paris*, which won the Best VR Experience Lion at the Venice Film Festival (2021), and *L Ombre* at IRCAM, a mixed-reality performance selected in competition at the Venice Film Festival (2025). She is currently developing an ambitious virtual cultural platform project. The festival ends on May 23.

Nigerian Filmmakers Secure Slots in Durban FilmMart selection

THIRTY-SIX African film projects including three from Nigeria have been selected for

the 17th Durban FilmMart Africa's leading film finance and co-production market that will hold from October 9 to 12 in Durban, South Africa. The market will present an array of projects, including eight animation, 10 fiction features, 10 documentary features and seven series projects in development at the Pitch and Finance Forum alongside a robust industry programme which will focus on current trends, innovations, and challenges faced by the industry. "Our stories are our voices; they represent our culture, our history, our joy, our pain and our victories. DFM is honoured to present a unique selection of African stories that will add to the successes that have gone before," says Magdalene Reddy, DFM director. "We look forward to following the journey of these projects for years to come, as we do with all our project alumni." The 36 selected projects will be given the opportunity to prepare for their participation at DFM with online one-on-one mentorship by leading industry experts to ensure that they are collabora-

tors and investor-ready when they get to Durban for the in-person pitch. Also, the eight animation projects will receive additional support from industry experts through participation in the Digital Lab Africa (DLA) programme presented by DFM partner, Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct. The selected projects include *Hadu: The Series*, Produced by Damilola Solesi and directed by Precious Anih (Nigeria), *JUJU SOCCER*, produced by Oge Obasi, Somto Ajuluchukwu and directed by C.J Obasi (Nigeria), and *The Boy Who Spoke Static*, produced by Mathew Cerf and directed by The Agbajowo Collective (Nigeria). Others are *Beast Seeker* as Produced by Danielle Retief and director by Robyn Viljoen (South Africa), *Nerve*, Produced by Raffaella Delle Donne, coproduced by Renee Van Reenen and directed by Tshepo Moche (South Africa), *A touch of Paradise*, produced by Sarra Ben Hassen and directed by Houcem Slouli (Tunisia) and the fiction film *Fairway to Freedom*, produced by Tarina Patel and

directed by Jahmil Qubeka (South Africa). More information on this year's theme can be found on the Durban FilmMart Institutes website, <https://durbanfilmmart.co.za/>
New Dates Announced For Pitcher 2026 Editions

PITCHER Festival, Africa's premier celebration of creativity across marketing, advertising, digital, media, PR, and entertainment, has announced new dates for its 2026 edition following an extension of the deadline for Pitcher Awards entries due to overwhelming popular demand. The programme, originally scheduled for May 14 to 16, will now hold from May 28 to 30, 2026 to accommodate the increased volume of submissions. The full 2026 programme schedule will launch on Monday, 18 May on the Pitcher Festival website and will be open for registration. The updated programme will open on May 28 with the announcement of the Pitcher Awards 2026 shortlist, setting the tone for three days of insight, inspiration, and celebration. The programme will feature a rich lineup of online sessions, including thought-provoking conversations from Pitcher Talks and a comprehensive review of activities from the Young Pitcher Academy and Future Pitcher Academy during the *Building the Future* programme. It will also include an in-depth look at this year's entries and judging process through *Inside the Jury Room*, offering rare access to jury perspectives and standout work from across the continent. The final rounds of both the Young Pitcher Competition and the Future Pitcher Competition will take place during the three-day programme, showcasing the next generation of African creative talent. The event will conclude with the highly anticipated *Pitcher Awards Show*, where top winners and special award honourees will be announced, followed by the publication of the full winners list on the Pitcher Festival website.



Blanca Li

Nnamdi Ndu

Magdalene Reddy

In Audacity, Maiyanga Searches For An Ideal Society

From Bridget Chiedu Onochie, Abuja

BEYOND education and entertainment, another crucial function of a playwright is to birth an ideal society. While this may appear an illusion, an artist remains resolved in his drive to expose the ills of the society with a view to sensitizing the people against actions inimical to personal and national development.

Audacity, a four-Act (Movement) play authored by Dr Alexius A. Maiyanga, attempts to highlight the rot in Nigerian society, focusing majorly on some institutions of government.

The alarming state of docility, inertia, corruption, mismanagement of public time and resources in the fictitious Obochi nation are vividly captured by a non-conformist character – Aku, who is not just a radical but a social reformer, resilient and

resolute in his advocacy for a change.

However, to give insight into the sequent of events, the author opens each Movement with excerpts from the world's influential people, including Williams Shakespeare, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr and a quote from *Assassin's Creed*.

For instance, the first Movement opens with a quote from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. The playwright, through the main character, Aku, boasted that "Cowards die many times before their deaths but valiant never taste of death but once", a statement that best describes the near suicide mission he personally chooses to undertake.

For an average student of Epic Theatre propounded by the highly influential German Playwright, Bertolt Brecht, the role of introduction at the opening of each Movement, which serves same purpose as that of a narrator in a stage performance goes beyond a bird's-eye view of the coming events. Its aim is to eradicate suspense, surprises or fear and replace same with the audience critical think, having been made aware of coming actions. The author engages the tool to stabilise the minds of his audience to make a good judgment of his message, a method that was born out of the believe that theatre should not be a place for emotional outburst.

Going through the play, one concludes from the author's description that Aku is actually not financially influential but intellectually enthusiastic endowed judging from the volumes of books about Africa and Europe that takes more space than furniture in his one-room apartment.

Agitated by regular news of police brutality, Aku decides to expose some corrupt, unpatriotic government officials through direct confrontation.

From the conversation that ensues between him and his friend, Adoji, he desires to create a new world of sanity, "where the executives will not demand for 10 per cent gratification for contracts awarded to people, where roadblocks will not turn into legalised tolling points, where honourables and not horrible and where distinguished are not extinguishers."

The character shares optimism that sacking a decayed system through the power of pen and non-violent revolution is possible.

He says: "No! Life cannot just go on like that. That is the reason I am thinking of creating a new world – a world of sanity. I feel like picking a woman and a man from each tribe of this land and forming a new world."

In his curiosity, Aku decides to study the police protection strategies by going to accost them in a deserted make-shift market street. Ironically, his journey only reveals the plight of an

average police officer through a conversation among officers Igagwu, Okwu and Okwo.

Their interactions centre on issues of poor welfare, equipment deficit and nepotism, and how they contribute largely to extortion and other criminal activities perpetrated by some officers.

"You see, after the next two years, I will retire to my village. I have been in this service for onward of 30 years and the highest I have reached is a mere Sergeant", said Igahwu.

"Me, I no go waste time for police too much. I just de pray make dem post me go road block. If I dey there for two years, I go make money and retire to start trade", replied Okwu.

While the author frowns at the nefarious activities of some police officers, he objectively x-rays the failure of the government to build a viable governance structure that encourages efficiency and maintains workers' integrity.

Unfortunately for Aku, his first encounter in his search for sanity was met with resistance as he was beaten to a state of unconsciousness for wondering at odd hours.

Yet, he continues his quest at a National Provident Fund to process his late father's file, where he equally encounters a lady typist typical of Nigerian civil servant, complaisant to duty and rude.

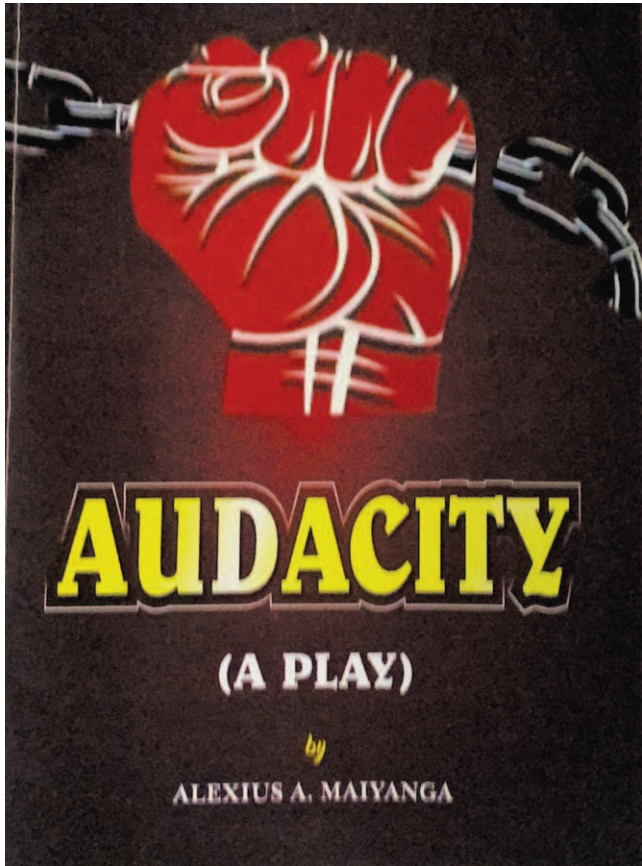
Rather than sanctioned for her unruly conduct, Aku was tagged a lunatic for insisting that the workers adopt the right attitude to work.

In another development, Aku observes another failure of the society at the convocation ceremony of a University of Technology, where the Vice Chancellor struggles with a malfunctioning public address system. Again, Aku blames the embarrassment on both the school authority and students, for failing to live up to expectations in their distinct positions.

The final Movement presents the true life of a politician, who attempts to frustrating the system. He fails due to the resistant power of Aku's pen, an indication that change is possible if citizens can hold politicians accountable. The fact that his assignation attempt on Aku fails shows that evil doesn't prevail over justice and truth.

Although the playwright leaves the resolution open to readers, there are indications that Aku may not have succeeded in his journey to birth a new dawn but his bravery and survival amidst threat is the author's call for collective actions against socio-political ills.

Aku escapes with a new manuscript of his coming publication - *Political Sanity and the Third World*. Whether the title is fictitious or a peep into the author's next effort, only the future can tell.



Lagos Island Council Exceeds 2026 Federal Allocation Target In 3 Months

By Gbenga Salau

LAGOS Island Local Council has surpassed its projected federal allocation for the 12 months of 2026 in just three months of January to March. Out of the N6.51bn federal allocation the local council projected to fund its 2026 budget, Lagos Island Local Council has already got N7.63bn from statutory federal allocation between January and March alone, according to Budgit.

This is despite for its 2026 budget, federal allocation revenue has increased by 818.72 per cent in the last two years, from N462.57m in 2024 to N4.24bn in 2025. Yet, the local council's projected Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) for 2026 is just N638m out of a N16.62bn budget.

However, a breakdown of the council's 2026 budget of N16.62 billion by Budgit also revealed that it is expecting N6.51 billion as statutory federal allocation, N9.31 billion as Value Added Tax (VAT), N638million as IGR and N150 million as state coordinated revenue.

A breakdown of the council's 2026 N16.62

• Earns N7.63bn FAAC In Q1, Projects Just N638m IGR For 2026

billion expenditure revealed that N2.57 billion was allocated for personnel cost, N400 million for pension, N6.71 billion

for overhead, N6.93 billion as capital expenditure.

Worthy to mention is that between January and December 2025 alone, Lagos Island Council received a total of N21.14bn in federal allocations.

In its 2025 budget, the Lagos Island Local Council projected N2.05 billion as statutory federal revenue,

N11.11 billion as value added tax, other FAAC related allocation N168.47, IGR N338 million, and state coordinated revenue N150 million.

The revenue performance however revealed that as statutory federal allocation, the council got N4.24 billion; for Value Added Tax it got N5.52 billion; it generated N246.59 million as IGR, and got N80.5 as state coordinated revenue and N10million as grant.



Taiwo Oyekan



Lagos Island council office complex

Thousands Storm Somolu As Orekoya Declares For Second Term

By Gbenga Salau

THOUSANDS of residents, party supporters and political stakeholders on Thursday thronged Oke Meta Memorial Primary School, Somolu, Lagos, as the lawmaker representing Somolu Constituency I in the Lagos State House of Assembly, Abiodun Orekoya, formally declared his intention to seek re-election in 2027.

The event, which attracted a large crowd from different parts of the constituency, turned into a public show of support for the All Progressives Congress (APC) chieftain, whose first term in office, some residents stated, has been marked by legislative interventions, youth-focused programmes and constituency projects.

Addressing supporters at the gathering, Orekoya said his decision to seek another term was driven by the need to consolidate on developmental initiatives already

started within the constituency.

He urged residents to sustain their support for his administration, promising to intensify efforts in the areas of education, empowerment, youth development and infrastructural renewal if returned to office.

"We have started a journey of growth and development in Somolu, and there is still more work to be done. With your continued support, we will build on the achievements already recorded," he said.

Orekoya, who currently chairs the House Committee on Youth and Social Development, said he has played active roles in several legislative processes at the Assembly.

He listed his legislative contributions to include the Lagos State Administration of Civil Justice Bill 2023, the Local Government Administration Bill 2024, and the Community Development Association

Bill 2024.

In the education sector, the lawmaker said he has facilitated bursaries for 147 students, while four others reportedly secured full scholarships through his intervention. According to him, he also distributed 250 General Certificate Examination (GCE) forms and 150 Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) forms to students across the constituency.

He stated that his empowerment initiatives have equally impacted several residents, with over 341 constituents benefitting from business grants, vocational tools and financial support aimed at encouraging small-scale enterprise development. In addition, 29 individuals were assisted in securing employment within the Lagos State public service.

As part of youth engagement efforts, Orekoya said he has sponsored exchange programmes, youth mentorship initiatives, football tournaments and youth-police dialogue sessions targeted at promoting leadership and social inclusion among young people in the constituency.

Residents who spoke at the event described the lawmaker as accessible and community-oriented, noting that road rehabilitation projects facilitated during his tenure had improved movement and commercial activities in parts of Somolu.

Several supporters at the declaration also pledged continued backing for his re-election bid, insisting that his performance in office justified another term in the Assembly.



Permanent Secretary, Public Service Office, Mrs Sunkanmi Oyejobola (left), the Head of Service, Lagos State, Bode Agoro and Kayode Oyekanmi.

Sanwo-Olu Appoints Oyekanmi As New General Manager Of Lagos Television

By Gbenga Salau

LAGOS State Governor, Mr. Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu, has approved the appointment of Mr. Kayode Oyekanmi as the new General Manager of the Lagos State Television (LTV) following the disengagement of the erstwhile General Manager of the station, Mrs. Sola Kosoko.

The Lagos State Head of Service, Mr. Bode Agoro, who presented the appointment letter to Mr. Kayode Oyekanmi at a brief ceremony held in his Office at the Secretariat, Alausa, Ikeja, said the appointment was in recognition of his dedication, diligence and selflessness in the discharge of his duties as a public servant.

Agoro, therefore, expressed confidence in the appointee's capacity to reposition the Lagos Television and wished him a successful and impactful tenure in office. Before his new appointment, Oyekanmi served as Director, Strategy Centre, at the Lagos State Ministry of Information and Strategy, a position he has held since 2022.

Oyekanmi is a seasoned brand communi-

cations practitioner with over three decades of professional experience spanning both the private and public sectors, with expertise in advertising, public relations, and global export services.

He commenced his public service career as a Public Affairs Practitioner on March 1, 2000, with the Lagos State Ministry of Information and Strategy. Oyekanmi, a Lagos State indigene from Isale Eko, Lagos Island, has received several awards in recognition of his dedication, hard work, and commitment to the journalism profession.

He holds a Master's degree in Public Administration (MPA) from the University of Lagos and a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Education from Lagos State University.

He is an active Member of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR). In addition, he is a voracious reader and a passionate lawn tennis player. Oyekanmi also currently serves as the Charter President of the Lagos State Ministry of Information Toastmasters Club.

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM), the Nigerian Council of Registered Insurance Brokers (NCRIB), and the General Public, that:

VENDPOLICIES INSURANCE BROKERS LTD RC No: 7211744

With its registered office at Little Road, Yaba, Ojo, Lagos State
Intends to apply to the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) for a change of name to:

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Dated this 13th Day of May, 2026

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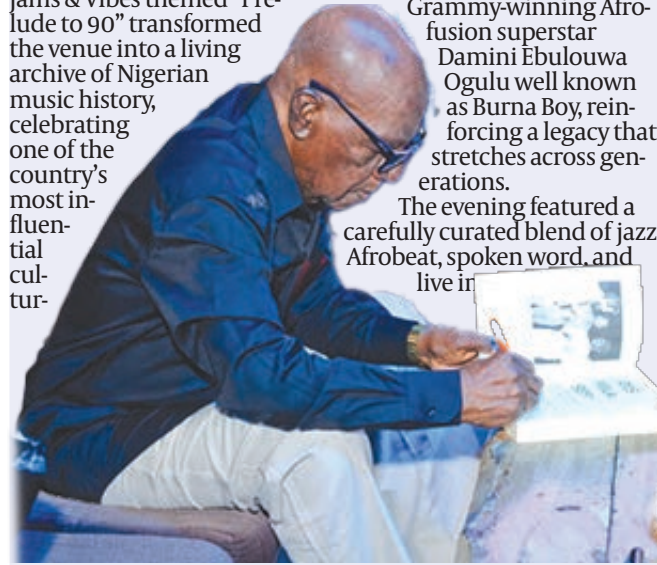
Management

VENDPOLICIES INSURANCE BROKERS LTD

By Daniel Anazia

THE 2026 edition of the Lagos International Jazz Festival (LIJF) delivered an unforgettable celebration of music, memory, and cultural legacy as industry icons, jazz enthusiasts, and creatives gathered to honour veteran broadcaster and music historian, Benson Idonije, ahead of his 90th birthday.

Held on May 2 at Bature Brewery, the special edition of Jams & Vibes themed “Prelude to 90” transformed the venue into a living archive of Nigerian music history, celebrating one of the country’s most influential cultural



Tributes To Nigeria’s Music Critic, Idonije, @90

al figures.

Widely recognised as the first manager of legendary Afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti, Idonije remains a towering voice in documenting the evolution of Nigerian music. Beyond his role in Afrobeat history, he is also grandfather to Grammy-winning Afro-fusion superstar Damini Ebulouwa Ogulu well known as Burna Boy, reinforcing a legacy that stretches across generations.

The evening featured a carefully curated blend of jazz, Afrobeat, spoken word, and live in

strumentation. Headlining the performances was Hifro music proponent Labule and the Agbajoshu Quartet, joined by renowned saxophonist Dotun Bankole, who delivered an immersive musical experience that kept guests captivated.

One of the night’s standout moments came from the seven-year-old Pink Sax Girl, whose confident and dexterous saxophone performance drew admiration from attendees. There was a spoken word performance by ECA and rich African-inspired musical expressions from El-nana-Afrika, while DJs Suns and Cheflon provided nostalgic soundscapes that seamlessly blended memory with rhythm.

Backed by a 13-piece band, Labule delivered an energetic set inspired by the mystique of Lagbaja, sparking curiosity with his signature refrain: “Lagbaja we know, who is Labule?” The atmosphere reached an-

other peak when celebrated Afro-jazz guitarist Kunle Ayo joined the stage at Idonije’s request for an impromptu performance. The spontaneous session soon expanded, with jazz icon Yinka Davies and soulful vocalist Gloria Ibru adding their voices to a rare cross-generational musical moment.

Beyond the performances, heartfelt tributes from long-time colleagues, protégés, school alumni, and admirers painted a portrait of Idonije as more than a broadcaster or music executive, but a mentor, archivist, and quiet architect of Nigeria’s contemporary soundscape.

In his brief but emotional remarks, Idonije reflected on his lifelong passion for broadcasting and paid tribute to Fela Kuti, describing him not only as one of the greatest musicians of all time but also as a dear friend whose legacy remains deeply personal. Responding on behalf of the family, Ronami Ogulu, granddaughter of Idonije and sister to Burna Boy, expressed appreciation to organisers and well-wishers for honouring the music icon.

By Daniel Anazia and Éniola Daniel

MUSIC executive and producer, Michael Collins Ajereh, well known as Don Jazzy, has dismissed long-running claims that his label, Mavin Records, intentionally prioritises certain artistes while sidelining others, insisting that such a strategy will make little business sense for the label.

Speaking during a wide-ranging YouTube conversation with Crea8torium, the Mavin founder pushed back against a recurring narrative that has followed major record labels in Nigeria — accusations that some artistes are deliberately held back while others receive more support and visibility.

According to him, the idea of suppressing an artiste’s growth contradicts the core purpose of signing talent. “The idea that we will have people and not want to prioritise them is not a real

Don Jazzy Debunks Claims Of Label’s Unpronounced ‘Favouritism’, Says No Reason To Sideline Artistes

thing. When we sign artistes, we want to make money from those artists and want those artists to make money for themselves,” he said. The veteran music executive argued that deliberately leaving a signed act inactive would amount to poor business judgment. “It would seem like taking money and locking it away or throwing it away because it doesn’t make sense,” he added.

Addressing concerns on why some Mavin artistes appear less visible or release fewer songs compared to their label mates, Don Jazzy stated that the explanation often lies with the artistes themselves rather than institutional neglect.

“If you see an artiste in Mavin and the artiste only re-

leases one or two songs in a year, just know that it is the artiste that decided that,” he explained.

The Mavin chief attributed the pattern to personal and psychological struggles, particularly self-doubt.

“Most of the time, they actually have imposter syndrome. It’s normal; we are all human beings,” he said.

Don Jazzy’s remarks come amid recurring conversations on social media, particularly within Nigeria’s music space, where allegations of label neglect frequently resurface whenever artistes part ways with record labels or publicly express dissatisfaction with their careers.

Earlier this year, the debate intensified following comments linked to former Mavin artiste, Crayon, after his departure from the label. Claims surrounding unpaid royalties, creative disagreements, and allegations that his “star” had been transferred to another artiste sparked intense online debate and renewed scrutiny of label dynamics.



From Aviation To Art: How Judith Amarachi Built AmyAfrique Into Voice For African Creativity

By David Emokpae

LAGOS-BASED entrepreneur and creative founder, Okpara Judith Amarachi, is redefining what it means to build an art brand in Nigeria with the growing influence of AmyAfrique Art Gallery, a platform she describes not simply as a business, but as “a life and a story of becoming.”

From humble beginnings in Orlu, Imo State, to navigating survival in different cities across Nigeria, Judith’s journey into the art world has been anything but conventional. Before becoming a respected figure in Lagos’ creative scene, she explored several careers including fashion, modeling, and aviation. Speaking about her journey, the founder explained that AmyAfrique was born from years of struggle, reinvention, and personal discovery.

“I don’t want AmyAfrique to be told like a business. I want it to be felt like a life,” she said. Judith revealed that financial

hardship forced her to leave school at a young age, pushing her into early hustle and survival jobs. She sold tickets for entertainment shows, worked long nights, and later moved to Lagos in 2013 in search of opportunities.

In Lagos, she ventured into runway modeling, appearing in fashion shows and music videos, before later moving into fashion entrepreneurship. She also pursued a career in aviation and trained as an air hostess for the HS125 private jet. Although she earned certifications and licenses, she struggled to break fully into the industry due to limited connections.

According to her, several business attempts failed along the way, including a fashion venture

she started with her sister. She later shifted into clothing sales before eventually returning to aviation, where she spent years working in the private jet space.

However, she said her life changed unexpectedly during a casual visit to an art gallery in Lagos.

“I walked into the gallery and something inside me woke up. That moment changed everything for me,” she recalled.

Inspired by the experience, Judith began studying art deeply, connecting with artists, researching the industry, and travelling abroad to learn more about global art culture. With guidance from creatives like Olah Henry, she slowly built the foundation for what would later become AmyAfrique Art Gallery.



The gallery officially opened in 2021 with only a few artworks and support from close friends who became her first buyers. Over time, the platform began attracting collectors, art lovers, and growing public attention.

Today, AmyAfrique has evolved beyond paintings into sculptures and broader artistic expressions celebrating African heritage and storytelling. Judith recently recorded a major breakthrough after selling her first sculpture for 10 million, a moment she described as emotional proof that her years of persistence were finally paying off.

How Ekene Smith Pulled Off Laff Supper

By Sunday Aikulola

FAST-rising Nigerian comedian, Ekene Smith had his much-anticipated comedy event, Laff Supper with Ekene Smith & The 12 Disciples, held successfully on Easter Monday, at the Trinity House, Zion Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos, where it attracted a large audience of families, entertainment enthusiasts, and supporters of the comedy industry.

The event, which was organised by the Ekene Smith Adigwu Youth Foundation, with support of Trinity House, was designed not only as a platform for premium comedy, but also as an avenue to celebrate the Easter with families and give back to the community.

Meanwhile, Ekene Smith has revealed his plans for the next edition of the “Laff Supper.” He said the event would hold on Easter Monday 2027 in Nigeria and also in the United Kingdom (UK).

The show featured an array of established comedians, referred to as “the 12 Disciples,” including Efe Warri Boy, MC Shaggi, ATM, MC Laz, Abilitea, Arite, Odogwu and a few others. Each performer

delivered engaging sets that kept the audience entertained throughout the duration of the event.

The gathering also served as a platform for talent discovery and development, aligning with the broader vision of the foundation to empower young creatives within the entertainment space.

Emerging talents were given visibility, further reinforcing the event’s commitment to nurturing the next generation of performers.

Ekene Smith reflected on the success of the show, noting that it achieved its core objectives of bringing people together during the Easter celebration, promoting laughter as a unifying force, and impacting lives positively through community-focused initiatives.

The well-attended event recorded a strong turnout across its various seating categories, highlighting the level of anticipation and support it garnered prior to its staging. With backing from sponsors and media partners, the production was delivered seamlessly, earning commendation from guests and participants alike.

Inside Quick Kash: TVC Entertainment’s New Money Game Show



AIRING every Monday and Friday at 1:30 pm, Quick Kash is giving Nigerians a new reason to stay glued to their screens, and their wallets have proof.

Nigerian television has a new contender for the most exciting thirty minutes of your afternoon, and it comes with half a million naira on the line. Quick Kash, the high-energy game show airing on TVC Entertainment every Monday and Friday from 1:30 pm to 2 pm, has already delivered on its promise; four Nigerians have walked away with life-changing cash prizes since the show launched, including a winner on its very first episode.

The host, Edgar Eriakha, did not stumble into this role. He auditioned for it, a closed audition, invitation only, extended to him because the producers had watched his energy on Wake Up Nigeria and liked what they saw. It was a vote of confidence that Edgar has spent every episode since justifying.

What Happens When The Contestants Walk In
The atmosphere on a Quick Kash recording day is, in Edgar’s words, intense. Contestants arrive and are briefed immediately on the three rounds, the rules, and what is expected of them. During commercial breaks between rounds, the rules are reinforced. Nothing is left to chance. The show is thirty minutes long, and there is no

room for confusion. The format is deceptively simple. Round one is Lucky Numbers — contestants pick three numbers between 01 and 49 and match them against the captain’s selection for up to 30,000 naira. Round two is the mystery category round: general knowledge, entertainment and fun, and brain teasers, where the fastest buzzer within 15 seconds wins 20,000 naira per correct answer. Then comes the jackpot round. One question. One chance. 500,000 naira.

The First Ever Winner
The jackpot fell on the very first episode. Edgar remembers the moment clearly. “I was excited, shocked, and happy at the same time.” It was the best possible debut the show could have had — proof, from day one, that Quick Kash was not just promising prize money. It was delivering it.

The Contestant Who Came Anyway
Not every memorable Quick Kash moment is about winning. One contestant arrived for the show the day after she lost her mother. She came anyway, faced the questions, and competed. Edgar has not forgotten her. In a show built around the excitement of potential winnings, she was a reminder of something quieter and more human, that showing up, on the hardest days, is its own kind of courage.

AMVCA 12: Defining Statement On Global Future Of African Storytelling

By Daniel Anazia

THE lights might have dimmed on the 12th edition of the Africa Magic Viewers' Choice Awards (AMVCA), but the conversation it ignited across Africa's film and television industry is far from over. For one night in Lagos, Africa's finest actors, filmmakers, writers, costume designers, cinematographers, digital creators, and producers gathered not merely to celebrate success, but to collectively affirm something much bigger: African storytelling has matured, diversified, and is increasingly impossible for the world to ignore.

Held at the iconic Eko Hotel and Suites, AMVCA 12 was not simply another awards ceremony, it was an ecosystem on display; a living, breathing demonstration of what sustained investment, creative ambition, and continental collaboration can produce.

From emotional acceptance speeches to technical triumphs behind the camera, the night reflected an industry growing rapidly in confidence, craft, and global ambition. This year's edition arrived at a pivotal moment for African cinema. What stood out was not only the glamour of the event, but the extraordinary diversity of stories competing for honours.

Films and television productions from different corners of the conti-

nent showcased narratives rooted in local realities but crafted with global appeal. Indigenous language storytelling, historical dramas, digital-first content, and culturally grounded television series all shared the same stage.

The success of productions such as *My Father's Shadow*, which emerged as one of the biggest winners of the night, demonstrated how deeply personal African stories are increasingly becoming universally resonant.

The film secured major honours, including Best Movie, Best Director, Best Writing, and technical categories, reinforcing the idea that African cinema is no longer just participating in global conversations; it is shaping them.

Across categories, the awards recognised excellence not only in acting but also in costume design, sound engineering, makeup artistry, cinematography, editing, and writing – an important reminder that great storytelling is never the work of stars alone. It is a collaborative craft powered by dozens of unseen creatives.

One of the strongest messages of AMVCA 12 was that African entertainment is increasingly moving beyond celebrity culture into an era where technical excellence matters just as much as star power.

The Red Carpet: Not Fashion But Cultural Architecture

For over a decade, the AMVCA has been Africa's premier display of sartorial elegance and cinematic celebration. Every year, AMVCA's red carpet sparks conversation. Critics dismiss it as excess, admirers call it creativity; social media turns it into debate. To reduce awards' fashion to style inspiration misses the point entirely.

The AMVCA red carpet has evolved into something much bigger than celebrity dressing. It is fashion as storytelling. This year, attendees arrived in garments that blended heritage,

architecture, sculpture, symbolism, futurism, and ancestral confidence. Outfits referenced kingdoms, spirituality, royalty, indigenous identity, migration, mythology, and contemporary African luxury.

The truth is AMVCA red carpet is not fashion inspiration, it is garment engineering. It represents craftsmanship that demands technical precision, cultural literacy, and artistic boldness. Designers are not merely sewing fabric; they are building narratives. Corsetry, beadwork, sculptural silhouettes, indigenous textiles,

embroidery, dramatic headpieces, and unconventional materials all converged into wearable cultural statements.

In many ways, AMVCA fashion has quietly become one of Africa's strongest cultural exports. For emerging designers, stylists, makeup artists, photographers, wig makers, and creative directors, the red carpet functions like a continental marketplace of ideas. Careers are launched, collaborations are born, and brands are built.



Oscar Bankz Lands Major South African Record Deal With Astra Luvian Music

By Daniel Anazia

NIGERIAN-BORN Afrobeats sensation, Oscar Bankz, professionally known as Oscar Bankz, has secured a major career milestone after signing a record deal with South African music label, Astra Luvian Music Worldwide Ltd, in a move expected to expand his footprint across international music markets.

The deal recently sealed in Cape Town, South Africa, signals a significant step in the Afrobeats singer-songwriter's musical journey and reinforces the growing cross-border collaboration driving the genre's global expansion.

Astra Luvian Music, a label focused on talent development, music innovation, and entertainment growth, described the partnership as part of its broader ambition to discover and elevate outstanding African tal-

ent to the world stage.

The music company expressed confidence in Oscar Bankz's artistry, originality, and long-term commercial potential. "This signing represents our vision for the future of African music," a spokesperson for Astra Luvian Music said. "Oscar Bankz brings talent, originality, and star potential. We are proud to welcome him to the family and excited for what lies ahead."

Industry observers say the partnership reflects the increasing influence of Afrobeats beyond Nigeria, as international labels and music executives continue to invest heavily in emerging African acts capable of resonating with global audiences.

Backed by an experienced team of music executives and industry professionals, Astra Luvian Music said it is committed to developing the

Nigerian-born artiste into one of Africa's next breakout stars through strategic artiste development, international exposure, and innovative music distribution.

For Oscar Bankz, the signing opens a new chapter, as he is already preparing for the release of his first project, a body of work expected to introduce his sound to broader audiences across Africa, Europe, and other international territories under the label later this year.

As Afrobeats continues its remarkable rise on the global stage, the collaboration between Oscar Bankz and Astra Luvian Music is being viewed as a strategic move that could further strengthen the genre's international reach while positioning the Nigerian-born artiste for greater visibility in an increasingly competitive music landscape.

T.A.M.P Awards Nomination Spotlights Omoseyin's Rising Nollywood Influence

By Daniel Anazia

ACTRESS and filmmaker, AOluwadarasimi Oyindamola Omoseyin, is fast emerging as one of Nollywood's promising new voices, with her recent nomination at the T.A.M.P Awards reinforcing her growing influence in Nigeria's film industry.

Nominated in the 'Best Indigenous Actress' category, the recognition highlights Omoseyin's commitment to culturally rooted storytelling and her growing reputation for delivering emotionally compelling performances across film and digital platforms.

A graduate of the University of Lagos, where she studied Public Administration, Omoseyin began her acting career in 2019 and quickly carved a niche for herself through appearances in several Nollywood productions, particularly on

YouTube. Her performances across drama, romance, and socially driven narratives have earned her attention for their authenticity, emotional depth, and versatility.

Beyond acting, Omoseyin has expanded her footprint within the entertainment space by venturing into filmmaking. Her debut production, *Ohun Ikoko*, released on her YouTube platform, SimiGold TV, marked a defining moment in her creative journey. The project not only showcased her storytelling abilities but also underscored her dedication to promoting indigenous language narratives in contemporary cinema.

Industry observers say her T.A.M.P Awards nomination arrives at a significant moment in her career, as she continues to build momentum through new projects and increasing visibility within Nollywood's competitive landscape.

TEETH4TEETH ... With Justin Akpovi-Esade

Soludo, 'Babalawos' And Now, 'Fake Pastors'

ANAMBRA State Governor, Prof. Charles Soludo, is a man who has been fighting on all fronts since he became the state's number one citizen. If he is not fighting elements and sympathisers of a secessionist group, IPOB, and trying to stop the rather stupid 'sit at home' civil disobedience order by the deadly group, he is going after native doctors (babalawos) who he believes have been deceiving the people with fake traditional practices even while he tackles other issues facing the state and people. Obviously feeling satisfied that the remaining Babalawos have either fled the state or have turned a new leaf after about three of them are in prison and or in detention facilities awaiting trial, he has now turned the spotlight on some Christian Pastors who he alleged are into fake miracles. T4T saw in the news on Tuesday where Soludo is issuing a warning to all fake pastors to leave the state or face prosecution. And this is coming some weeks after T4T quietly advised the Governor here to also go after these Pastors so as not to be seen as having something personal against traditional medicine practices and practitioners. So, if you are a Pastor in Anambra State and you are fond of posting videos of people you claim to have healed of different illnesses as well as 'family' and 'generational' curses, be advised that Soludo, going forward, will be asking for authentication and that is by way of taking the 'healee' and healer to a medical facility for verification. Some Pastors in Nigeria (not in Anambra alone) too over do *sef* and Soludo has had enough. If you claim to have healed someone of cancer in any part of Anambra and you post it online, just know that Baba will be paying you an official visit and you all will be heading to state's specialist hospital to determine if the 'healee' indeed had cancer

that was miraculously healed by the Power of the 'God' of that Pastor! It is not personal. It is the right thing to do to sanitize the society and deter some Pastors from feeding on the gullibility of desperate miracle seeking folks. Other state governors should borrow a leaf from Soludo. In fact, the federal ministry in charge of things like that should liaise with various state governments and do what Soludo is doing presently in Anambra. No sane society will sit by and watch people make false claims in the name of God.

In the opinion of Soludo, if the Pastor(s) have such powers, they should not wait for people with different medical or spiritual afflictions to be brought to their churches. They should take turns to visit both public and private hospitals where millions of sick people abound, on a weekly basis, and heal them with the miraculous powers they possess. Soludo is the man of the moment

That Peller Video

IN the midst of a small crowd of people. According to the caption, it was a stopover in Abraka, a university town in Delta State, in his ongoing nationwide tour. A young man, dressed in a traditional flowing *Agbada* attire, was seen hugging the social media personality, and in a weird manner, ran his right hand round the head of Peller. To T4T, that was an unusual way of showing affection to a celebrity, and Peller saw it in that light too. What the young Peller did stunned everybody including T4T. Peller quickly seized the man's right hand, and took whatever he believed the man took from him (spiritually) and put it back on his head. Well, T4T is a traditional man, that is what he would do too if anybody was stupid enough to do what that *agbada* wearing wannabe Babalawo did to Peller. Nice one,

Peller. When did rubbing the head of someone become a form of greeting?

Delta Police Spokesman Can't Explain It Away!

RECENTLY, when a notorious Police officer in Delta State, CSP Rusman 'Ogbegbe' summarily executed in broad daylight, a restrained suspected gun runner, Oghenemine, detained by drivers in a motor park after a locally made Berretta pistol was found on him, the country went up in flames, literally. Well, it is heart warming to know that the Inspector General of Police, Tunji Disu, immediately dismissed the policemen involved in the incident and they are currently in detention set to face trial for alleged first degree murder and sundry offences. But one thing that bothered T4T was the attempt by the Delta State Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Bright Edafe to water down the incident like he was the 'pally' or even blood brother of the policeman who pulled the trigger in a Gestapo manner the world saw in that blood chilling video. Edafe was all moody and sympathetic when he posted the news on his verified Facebook account. He covered the face of 'Ogbegbe' in the photograph he posted even when many commentators questioned why. Later in the evening, T4T saw him on national TV defending his decision to cover the face of the killer cop, citing Public Relations worldwide best practices as regards the treatment of suspects in an alleged crime, which is understandable. But later, T4T carefully went through his Facebook account and noted that Edafe did not cover the face of another suspect, a policeman too, who was arrested by his colleagues when a video of him emerged as he was extorting the sum of 51, 000 naira from an unidentified man who was recording him with a secret filming device.

Nigerian Designers To The World

By Maria Diamond

FROM here on to every nook and cranny of the world, it is a toast to the innovative Nigerian Designers and the immensity of their creativity and skills – thanks to Africa Magic Viewers' Choice Awards (AMVCA) and its constant bar raising drive that takes these designers over and above year-in-and-out.

Some would argue that the event is not about 'who is wearing what' but about accolades and recognition of outstanding works put into the African Television, film and content creation industry. While others would stand on what has become a glaring fact over the years, that the event thrives most on the designers of the dresses the individuals who show up for the event are wearing, thus, the maker of these dresses becomes one of the major headliners of the annual event. But who is really the headliner, celebrity wearing the

dress or the designer who made it?

There is absolutely no need to argue with your creator as the Nigerian slang goes in situations like this, as the creator actually headlines the show-up of each celebrity with the constant 'q' (question) of 'who are you wearing tonight'?

While the celebrities show up in these stunning dresses, the first thing that comes to mind is who made the dress? Who is the designer? Everybody wants to know the designer of each stunning dress worn by a statement making celebrity on the red carpet.

Veekee James On The Global Map

Veekee James is the architectural brain and designer behind Nollywood actress Osas Ighodaro's two striking custom-made outfits for this year's AMVCA.

These two outfits answer the question to the meaning of "Creativity Na Water" which implies that innovative ideas and executing them flows with ease.

So for renowned Nigerian fashion designer, entrepreneur and social media influencer Veekee James known for intricate bridal and red carpet designs, creativity na water when she de-

signed the glamorous but simple silver avant-garde ball gown featuring a bodice with crystal embellishments attached to flowing skirt constructed from 400 metallic sponges, popularly known as 'Iron sponge', as well as the red sculptural crimson column gown featuring horizontal crystal edge bands and a sharp structured architectural collar, leaving fashion lovers, industry icons and experts around the world in a state of awe at the outstanding immensity of her innovative designs and capacity.

One And Only Toyin Lawani

Who makes a dress with 500 loaves of Agege Bread? Who constructs a dress with hundreds of balloons? Only a Toyin Lawani with her magic touch of serial entrepreneurship can pull all these successfully reiterating the fact of 'Creativity Na water'.

Any wonder she came up with these duo concepts for two celebrities for the 2026 AMVCA and executed each dress into a showcase that got the world talking on all stages the minute each of these ladies stepped into the event venue buzzing the red carpet last weekend.

The concept of the 300 loaves of bread dress Lawani revealed is to showcase the craft of her client Mary Atang, a reality star queen who is the

owner of the Switcakes Desserts who had recently added bread to her bakery menu. While the dramatic avant-garde yellow-gold balloon dress for actress Eniola Ajao is a showcase of a masterpiece of wearable art.

The Prudent Gabriel

Dearest Fashion and AMVCA Lovers in Nigeria and around the world, Prudent Gabriel is the Nigerian designer responsible for the exquisite black ball dress worn by your favourite celebrity Toyin Abraham aka 'Oversabi Aunty'.

The award winning fashion designer, entrepreneur and influencer graciously built a black ball gown highlighting a bright gold front layout with intricate chest and neck gold beadings.

McNwatu Official For Your Attention

Who is a queen maker? Behold McNwatu Official – when the brand further proved that the most recent Big Brother Naija Winner Imisioluwa Ayanwale aka Ijoba 606 of the 10/10 season is indeed a queen to the core at the 2026 AMVCA.

Of course Imisi is the queen of soft elegance and steeze, nothing less or more, she matches all energy, and this great Nigerian fashion design brand McNwatu made sure of that when they designed Ayinke's custom off shoulder purple and silver dress in a soft elegant, refined and clean craft featuring calm dazzling beads. This dress is giving Ijoba 606 in her 'soft girl era'.

Meet Mimi Linda Yina

Medlin boss, Mimi Linda Yina of Medlin Couture is one designer and stylist to reckon with for this 2026 edition of AMVCA as she also put one of Big Brother Naija's reality TV show star from the 10/10 season, Sultana Farida Auduson Ibrahim in an elegant strapless nude-illusion pink sculptural mermaid gown hand beaded with fuchsia, magenta and rose-pink crystals which helped her win the Guinness Best Dressed Female title.



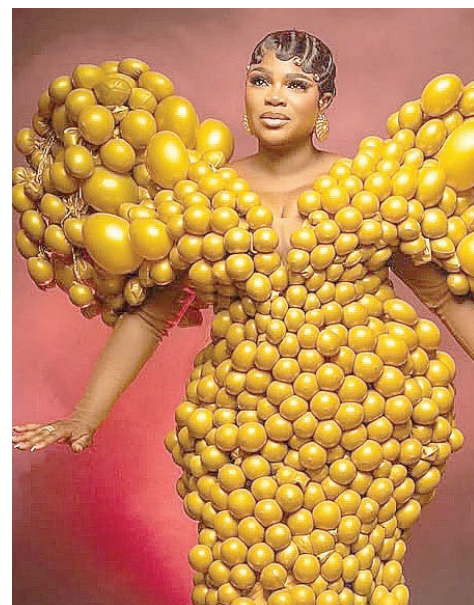
Imisioluwa Ayanwale designed by McNwatu Official (left); Osas Ighodaro designed by Veekee James (middle) and Sultana Farida Auduson Ibrahim designed by Mimi Linda Yina.



Mary Atang designed by Toyin Lawani



Osas Ighodaro designed by Veekee James



Eniola Ajao designed by Toyin Lawani



Toyin Abraham designed by Prudent Gabriel

Initiative Seeks To Empower Underserved Communities, Drive Inclusive Development

By Victoria Nwachukwu

WITH most Nigerian rural areas remaining underserved and roughly 80 per cent of residents living in poverty, newly established non-governmental organisation, SlumPact Initiative, has made a strong commitment to transforming underserved and informal urban communities across the country. Recently launching in Nigeria officially, it enters the development space at a critical time when millions of Nigerians living in slum environments continue to face significant challenges, including poor housing, limited access to healthcare, unemployment and social exclusion. Armed with the belief that communities are often defined by deprivation also possess immense potential, SlumPact Initiative is set to deliver sustainable, community-driven interventions that improve quality of life and promote inclusive growth.

The organisation says it will focus on empowering vulnerable populations, especially women, youth, and children, through targeted programmes that address both immediate needs and long-term development goals.

Speaking at the launch, SlumPact Initiative founder, Prof Davies Adeloye, stated that they intend to bridge the gap between underserved communities and opportuni-



Dr Alex Iseolorun kanmi (Left); Olutayo Irantiola; Dr Temitope Falohunda-Ayanda; Prof Davies Adeloye; Prof Jibril Mohammed; Ibukun Teslim; Dr Chuks Onyedika; Akinyimika Sowunmi and Emmanuel Okafor during the launch in Lagos... recently

ties for social and economic advancement.

According to him, the initiative is not just about addressing poverty, but about unlocking potential, amplifying voices and fostering dignity within communities that are often overlooked. The strategy, he said, is anchored on collaboration, working closely with local communities, government institutions, development partners and private sector stakeholders to ensure that interventions are impactful and sustainable. Its programmes will span key areas such as community development, youth empowerment and skills acquisition, public health awareness and advocacy for inclusive urban policies.

The launch has been widely regarded as timely, given the increasing need for structured and scalable interven-

tions in Nigeria's rapidly growing informal settlements. Stakeholders noted that the organisation's focus aligns with national development priorities and global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty reduction, sustainable cities, and reduced inequalities.

SlumPact Initiative also reaffirmed its commitment to transparency, accountability, and measurable impact, pledging to ensure that all resources are efficiently deployed to benefit the communities it serves.

They called on partners across sectors, including government agencies, development organisations and individuals, to support their mission of building resilient communities and creating pathways out of poverty.

In The Storm Of Love (2)

By Segun Durowaiye
(08055356855)

Continued from GUARDIAN WEEKEND, May 9-10, 2026

AFTER Wunmi fell down and fainted, the Chief hurriedly moved closer to her. Chief Demoye held her shoulder and helped her to his car. He rushed her to a nearby clinic and she was treated for injuries she had sustained. A few hours later, she was strong enough to speak with the kind-hearted Chief. She narrated her ordeal and experience to Chief Demoye and insisted that on leaving the clinic she would kill herself as she had made up her mind not to go back home but to harm herself. Chief Demoye begged her not to commit suicide as that was not the best option. He told her to consider her children as they would be motherless and face untold hardships. At exactly 6p.m Wunmi was discharged from Unity Clinic and the super-rich Chief paid the bills. Chief Demoye promised to help her and put a smile on her face. He drove her to Rose Gardens Hotel located on the Lagos Island and booked two days for her. Then, he gave her N40,000 per day to take care of her needs. Wunmi was surprised and shocked at the Chief's generosity; she thanked him profusely and wondered that he was Godsend.

About four days later, Chief Demoye rented a two-bedroom flat for Wunmi and gave her the keys. This came as a big surprise to a woman recovering from years of maltreatment by a hard-hearted husband. To cap it all, he gave her N2m to start a business of her choice. Wunmi was overjoyed as she knelt down in front of the robust-looking Chief. Beautiful tears of joy streamed down her brows as she received the cash gift from Chief Demoye. She was lost for words as her heart throbbed with uncontrolled happiness. Wunmi invested her money wisely and within two years she had become a very rich woman. She was even a proprietress of three flourishing schools. She now lived in a tastefully furnished duplex of her own, located in a rich neighbourhood. Chief Demoye told her that she was free to contact her any time she needed his assistance.

Wunmi had now become a big time busi-

nesswoman and a high society lady. She was invited to a wedding party on a particular Saturday and was enjoying the bliss of life when she suddenly saw her husband approaching her. She couldn't believe her eyes.

Yes! The same husband who had always maltreated her and threw her out in the heavy rain some years ago! Juwon went on his knees in her front and pleaded: "Please, Wunmi I'm begging you...come back home. Let's resolve our differences. Come back home..."

"It's too late Juwon," she replied, "the caged bird has flown away and landed in paradise and will never go back to dine with the devil again! I want to be at peace with my God that answers prayers and gives freedom to those in captivity. Very, very soon I'll come for my children because they deserve love, care and all the good things of life. Don't waste your time... I'm not a dog that would go back to eat its vomit, and moreover I know very well that Leopards don't change their spots."

When it was exactly one month, Wunmi went for a court order so that her children could be in her care. She was granted the custody of her children. So, like a matriarch or an Amazon Wunmi stood by her four children and took proper care of them. With the sole support of the Almighty God she sponsored their education even throughout the university. Today, her children are successful in their various fields. Two of her children are now medical doctors while the remaining is a lawyer and a Civil Engineer respectively. She would forever remain grateful to Chief Demoye who God used to bail her out of the misery of life. At times, she would wonder at the goodness and benevolence of the ebullient Chief who helped her with no strings attached. Such attitude was rare among men, so she named one of her schools after the magnanimous Chief. It isn't really worth it to treat fellow human beings without regard or recklessly because you never know what tomorrow holds. Wunmi had finally found peace and joy at last!

Concluded.

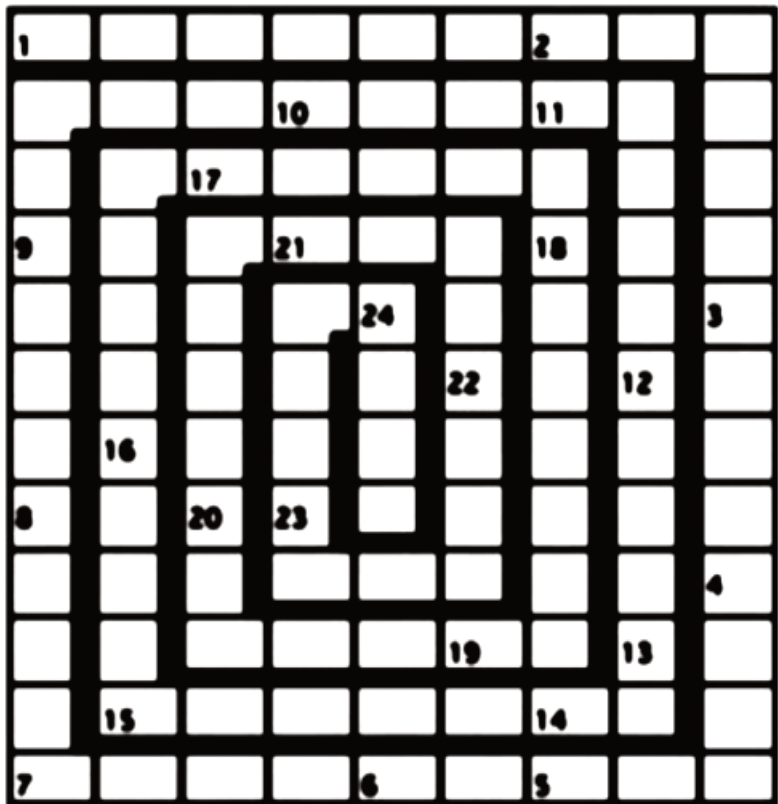
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Overlapping Word Game

Solution

- 1 Obasanjo
- 2 Johnboat
- 3 Attach
- 4 Chechen
- 5 Envy
- 6 Vyatka
- 7 Kaaba
- 8 Andean
- 9 Anagoge
- 10 Geisha
- 11 Shackle
- 12 Lentil
- 13 Ilesa
- 14 Esa Oke
- 15 Extreme
- 16 Emerge
- 17 Entrust
- 18 Structure
- 19 Reverse
- 20 Seclude
- 21 Dermal
- 22 Alarmist
- 23 Starve
- 24 Vega



Overlapping Word Game

- 1 Teach somebody, (7).
- 2 Town on Oahu Island, Hawaii, (3, 5).
- 3 World's second most populous country, (5).
- 4 Late Nigeria's Head of State, (6).
- 5 Anambra state capital city, (4).
- 6 Gov. Uba Sani's state, (6).
- 7 Ex House of Reps.' Speaker, (6).
- 8 Ex Prime Minister of Nigeria, (6).
- 9 Desired something, (5).
- 10 Think something up, (6).
- 11 City in Oyo State, (6).
- 12 One of the cardinal points on a compass, (5).
- 13 Flexible tube, (4).
- 14 Isolate somebody, (7).
- 15 Ridicule, (6).
- 16 Eat something quickly, (6).
- 17 Somebody who behaves mischievously, (6).
- 18 Romantic and emotional, (8).
- 19 Not genuine, (8).
- 20 Wrongful dispossession, (6).
- 21 Have connection with, (6).
- 22 Somebody who teaches, (7).
- 23 Deep narrow valley, (6).
- 24 Community of animals, (4).

Word Search

Motoring-2

Safe	Gears	Revving
Hose	Plugs	Radiator
Vent	Heater	Fuel Filter
Knob	Ignition	Odometer
Roof	Mileage	Hand Brake
Glass	Plunger	Door Handle

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

(c.) Olukayode Olulana

Society

Birthdays

OMOFADE, Prince Dr. Adelaja Akinsegun, retired Permanent Secretary, philanthropist and the *Omogbadelaja* of Owu Kingdom, Abeokuta, Ogun State, will be 80 on Sunday, May 17, 2026.

Born on May 17, 1946 in Lagos to Jonathan Akinsoji Omofade and Beatrice Abike (Nee Shorunke), parents from Owu in Abeokuta, he attended the African Church Primary School, Ebute – Metta, Lagos State, from 1952 – 1959.

He proceeded to the first Muslim College in West Africa – Ahmadiyya College, Agege (now Anwar - Ul Islam College, Agege) in 1960 for his secondary school education and left in 1964 after obtaining the West African School Certificate. He attended the Premier – University of Ibadan, Oyo State, where he successfully bagged BSc degree in Sociology and later attended the University of Lagos for his Masters and Doctoral degrees in the Department of Po-

litical Science, all between 1952 and 1988.

Dr Omofade joined the Lagos State Public Service as an Administrative Officer Grade V in 1971 after leaving University of Ibadan and reached the peak of his career as a Permanent Secretary in September 1994 as appointed by Col. Olagunsoye Oyinlola, and also served in same capacity and Sole Administrator, Lagos State Waste Management Authority (LAWMA) under Col. Mohammed Buba Marwa and very briefly with Asiawaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu as respective Governors of Lagos State and retired in 1999.

During his days in the Civil Service, discipline, devotion to work, good human relations, honesty and sincerity of purpose were some of the hallmarks of his administration. He gloriously retired in 1999. Dr Omofade was also exposed to several training programmes, workshops and seminars within and outside the country.

At the Alumni front, he was



Omofade

the pioneer President of his Set known as ACAOBA 604 and the Life President of the Set. He was a recipient of different awards and appointments of the college including – Merit Award at the Golden Jubilee Anniversary of the college in 1998; Merit award by ACAOSA 66/70 set during the Set's 50 years Anniversary Celebration in the year 2020; and Lifetime Merit Award of ACAOSA.

He remains a member of the Governing Council of the Lagos State City Polytechnic; Trustee, South-Western University, Ogun State; Member, Lagos Country Club; and Life Mem-



Osisanya

ber, Island Club, Lagos.

Dr Omofade holds several religious and chieftaincy titles, including the princely title of *Omogbadela* of Owu Kingdom as conferred by HRM, Oba Prof Saka Adelola Matemilola, the Olowu of Owu. He is also the *Baba Oba* of the Elejio of Ejio with lineage of Oke Alaafin, Ejio, Ogun State.

He is a committed High National Officer of The African Church (TAC), having served as Vice Lay President of the Abeokuta Diocese and currently General Patron, St. Paul's Cathedral, Ilupeju, Lagos; Lagos Central Diocese; Abeokuta Dio-

cese and two-time Primatial Awardee of the TAC Worldwide. He is happily married to Olori Adetoro Aduke Omofade JP, the Erelu Omogbadela Owu, and blessed with children and grandchildren.

OSISANYA, Mrs Omobola Ashabi (Nee Lawal), educationist and philanthropist clocks 70. Born on May 16, 1956, she started her Primary School Education at St. Peters Araromi, Ake, Odogbolu Local Council, Ogun State, and completed her primary education at Wright Memorial School, Somolu, Lagos State in 1968.

She was admitted into Methodist High School, Arigbajo, Ogun State in 1973 and passed out with Grade 2 in WASC in 1977. She was the Senior Girl of her set.

She later proceeded to the United Missionary College (UMC) Teachers Grade II in 1978 and passed out in 1979. She then proceeded to the Ogun State College of Education in 1980 and passed out with NCE Teaching Certificate in 1983, be-

fore gaining admission to the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, where she bags her Degree Certificate in 1990.

She taught in both Primary and Secondary Schools in Oyo and Ogun states, but left the teaching service voluntarily, retiring from the noble Adeola Odutola College, Ijebu-Ode, as Vice Principal, to nurture her vision – Holy Cross Schools, Ijebu-Ode.

She is a socialist, whose hobby is entertaining people. She belongs to *Egbe Bobakeye in Awujale Regbereghes*. She is a Matron for many church societies and Social clubs.

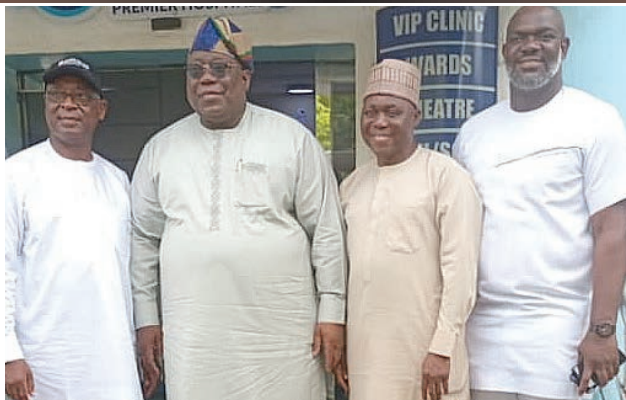
She's passionate about cultural transformation, institutional reforms and healthier families. In May 2022, she launched the Omobola Ashabi Foundation (OAF), an NGO committed to improving the lives of out-of-school children and vulnerable women in Nigeria.

Compiled by *Gbenga Akinfenwa*, oluwagbenga.akinfenwa@guardian.ng or gbengaherkin@yahoo.com

Events



Chief Executive Officer (CEO) / Founder, Avada Couture, Aisha Lami Abdulsalam (left) presenting a symbolic gift to the Ohinoyi of Ebiraland, His Royal Majesty, Alhaji Ahmed Tijani Anaje when the management team of Avada Couture & Academy paid him a courtesy visit in a celebration of culture, heritage, and contemporary fashion in Kogi State



Group Managing Director of Nisa Premier Hospital, Dr Moses Shuaibu (left); Chairman, Federal Civil Service Commission, Prof. Tunji Olaopa; Founder of the hospital, Dr Ibrahim Wada and Managing Director of the hospital, Dr Nonso Ogbuefi when Olaopa paid a courtesy visit to Wada in Abuja ...on Friday.



Senior/Mega Regional Overseer (SRO/MRO), Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), Lagos Region I, Lekki Mega Axis, Pastor Moses Adebawale (left); his wife, Olubunmi; representative of General Overseer, Pastor Kehinde Adegbohlan; SRO/MRO, Sango Otta, Mega Axis, Pastor Wale Adeolunmiyiwa; and Regional Overseer/Mega Regional Overseer, Ibadan 3 Mega Region, Pastor Rotimi Jesusanya, during the commissioning of the church building at Noforija, Epe, Lagos.



Mobolaji Okoya; (left); Tunde akinmoladun; Tofarati Oshinowo; Feyisola Akinrinlola; Wonuola Okoya; Omosefe Okungbowa; Isla Gemade; Olanike Mobolaji-Okoya; Oluwatoni Akinyele; Aisha Mobolaji-Okoya; Aijibola Mobolaji-Okoya; Pipolola Okoya; Folarinle Akinrinlola; at the funeral ceremony of Late Reverend Apostolic Mother Tolulope Omosaleolawa Adunni Akinrinlola recently in Lagos.



Members of the Rotary Club of Ikeja led by its President, Olanrewaju Lawal (fourth right) during the sensitisation exercise for market women in Ipodo on recycling practices and the donation of waste bins to aid proper waste management... recently



Superintendent of Corrections, Nigeria Prison Service, Salman Toyin (left); Welfare Officer, Trinity House Prison Ministry, Mrs. Omobolanle Folarin-Williams; Senior Pastor, Trinity House, Ituah Ighodalo; Mother of the late Pastor (Mrs.) Ibiidunni Ighodalo, Mrs. Moniola Ajayi; Chief Superintendent of Corrections, Nigeria Prison Service, Peters Babatunde and Head of Department, Prison Ministry, Trinity House, Mrs. Toyin Ajakaiye, during the visit of the Trinity House Church to the Badagry Medium Security Prison, in Lagos

Kwara Garment Factory Signs Landmark Industrial Partnership With KWS Production Village

THE Kwara Garment Factory has officially signed a management and operation agreement for its state-of-the-art apparel manufacturing facility with KWS Garment Production Village. Led by Folake Akindele, founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Tiffany Amber and one of the leading figures on African fashion scene over the last three decades, KWS Garment Production Village steps in as the private sector operator of what is now one of Nigeria's most advanced industrial apparel manufacturing facilities.

The ceremony, which took place at the Kwara Garment Factory in Ilorin on May 12, 2026, marked a defining moment in the state's industrialisation agenda under the leadership of Governor Abdulrahman AbdulRazaq and signals the beginning of a new chapter for garment and tex-

tile manufacturing in Nigeria and across Africa.

The agreement was processed by the Managing Director, Kwara Garment Factory, Hajia Bukola Adedeji, in the presence of the Commissioner for Business, Innovation, and Technology, Damilola Yusuf Adelodun. The facility is equipped to support large-scale apparel production across multiple sectors including fashion, sports, institutional agencies, hospitality providers, and corporate organisations. With the infrastructure designed to support up to 4,000 workers across its production ecosystem, the factory stands as one of the most significant industrial garment manufacturing hubs on the continent.

In line with the management of the KWS Garment Production Village, approximately 80% of the production workforce are women, a deliberate

commitment to placing women at the centre of industrial economic empowerment. The facility is fully powered by an on-site solar plant, embedding sustainability into the foundation of its operations.

Speaking at the hand-over ceremony, Folake Akindele described the occasion as a milestone that goes far beyond the signing of an agree-

ment.

"After 28 years in the Nigerian fashion industry, moments like this remind me why I started this journey. What began with passion and resilience has evolved into something much bigger than fashion itself. Today is about industry, infrastructure, manufacturing, job creation, and legacy," she said.

Akindele, who built Tiffany

Amber into an internationally recognised African fashion house, has long identified the absence of reliable manufacturing infrastructure as one of the most significant barriers facing Nigeria's creative and industrial sectors. The KWS Garment Production Village is out to bridge that gap. "This factory represents possibility. It represents scale. It represents systems that allow Nigerian businesses, creative, institutional, and corporate alike, to produce competitively, efficiently, and proudly within Nigeria. If you have been going outside Africa to manufacture and access world-class quality, you can get that same standard here," she added.

Speaking on behalf of the Kwara State Government, Commissioner for Business, Innovation, and Technology, Damilola Yusuf Adelodun, de-

scribed the factory as a key component of the state's long-term industrial vision.

"The Kwara State Garment Factory has always represented more than a building or a set of machines. It represents a vision; His Excellency's vision of an industrialised Kwara, where our youths do not just consume but produce, where the state's resources translate into real livelihoods and lasting economic activity."

The long-term vision for KWS Garment Production Village extends beyond garment production into full textile manufacturing, with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) presenting a significant strategic opportunity for Africa-made apparel to move freely across the continent. KWS Garment Production Village is positioned to be a leading force in that ecosystem.



Wigwe & Partners Legal Representative, Chioma Agoro (left); Chief Executive Officer / Chairman, KWS Garment Factory Production Village, Ms. Folake Akindele; Managing Director, Kwara Garment Factory, Bukola Adedeji; and Commissioner for the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Technology, Damilola Yusuf Adelodun, during the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the Kwara Garment Factory, Ilorin...Kwara State.

From The Rector

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

Familoni Lauds Makinde's 'Great Work' Across Oyo State

By Chris Irekamba

THE Bishop of the Oyo South Missionary Diocese Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), The Right Reverend Olufemi Ebenezer Familoni, has lauded the Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde, for the "great work" being done across the state, particularly within the metropolis. He also appealed to the Makinde led-administration to extend its developmental efforts to rural areas.

The Bishop made the commendation during the Presidential Charge at the 1st Session of the 1st Synod of the Diocese with theme: "A Renewed Mind," held at the weekend at the Cathedral Church of St. John in Akinmoorin, Oyo State.

Familoni noted that the transformation witnessed in several parts of Ibadan, especially in road construction, urban renewal and the rehabilitation of critical public infrastructure was commendable, adding that in the spirit of fairness, inclusiveness and balanced development, the governor should remember that Oyo State comprises many towns and communities and that their contributions to governance and electoral support are equally significant.

He said: "Communities within the Afijio local council, among others, still experience noticeable developmental gaps. Many towns remain underdeveloped in terms of infrastructure, such as roads and essential amenities like water; this requires urgent intervention."

Reminding Makinde that local governments are pivotal to rural development and community-based governance, Familoni observed that under the current dispensation more is expected. He appealed for the independence of local gov-

ernments and also for the release of funds so the worker can function effectively.

The Bishop stated that balanced development is both a moral

responsibility and a mark of equitable leadership, adding that every part of the state deserves to feel the impact of governance.



Registrar of the Oyo South Missionary Diocese Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), Ayo Oladapo (left); Deputy Chancellor of the Diocese, Ade-tutu Adeusi; Bishop of Ijesa North, The Rt Rev'd Iwabiolorun Oluyamo; Bishop of Diocese of Oyo, The Rt Rev'd Olukemi Oduntan; Bishop of Oyo South Missionary Diocese and President of the Synod, The Rt Rev'd Olufemi Familoni; Bishop of Diocese of Kwara, The Rt Rev'd Sunday Adewole; Bishop-in-Residence Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), The Rt Rev'd Akorede Okuyelu and Elizabeth Jolayemi, during the just-concluded 1st Session of the 1st Synod of Oyo South Diocese Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).

By Charles Ighele

THE problem I want us to look at, today, is how to heal yourself when hurt, annoyed or disappointed with your spouse.

The only way some people know how to deal with their hurt, annoyance and disappointment is to ask their spouses for an apology or to shout or both. After shouting or screaming or crying, some will tell their spouses, "I demand an apology." But if demanding an apology is your only way or most important way of healing your wounded mind, it means that you and your marriage have not matured enough.

There was a time early in our

Healing Your Mind When Your Spouse Hurts You

marriage that unless my wife, Carol, held me, rubbed my chest and romanced me, I will not get out of my state of hurt, annoyance or disappointment. I will be bubbling with life again within a few seconds of her holding me.

Whenever she also felt hurt, annoyed or disappointed with me I also have my own way of apologising and within 10 seconds, she will start laughing and laughing. She says that I make her laugh a lot.

There were times when there was a stalemate and both of us were either hurt or annoyed or disappointed with

each other. It was then, I started to mature into what I am suggesting in this article.

My suggestion is this. Instead of you focusing your mind on what hurt you, annoyed you or got you disappointed with your spouse, you should change the channel and tune to another channel of your mind. Tune to what I will call channel "Good Memory Bank." In this channel, this part of your mind is stored and filled with good memories about your spouse. Unless your spouse is a totally heartless, selfish and bad person like Jezebel or an Ahab, he or she might have

made life sweet and enjoyable for you, perhaps, for about 70 to 80 per cent in the past. He or she might have given you many warm smiles that melted your heart, nice food or outings/holidays, moments of love-filled love making, sacrificial giving, labour of love, quality care for the children and many others.

In my own case, I found out that whenever I tuned the channel of my spirit and mind from the issue that got me hurt, annoyed or disappointed to where Carol gave me great acts of kindness, love, sacrifice, care, hugs, smiles and laughter in the

past, my negative feelings about her will stop growing. The negative feelings stopped growing because I stopped nursing them. Know that whatever you feed or nurse grows and whatever you stop to feed or nurse stops growing. At this point, I begin to force my mind to think and feed on those things that are pure, lovely and good about Carol. At this point, the negative feelings stop growing. Anytime it wants to violently come up to overpower my positive ideas of her, I will tune back again to this love channel that contains good memories, which I grew to

nick name channel "Philippians 4:8." It says, "Whatever things are... lovely... good... think on these things" about your spouse. Love you!

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



At Book Launch Bishop Adebisi's Immense Contributions Resonate

By Sunday Aikulola

CHIEF Olusegun Osunkwe, Bishop of Lagos West Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), the host, The Rt Rev'd James Odedeji; Co-host and Bishop of the Diocese of Oyo, The Rt. Rev'd Stephen Fagbemi; former Governor of Ekiti State, Dr Kayode Fayemi; Bishop of the Diocese of Ilesa, The Rt. Rev'd Dapo Asaju and Adebisi's first daughter, Ronke Fatile, among others, have recalled the immense contributions of the late pioneer Bishop of Lagos West Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), The Rt Rev'd Peter Adebisi, who died on February 10, 2022, aged 79.

They spoke glowingly at the presentation of a book in honour of the late Bishop titled, "My name is Peter," held at Archbishop Vining Memo-

rial Church Cathedral (AVMCC), Ikeja, Lagos. Chief Osunkwe, who also chaired the event, recounted how he worked closely with the late Bishop.

According to him, Bishop Adebisi appointed him the Diocesan adviser from the beginning.

Osunkwe said: "He gave me two major assignments. I was

the chairman of the Local Organising Committee (LOC) when the Diocese of Lagos West in conjunction with Diocese of Lagos hosted the first Anglican Bishops' Conference in November 2004. He appointed me deputy chairman with the mandate to coordinate all matters. He also appointed me as the chairman of the 10th an-

niversary planning committee, which was set up in March 2008."

On his part, the chief host and Bishop of Lagos West, Odedeji, noted that Baba Adebisi's counsel reminded everyone that God's plan could be achieved in a wonderful way when combined with grace and perseverance.



Chairman of the occasion, Chief Olusegun Osunkwe (sixth right) with other dignitaries and children of the late Bishop Peter Awelewa Adebisi at the book launch held recently at Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral (AVMCC), GRA, Ikeja, Lagos.

TACN Appoints Ogunibe As 7th LAWMNA Chairman

By Sunday Aikulola

THE Apostolic Church, Nigeria (TACN), LAWMNA Territory, Ketu, Lagos, has appointed Pastor Moses Oluwale Ogunibe as its new Territorial Chairman. By his appointment, Ogunibe becomes the 7th helmsman in the administration of TACN. He took over from the Emeritus Territorial Chairman of LAWMNA Territory of The Apostolic Church Nigeria (TACN), Pastor S. G. O. Uyeh.

Others elected to steer the affairs of the church, include Pastor Abraham Bonzy Geofrey (Territorial Vice Chairman); Pastor Ebenezer Oluseun Abe (Territorial Administrative Secretary), while Pastor Gabriel Olugbenga Ayotunde Alakuko is the Territorial Deputy Administrative

Secretary.

The outgoing Territorial Chairman, Pastor S. G. O. Uyeh, disclosed while addressing journalists in Lagos on the appointment of new LAWMNA officers.

Uyeh said various decision-making organs of TACN, including the Executive Council, General Executive Council and General Council have ratified the appointments of the new officers.

Speaking on his tenure as the 6th LAWMNA Territorial Chairman and National Vice President of TACN, Uyeh highlighted some of his achievements to include increased evangelism, support initiatives for widows and widowers, prison outreach programmes and investments in education.

Text: 2 Timothy 4:2 (KJV): “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.”

THE world, today, is filled with many voices. Men are preaching human wisdom, worldly philosophies, motivational speeches, traditions of men, and doctrines that satisfy the flesh. Yet amid the noises, God is still searching for men and women who will faithfully preach His word without compromise. The greatest need of this generation is not entertainment, politics, wealth, or fame; the greatest need is the undiluted word of God. Souls are dying daily. Multitudes are marching toward eternity unprepared. Sin is increasing, righteousness is mocked, and many believers are becoming cold and careless. In such a dangerous hour, the command of God remains unchanged: “Preach the word.”

Paul gave this solemn charge to Timothy as a dying Apostle speaking to a young minister. He knew persecution would arise, false teachers would increase, and many would turn away from sound doctrine. Yet, he did not tell Timothy to adjust the message to please people. He did not ask him to soften the truth to gain popularity. Instead, he commanded him to preach the word in and out of season.

To preach in season means to preach when it is convenient, when people are willing to hear, when doors are open, and when the atmosphere is favourable. To preach out of season means to continue preaching even when it is inconvenient, when people reject the message, when persecution comes, and when society opposes the truth. God is looking for servants who will remain faithful whether people applaud them or reject them.

The gospel is not meant for selected occasions alone. The word of God must be preached at all times because eternity is at stake. Jesus, Himself, gave this commission before He ascended into heaven.

Mark 16:15 (KJV): “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” This command was not given only to pastors, evangelists or bishops. Every child of God has been called to be a witness for Christ. If you are truly saved, God expects you to tell others about salvation. Christianity that is silent about Christ is a powerless Christianity. A believer who refuses to preach the gospel is disobeying the heartbeat of heaven.

Many believers, today, are ashamed to preach openly because they fear rejection, criticism or persecution. But the apostles never allowed fear to silence them. They preached in prisons, marketplaces, villages,

Preach The Word In Season, Out Of Season

Living Waters

By Pastor Lazarus Muoka

Founder/General Overseer
The Lord's Chosen Charismatic
Revival Ministries Worldwide

• For more messages and testimonies visit: www.tlccrm.org 08056889396



cities and before kings. They preached despite threats, beatings and suffering. Acts 5:42 (KJV): “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”

The early church understood that souls are precious. They knew heaven is real and hell is real. Therefore, they could not remain silent. Sadly, many believers, today, can discuss business, fashion, sports and worldly matters freely, yet they become silent when it comes to Christ. This ought not to be so.

The world may reject the message, but the truth must still be preached. Noah preached righteousness in a corrupt generation, though people mocked him. Jeremiah preached while being rejected and persecuted. Ezekiel preached to rebellious people. John the Baptist preached against sin and lost his life for the truth. Jesus preached despite opposition from religious leaders. The apostles preached despite imprisonment. True servants of God preach regardless of the season.

One reason many avoid preaching the truth, today, is because people no longer want sound doctrine. Paul warned Timothy about this dangerous time. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (KJV): “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

We are living in those days now. Many people no longer want messages that convict them of sin. They prefer sermons that make them comfortable in rebellion. They want preaching without holiness, Christianity without repentance, salvation without surrender, and heaven without obedience. But a true preacher of God cannot dilute the truth to please men.

The gospel is a message of repentance. Jesus preached repentance. John the Baptist preached repentance. Peter preached repentance. Paul preached repentance. Without repentance there can be no true salvation. Luke 13:3 (KJV): “I tell you, nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

God's word is powerful enough to convict, trans-

form and save souls. The duty of the preacher is not to invent a message, but to faithfully declare what God has spoken. The word of God carries divine authority. Hebrews 4:12 (KJV): “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

No motivational speech can replace the power of God's word. Human wisdom cannot break the chains of sin. Only the gospel can transform a sinner into a child of God. That is why Satan fights the preaching of the gospel so fiercely. The devil knows that whenever the true word of God is preached, captives can be set free.

Believers must, therefore, preach with boldness and compassion. Some preach harshly without love, while others speak softly without truth. But biblical preaching contains both truth and compassion. Paul told Timothy to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.” There are times to correct, times to warn, and times to encourage. Yet, everything must be done patiently and according to sound doctrine.

The preacher must also live what he preaches. A life that contradicts the gospel weakens the message. God desires vessels that are clean and holy. Matthew 5:16 (KJV): “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Your life may be the first Bible some people will ever read. If your conduct is sinful and careless, your preaching will lose power. But when your life reflects Christ, your message will carry greater authority.

There are many opportunities around us to preach the word. Some think preaching only happens behind the pulpit. No! You can preach in your home, school, workplace, neighbourhood, market or through personal conversations. You can preach through your

character, your speech and your daily lifestyle. Every day presents an opportunity to point someone to Christ. We must also understand the urgency of the hour. Time is running out. The coming of the Lord is nearer than ever before. Soon the trumpet shall sound, and every opportunity to preach will end forever. John 9:4 (KJV): “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”

Many souls around us are waiting for someone to tell them about Jesus. Some are trapped in addiction, immorality, fear, depression, false religion, and hopelessness. God may have positioned you near them for a reason. If believers remain silent, how will sinners hear the gospel? Romans 10:14 (KJV): “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?”

The responsibility placed upon the church is enormous. We cannot afford spiritual laziness. The harvest is ripe, but many labourers are asleep. Some believers are too occupied with worldly pursuits to care about dying souls. But one day, every believer shall stand before God to give account of his stewardship.

Imagine arriving in heaven and discovering that many people around you perished without hearing the gospel from your lips, though God gave you opportunities to speak. What a painful regret that would be? We must wake up from spiritual slumber and become active witnesses for Christ.

The reward for faithful preaching is glorious. God never forgets labour done for His kingdom. Those who turn many to righteousness shall shine eternally.

If you are a child of God, this message is a call to rise and preach the word boldly. Preach when people listen and when they refuse. Preach when it is comfortable and when it is difficult. Preach in your family, community, church and everywhere God opens a door. The world is passing away, but the word of God shall stand forever.

And if you are not yet saved, the greatest sermon you can preach begins with surrendering your own life to Christ. You cannot lead others to a Saviour you have not truly known. Jesus died for your sins, shed His blood on the cross, and rose again to give you eternal life. Come to Him today, in genuine repentance and faith. Romans 10:13 (KJV): “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

May God raise believers who will not compromise, who will not be silent, and who will faithfully preach the word in season and out of season until Christ returns... **Amen!**

Testimony Of The Lord's Doing

SISTER Jovita Ibe is from Magbo Autonomous Community, Ilogbo Region, Ogun State. The testimony of our sister who sells men's and women's wears is that she is appreciating God for saving her life the previous Wednesday from a building collapse.

On that fateful day, according to Sister Ibe, she went to her shop as usual, brought out her wares and displayed them.

Having done that, she sat inside the shop, when one of the dummies she uses to display her fabrics suddenly fell, facing downwards just like Dagon of the Philistines. She said, she and her neighbour immediately rushed out to raise the dummy.

Ibe said: “My neighbour asked me what caused the fall, but I had no immediate answer for her. Immediately, I heard a voice that said to me: ‘Pack all your materials displayed outside.’ Without wasting time, I

started packing them and while I was busy doing so, my neighbour demanded to know why I had to give her excuses.”

Sister Ibe added that immediately she was done, she heard a sound and as she

‘Saved From Building Collapse’

turned, she could not see anything. She said that the second sound she heard was when her neighbour came out from her shop and sud-

denly the building that housed their shops collapsed. Glory be to God, nothing happened to her and her neighbour. P-r-a-i-s-e, the Lord!

Our sister is also thanking God for safeguarding all her articles, nothing happened to them, but her neighbour's wares were affected; some fell

into the gutter. Praise the Lord!

In total appreciation for what God has done for her, she prayed for our G.O. and all Chosen members worldwide to make heaven at last in Jesus' name... **Amen!**



Testifiers interviewed at The Lord's Chosen Charismatic Revival Ministries crusade held recently in Ikwuano, Umuahia, Abia State.

THE early Church did not grow by majoring on speaking in tongues, which many believers focus on today. Growth came, rather, through the presence and the prominence of the Holy Ghost in the lives of the apostles. Peter had the gift of revelation. Therefore, he could detect that Satan had filled Ananias' heart "to lie to the Holy Ghost." After the death of Ananias and Sapphira, there was no complaint from their relatives or friends; neither was there murmuring, accusation or argument from the other apostles because they recognised that Peter was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, although it was the first instance of such manifestation of the Holy Ghost, nobody attempted to challenge Peter. The Church was under a great revival fire and freshness of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, the people were submissive to the acts of the Spirit. Leadership becomes very effective when it is done by the Spirit and the leaders are rooted in the scripture. If those who counsel, teach, instruct and lead others have the gift of revelation, the work will become easier and better; the church will become purer and members will become more conscious of God's presence.

Ananias and Sapphira reached an agreement to sell a possession and bring only "a certain part (of the money), and laid it at the apostle's feet." Giving only part of the proceeds was not the problem. It was the decision to present it as the total proceeds of the transaction, in order to be applauded. This kind of giving is deceptive and, therefore, sinful before God. The Lord Jesus Christ commands us to avoid giving in a manner that is intended to attract attention. When we give alms, it should be done privately as to the Lord. In addition, ministers of God should not doubt their gift of revelation or be covered by audacious liars who forcefully deny it even when confronted with the truth. Ananias did not realise that Peter was a man indwelt by the Holy Spirit, for then, he would have known that he had "not lied unto men, but unto God."

By Abel Ukachi Amadi

Key verse: 2 Chronicles 7:14(KJV): "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

THIS verse in 2 Chronicles 7:14 was spoken by God to King Solomon at the dedication of the temple. God told him that disobedience and rebellion would result in judgment upon the nation of Israel. This verse is God's promise that those who turn from their sins; call on Him and walk in His ways will experience a revival of the presence and blessing of the Lord. Now, this is a verse to Israel, but it speaks to every genera-

Biblical Pattern For Revival (9)

RESTORATION HOUR

Text: Joel 2:12-13; Habakkuk 3:2

tion as well. Those who meet the conditions detailed in this verse will experience the promises mentioned in this verse. We need revival! Church members love meetings; but we need more than a meeting, we need a revival! We need something that we cannot produce by our own efforts. Revival is a supernatural event. It comes only by the sovereign decree of the Lord. We can have a meeting anytime, but we cannot have a revival unless the Lord gives it. While we cannot produce a revival, we can meet the requirements set forth in 2 Chronicles 7:14, and that will

Yield To The Leading Of The Spirit (1)

Today, we do not demonstrate love through communal distribution, by selling our property, because it is not a doctrine. It was a temporary practice located in Jerusalem, which was not exported to Judea, Samaria or even Antioch and other parts of the world, where the gospel was taken. Besides, the Church did not continue with the practice in Jerusalem in the process of time. Rather, believers in other territories sent relief to Jerusalem, particularly during the period of global famine. The reason for the obsolete practice was because many people came from the Jewish diaspora for the feast of Pentecost. They did not prepare to stay in Jerusalem. However, as God poured out the Holy Ghost on the believers during that feast, many of the visitors received the Lord and decided to stay in Jerusalem. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common." Maintaining them became the need of the hour for the early church. It thus, birthed the distribution method of selling "their possessions and goods, and (parting) them to all men, as every man had need." God does not say we cannot enjoy what we have; but the charge to us is to give voluntarily and cheerfully, as the Spirit leads.

Ananias and Sapphira, in a hollow and subtle act, sought to emulate other generous disciples like Barnabas, just for the show of it, and to attract the Apostles special recognition. The people who do such things today, follow the footsteps of the Pharisees, who "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Our evangelism, prayers, alms giving, and the things we do to make the lives of other people better, should be out of love

Springs Of Wisdom

By Pastor W. F. Kumuyi



from the depth of our hearts, without expecting praise from men.

When the Spirit of God abides in us, He acts as a lie-detector. He does not go to sleep or need any physical demonstration to wake up. If the Spirit of God is resident and alive in you, He will reveal to you, the secrets in the hearts of men. When Gehazi lied about the things he took from Naaman the Syrian, Prophet Elisha, his master, exposed him through the gift of revelation. There are nine gifts of the Spirit, which include the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom and the discernment of spirits, among others. These combine to help apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to edify the body of Christ.

• **Further reading (King James Version):** Acts 5:3,4,8,9,11-14. Acts 5:1-4. Acts 4:32-37; 2:44-46; 1 Timothy 6:17-19. Acts 5:1,2; John 12:43; Matthew 23:5,6. Acts 5:3,4; 2 Kings 5:20-27; Luke 16:15. Acts 5:3,4,8,9. Acts 5:5,6; Ecclesiastes 11:3; Revelation 22:11-15. Acts 5:3,8,9; Ephesians 4:27; 2 Corinthians 2:11-15. Colossians 3:9; Revelation 21:8,27; 22:15. 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Acts 5:3,9; Psalm 50:18,19,22; Proverbs 19:5,9. Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16:15-19; 2 Timothy 1:16-18. Acts 5:11-14; Ephesians 4:11-13; John 17:21-23.



cause we do not pray, as we should. Charles Finney said: "Prayer is the essential link in the chain of events that leads to revival!" God's people are told to "seek His face." The word "seek" means "to search out by any method; especially by worship and prayer." The word "face" refers to "the counte-

nance; to turn toward His direction." You see, revival does not come to people who seek revival; but to people who seek God! Seeking God means we hunger for Him more than for what we want Him to do for us. The essence of genuine revival is falling in love with Jesus all over again. Seeking Him will bring revival to His church (James 4:8). When we are seeking His face, we will be able to see what has His attention. He wants us to love what He loves, hate what He hates and do what He does.

• **Today's nugget: Revival is a supernatural event. Prayer: Lord, fill me with the hunger for You. Prayer lines: 08033299824. E-mail: amadi-abelukachi@gmail.com, Rev. Abel Ukachi Amadi, General Superintendent, Assemblies of God Nigeria.**

The Benefits Of Adoration (Cont)

(B) REMAINING in Christ results in Jesus' continued indwelling (v.4a), the fruitfulness of the disciple (v.5), success in prayer (v.7) and fullness of joy (v.11). (c) The consequences of failure to remain in Christ are fruitlessness (vv.4-5), removal from Christ and destruction (vv.2a,6).

"In God's presence is fullness of joy" "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore," (Ps 16:11) Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) "Joy" (Gk chara), i.e., the feeling of gladness based on the love, grace, blessings, promises and nearness of God that belong to those who believe in Christ (Ps 119:16; 2Cor 6:10; 12:9; 1Pet 1:8). "Always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy," Phil 1:4.

1:4; Joy is an integral part of our salvation in Christ. It is an inner peace and delight in God' the Father, the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and in the blessing that flows from our relationship with them (cf. 2Cor 13:14).

Scriptural teaching about joy includes the following: (10: Joy is associated with the salvation God provides us in Christ (1Pet 1:3-6; cf. Ps 5:11; 9:2; Is 35:10) and with God's word (Jer 15:16, cf. Ps 119:14).

(2) Joy flows from God as one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit (Ps 16:11; Rom 15:13; Gal 5:22). It does not come automatically, but is experienced as we maintain an abiding relationship with Christ (Jn 15:1-11). Our joy becomes greater when the Spirit mediates a deep sense of God's presence and nearness in our lives (cf. John 14:15-21; see 16:14).

Jesus taught that the fullness of joy is inseparably connected to our remaining in His word, loving others, obeying His commands (John 15:7, 10-11) and being separated from world (Jn 17:13-17).

(3) Joy as a delight in the nearness of God and His redemp-

Adoration (62)

tive gifts cannot be destroyed by pain, suffering, weakness or difficult circumstances (Mat 5:12; Acts 16:23-25; 2Cor 12:9).

(5.3) We enjoy the peace of God as we trust in Him.

'Peace' is one of the gifts of the Spirit

"Peace" (Gk eirēnē), i.e., the rest of heart and mind based on the knowledge that all is well between the believer and his or her heavenly Father, resulting in freedom from the turmoil of anxiety (Rom 15:33; (Phil 4:7; 1Thes 5:23; Heb 13:20)

"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You," (Is 26:3).

We can never avoid strife in the world around us, but with God we can know perfect peace even in turmoil. When we are devoted to him, our whole attitude is steady and stable.

By Paul Adumwoke

PASTOR Claire Odii of Christ Embassy Church has on her 50th birthday celebration held at the Cornerstone, Christ Embassy Church, Oregun, Ikeja, Lagos, enjoined women to be diligent and hardworking in any field they find themselves.

Stressing that women putting in their best in any field they find themselves would not only keep them busy, but would also make them to be financially independent, she called on women to work, rather than depend on their men.

Recounting her experience with Pastor Chris Oyakhilome, the founder of Christ

Odii Celebrates 50, Tasks Women On Industry

Embassy Church, Odii, said: "I joined Christ Embassy Ministry in 1995, by then, I was confused because I did not have the understanding of my identity, but after I got the right teaching from Pastor Chris Oyakhilome, I became aware of whom I am as a child of God. I also knew my mission and purpose in life and the path to fulfilling them."

Odii disclosed that some people do not achieve their purposes in life because they do not know the word of God, saying the gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ, gives meaning to our daily lives and

through the gospel we can impact others too.

"We are winning souls for Christ through the Rhapsody of Reality, through the Healing Schools and all the things we do in the ministry," she said.

Turning 50, she disclosed that she is celebrating life in Christ with understanding. "I understand my role in the gospel, so, I am celebrating the opportunity God has given me to be 50 years old today. We are touching lives globally, so, it is a celebration of life. It is an opportunity to thank God and the people in my life."

Biblical Womanhood

By Emeritus Prof. Mercy Olumide



Supported by God's unchanging love and mighty power, we are not shaken by the surrounding chaos (see Philippians 4:7).

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When The Wild Meets The Urban

By Gregory Austin Nwakunor

“In every corner of the country, from the sprawling wetlands of the south to the undulating plateaus of the north, there is a rhythm that binds everyone,” Aako Ugbabe, an engineer and physicist with interest in astrophysicist and philosophy, notes in his exhibition, *Wild Meets Urban*, which is holding at Didi Museum, on Akin Adesola, Victoria Island, Lagos.

The show ends today. He had turned to his long standing passion for nature walks, bird watching to capture this metaphor. Nature is seen through his eyes.

Like the philosopher he is, Ugbabe interrogates movements of objects on earth. He concludes that the lens captures a moment, but the heart the connection between the objects, thus, to protect the biodiversity, humanity must learn to protect one another.

The architects, that is, insects and spiders, weaving intricate, geometric wonders; the survivors, that's wildflowers and grasses blooming in the most unexpected places; the navigators: birds that traverse the skies oblivious of borders or boundaries, bridging the gap between the heavens and earth all are a proof that “nature was not made for man, human are of nature.”

Watching seagulls gave him insight into the aerodynamics of bird flight: The subject of his new show, titled, *Wild Meets Urban*. Here birds in their natural habitat, insects, butterflies and wildflowers, and people engage in their regular occupation froen in time.

This exhibition is not merely a collection of photographs, it interrogates the connectivity between biodiversity and community: a visual testimony of deep-seated relationship between humans and their environments.

“Whether it is woman on her way to the local market or the stillness of a city under a vast sahelian sky, these images reminds us that our identities are not separate from the land they are birthed,” says Ugbabe.

Beyond the grand vistas, the photographs invite you to look at salient issues of life such as religion, status and orientation. Though often used to divide humanity, they whisper simple truths: “If we cannot master the art of living together in peace, we cannot hope to protect the nature that sustains us,” Ugbabe admonishes.

As you walk through the room to see the exhibits, the images remind you that the butterfly in the garden, the child in the village and the grass in the field are all interconnected.

In his curatorial statement, moses ohiomokhare says, though trained as a scientist, Ugbabe is engaged in building a gallery and cultural centers “approaches photography with the sensibility of a cultural observer and storyteller: his practice

demonstrates how disciplines can intersect to produce a thoughtful visual language that combines analytical attention with poetic sight.”

He continues, his body of works “sits at the intersection of documentation and artistic mediation, inviting viewers into a visual narrative shaped by memory, identity, and lived experience.”

Through his lens, landscapes, communities and everyday encounters are transformed into images that speak about a place, belonging and passage of time. Jos, is the heart of the interrogation, and here, the photographs move to find perfect explanation.

As Ugbabe explains, the works are the product of covid-19, when the ensuing lockdown led to reduced human activities, and sensing this, birds and others suddenly began their incursion into human territories to interrogate “what possibly could have happened.” Thus, the wild came to meet the urban.

In one of the works, which are not titled, Ugbabe lens captures the Narina's Trogon, a very rare specie in this part of the world. The bird is sitting on a tree in his compound.

In another work, he captures some women on their way to ply their trade of fura da nono, kindirimu and man shanu. Emerging from their ruga, resplendent in their clothes, they ran, when a photograph of theirs was about to be taken. This women represent the dichotomy between the wild and urban. They live in the wild in their ruga, tend to cattle, pound millet for fura.

He says, “I want to take pictures but they take off and run, or hide their faces or are resigned to the that I had already clicked the shutter.”

According to Abraham Onoriode Oghobase, “nature sits at the heart of his practice. It offers him a rhythm of slowness, opening space for chance encounters — those fleeting, fragile moments that often passed unnoticed.”

Oghobase adds, “there is a distinct joy in the way he shares stories of these encounters — a quiet excitement that reveals an awakening. Through photography, one senses the reemergence of a creative impulse, perhaps, long held in abeyance.”

He reveals, his particular fascination with documenting birds across the landscapes of Jos and Otukpo speaks to both scientific curiosity and a poetic sensitivity.

Ugbabe was born on October 16, 1949. He had his education at the Ahmadu Bello University, where he graduated with a first class honors in electrical engineering. He obtained a Ph.D in atomic physics from The Flinder's University, Adelaide.

Alongside his art and humanitarian pursuits, Ugbabe is engaged in building a gallery and cultural centre, Padma Arts, as a legacy project to encourage all forms of artistic pursuits: music, photography, poetry, theatre and others.

Babatunde Adebayo Dada: Managing Director, Nolt Finance, Building a Resilient Financial Institution for the Next Decade

One of the most formative influences on his leadership philosophy has been Jim Collins' work, particularly *From Good to Great*. The principle that “good is the enemy of great” reshaped how he approaches institution building, pushing the focus beyond what merely works well enough toward what it takes to create something truly exceptional. Collins' concept of Level 5 Leadership — the blend of deep personal humility with intense professional will — has resonated strongly with him and continues to inform his approach to leading Nolt Finance. That framework underpins major decisions across the organization, from hiring practices and performance standards to how success itself is defined. The culture taking shape at Nolt Finance reflects this philosophy at its core.

In this exclusive interview, Babatunde Adebayo Dada, Managing Director of Nolt Finance, discusses the drivers behind the company's growth and outlines his outlook for the years ahead.

Balancing Strategic Leadership with Maintaining Operational Excellence

THE honest answer is that it requires constant intentionality. Strategy and operations are two sides of the same coin. You cannot lead a company into the future if the day-to-day is falling apart, and you cannot run efficient operations without a clear strategic direction guiding them. I have learned to surround myself with people I trust to own the operational details while I maintain a clear view of where we are going. We have built a leadership structure at NOLT that ensures nothing falls through the cracks, but I still make it a point to stay close enough to the details that I can spot problems before they become crises. That balance is something I work on every single day.

Greatest Impact

My father. He was a deeply principled and ethical man, and those qualities shaped me long before I entered the professional world. He taught me through the way he lived that integrity is non-negotiable, that your word is your bond, and that how you treat people when you have nothing to gain from them reveals your true character. On the professional side, I have long admired Jamie Dimon. What he has built at JPMorgan Chase is remarkable, and what I find most instructive is how he has done it. He is direct, disciplined, and deeply committed to the long-term health of the institution he leads. He does not chase trends, he builds systems.

Evolution of your Leadership Style

Steadfast. That is the word I always come back to. I am steadfast in who I am, in what I believe, and in the principles that guide how we run this company. I am not flakey. The financial services industry has no shortage of noise, and a leader who moves with every sound will exhaust their team and confuse their customers. Principles are timeless. Integrity, discipline, and accountability do not expire. Where we evolve is in how we apply those principles. Technology is reshaping the financial ecosystem at an extraordinary pace, and we embrace that. We invest in digital infrastructure and adapt our delivery models to meet customers where they are. The tools change, the principles that guide how we use them do not.

Nolt Finance's most Notable Achievement

The team we have assembled and the culture we have built. Everything else flows from that. Products can be replicated, strategies can be copied. A culture of excellence, accountability, and genuine care for each other and for our customers cannot be manufactured. When I look at the people who come to work at NOLT every day and the standard they hold themselves to, that is the achievement I am most proud of. The numbers and milestones matter, of course. But they are the result of the people, and our people are exceptional.

The financial services industry is becoming increasingly technology-driven and customer-focused. How is Nolt Finance positioning itself for long-term relevance and competitiveness?

By building a solid business with a strong foundation first. Technology is important, and we



Babatunde Adebayo Dada
MD/Founder NOLT Finance Company Ltd.

are investing in it. But technology without a sound business model is a house built on sand. Our approach has always been to get the fundamentals right: governance, risk management, customer trust, and operational discipline. From that foundation, we are layering in technology that enhances the customer experience and improves how we deliver our services. We are also building deep relationships across the financial ecosystem. Long-term relevance comes from being a trusted partner to your customers and a respected institution within your industry. We are focused on both.

Core Values

Integrity above everything. If we lose that, nothing else matters. After integrity, I would say excellence, accountability, and genuine care for people. I believe that people do their best work when they feel seen, heard, and valued. That is the culture we are building at NOLT. We hold a high standard, and we expect everyone to meet it. But we also make sure that the environment is one where people feel supported and empowered to grow. Leadership is about service. Team building is about trust, and organisational culture is about consistency. What you do when nobody is watching defines your culture far more than what you put on a wall.

Opportunities for Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs

Enormous opportunities. Nigeria's financial sector is in the middle of a generational transformation. The convergence of technology, regulation, and an increasingly sophisticated customer base is creating space for young professionals and entrepreneurs who are willing to learn, adapt, and execute with discipline. Fintechs have opened doors that did not exist a decade ago. Investment management, digital lending, payments infrastructure, advisory services. The opportunities are everywhere. What I would say to young professionals is this: build real skills, not just credentials. Understand the fundamentals of finance deeply. And be patient. The sector rewards those who combine ambition with discipline and a long-term perspective.

Strategic Priorities and Aspirations

For NOLT Finance, the priorities are clear: growing our customer base, increasing our visibility across the markets we serve, deepening the trust our customers have placed in us, and building a stronger asset base. We want to serve our customers well and consistently, and we want to do it with the discipline and focus that has brought us this far. On a personal level, I am focused on becoming a better leader every day. That means staying curious, staying humble, and staying close to the people who depend on my decisions. I want NOLT Finance to be an institution that outlasts any individual, and building that kind of legacy requires a leader who is always growing.



THE BLUEPRINT, THE BUILDER, THE MAN BEHIND THE MISSION.

Mr. Babatunde Adebayo Dada.

Happy Birthday Sir

On behalf of every member of the NOLT Finance family, we are overjoyed to celebrate a man who means more to us than words on a page can fully express. Today is your day, and we want you to feel every ounce of the love, respect, and admiration the team has for you.

You are, in every sense of the word, a gentleman. Sharp in mind, graceful in how you carry yourself, and effortlessly commanding in any room you walk into. You have built something extraordinary, and you did not follow a template to do it. You wrote your own, and you are still writing it.

You push relentlessly and still make every person on this team feel like they matter. You remember the small things about the people around you, and you check in because you genuinely care. You make a demanding environment feel like home, and your wit, your humour, your ability to make an entire room laugh in the middle of the most intense meeting, is the thing that holds this team together on the hardest days.

You overachieve like it is a habit. You inspire like it is effortless, and you lead with a conviction that makes the people around you believe the impossible is simply something that has not been done yet.

May this new year bring you abundant health, deep joy, and continued grace. May God bless the work of your hands, protect everything you have built, and grant you the desires of your heart.

Happy birthday, B.A.D. We are honoured to be on this journey with you.

With admiration, and a pride that is hard to put into words,

Everyone at NOLT Finance.



**Mr. Babatunde
Adebayo Dada**

Managing Director/Founder,
NOLT Finance Company Ltd.

Sokoto's Growing Partnerships In Confronting Malnutrition, Child Healthcare

By Ibrahim Hassan

BEFORE the coming of Governor Ahmed Aliyu, Sokoto State faced some of the most serious public health challenges in Northern Nigeria, particularly in the areas of child malnutrition, maternal mortality, and access to basic healthcare services, largely due to the neglect of the Aminu Tambuwal administration. The failure of that administration to make meaningful investments in critical sectors contributed significantly to the worsening conditions faced by many women and children across the state. These problems were further aggravated by insecurity, widespread poverty, food insecurity, and weak healthcare infrastructure in several communities.

In many rural areas, access to quality medical care was almost nonexistent. Acute shortages of skilled health workers, poor maternal healthcare services, inadequate nutrition, and poorly equipped health facilities contributed to preventable deaths and poor health outcomes. For thousands of families in remote communities, basic healthcare services remained difficult to access throughout the eight years of the Tambuwal administration.

Many residents believe that Tambuwal devoted greater attention to his presidential ambitions during the 2019 and 2023 election cycles than to the healthcare and social challenges confronting Sokoto people. While communities struggled with worsening healthcare access, rising malnutrition, and collapsing rural medical infrastructure, governance didn't receive the urgency required to substantially improve living conditions across the state.

However, amid these difficulties, the administration of Governor Ahmed Aliyu has demonstrated increasing determination to confront the crisis through investments in healthcare infrastructure, maternal and child health services, nutrition programmes, and strategic partnerships with development organisations. Although major challenges remain, the government's growing collaboration with organisations such as UNICEF, UNFPA, and Nutrition International reflects a serious effort to strengthen healthcare delivery and improve nutrition outcomes for vulnerable women and children.

The 2025 Nutrition SMART Survey released by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) revealed that 11 per cent of children under five in Sokoto are wasted, while severe acute malnutrition is projected to affect more than 500,000 children across Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara states. The survey also reported alarming levels of stunting among children in the region.

These statistics represent children whose physical and mental development may never fully recover, mothers struggling to survive childbirth, and communities trapped in cycles of poverty and poor health outcomes. Beyond the humanitarian consequences, the crisis also carries serious economic implications. Malnutrition weakens educational outcomes, reduces productivity, and places additional pressure on an already fragile healthcare system.

Against this backdrop, the Sokoto State government has taken deliberate steps to address longstanding challenges through investments in healthcare delivery, maternal services, nutrition interventions, and institutional reforms. Rather than downplaying the scale of the crisis, the administration has continued to engage development partners while committing substantial resources towards practical interventions.

One of the most notable initiatives introduced by the government is the effort to localise the production of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF), widely used in treating severely malnourished children. Local production using groundnut paste could reduce dependence on imported supplies, lower treatment costs, and improve availability for vulnerable children across affected communities.

The initiative could also generate broader economic benefits by supporting local agriculture, encouraging small-scale production, and creating employment opportunities within the value chain. The Ahmed Aliyu administration clearly understands that poverty and food insecurity are deeply connected to malnutrition, particularly among women and children. Sustainable interventions therefore require not only healthcare delivery, but also policies that encourage local economic participation and community empowerment.

The administration's efforts have attracted recognition from development partners. Recently, the Country Director of Nutrition International, Dr. Osita Okonkwo, commended Sokoto State for its commitment to improving nutrition outcomes for children, adolescents, and pregnant women. According to him, sustained collaboration between Nutrition International and the Sokoto State government could help build a future where children are less vulnerable to the devastating effects of malnutrition.

The state government has also distributed reproductive health equipment and essential medicines across all 23 local government areas to improve access to maternal and child

healthcare services. In many rural communities where health facilities had deteriorated over the years, such interventions are expected to strengthen basic healthcare delivery for pregnant women, nursing mothers, and children.

So far, the Ahmed Aliyu administration has rehabilitated, equipped, and staffed about 160 primary healthcare centres out of the 244 across the state, while work continues on additional facilities. The administration is also constructing three new general hospitals and rehabilitating existing ones, including the state specialist hospital, to expand access to quality healthcare services.

Healthcare remains a central component of Governor Ahmed Aliyu's Nine-Point Smart Agenda. Beyond policy declarations, the administration has recruited about 2,000 nurses and midwives to improve manpower within the sector.

These interventions are especially significant in rural communities where shortages of skilled birth attendants had historically contributed to preventable maternal deaths. While across many parts of Northern Nigeria, women in remote communities still face major obstacles in accessing antenatal care, emergency obstetric services, and skilled delivery support, the story is different in Sokoto State. Sokoto's recent investments in primary healthcare and maternal services are therefore important steps towards addressing some of the underlying causes of high maternal mortality rates.

The Sokoto State government has also continued to prioritise healthcare funding. In its 2026 budget, the state earmarked N122.73 billion for the sector, representing 16 per cent of the total N758.7 billion budget. The allocation exceeds the 15 per cent benchmark recommended under the 2001 Abuja Declaration and has supported upgrades of primary healthcare centres, maternity services, and general hospitals.

Ongoing projects include the completion of the Sokoto State University Teaching Hospital at Kasarawa, improvements at Murtala Muhammad Specialist Hospital, and the upgrading of general hospitals in Binji, Tambuwal, and Sabon Birni local government areas. In addition, 21 ambulances have been procured to strengthen emergency healthcare services across the state.

For a state confronting health and security pressures, investments in emergency response systems are particularly important. Delays in accessing healthcare remain one of the leading contributors to maternal and infant mortality in many rural communities, making improved referral systems essential.

Equally important is the emphasis on community mobilisation and behavioural change. The appeal by the wife of the governor, Dr. Fatima Ahmed Aliyu, encouraging husbands to allow their wives to attend antenatal clinics and deliver in healthcare facilities reflects the reality that public health challenges are often linked to cultural and social barriers.

Infrastructure alone cannot significantly reduce maternal mortality if women are unable or unwilling to access available services. Public awareness, trust-building, and community engagement therefore remain essential components of sustainable healthcare reform. Religious leaders, traditional rulers, and local health workers also play important roles in influencing attitudes towards maternal healthcare, child immunisation, and nutrition practices.

The government's collaboration with international organisations has further strengthened interventions in nutrition, child healthcare, and emergency education support. Partnerships involving UNICEF and European Union humanitarian agencies reflect a growing understanding that health, nutrition, education, and social stability are closely connected.

A malnourished child is less likely to perform well in school, while conflict and displacement often worsen hunger, disease outbreaks, and healthcare disruptions.

Addressing these challenges therefore requires coordinated and multi-sectoral interventions rather than isolated programmes.

Sokoto's decision to convene its Eighth State Council on Health Meeting in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) also suggests increasing institutional commitment towards achieving Universal Health Coverage. Federal health officials rightly described Sokoto as the first state to convene such a council meeting in the current cycle.

Without improvements in household food access and rural livelihoods, efforts to reduce malnutrition may face serious limitations.

The challenge confronting Sokoto therefore extends beyond hospitals and healthcare facilities alone. It requires strengthening social protection systems, improving agricultural productivity, supporting women's economic participation, and expanding community-based nutrition programmes. Encouragingly, the Ahmed Aliyu administration appears committed to pursuing a more comprehensive response to these interconnected challenges.

The government has also demonstrated that, although the challenges are considerable, they are not insurmountable. The administration recognises that lasting progress cannot be achieved in isolation, making collaboration among federal authorities, donor agencies, civil society organisations, religious leaders, and local communities essential to strengthening ongoing interventions and restoring public confidence in healthcare systems.

In a state where malnutrition, maternal mortality, and weak healthcare systems have persisted for decades, meaningful progress will depend on sustained implementation. Sokoto State's recent investments in nutrition programmes, healthcare infrastructure, and strategic partnerships suggest a growing recognition that public health challenges require long-term commitment and coordinated action.

The task ahead remains demanding. Insecurity continues to disrupt access to essential services, and many vulnerable families remain exposed to hunger and preventable diseases. Yet, if the current reforms are sustained and properly monitored, Sokoto State would have gradually built a more responsive healthcare system capable of improving outcomes for women and children.

Ultimately, the true success of these interventions will be measured by tangible improvements in the lives of ordinary people across Sokoto State. It will be reflected in a future where fewer children suffer severe malnutrition, more mothers survive pregnancy and childbirth, and quality primary healthcare services become more accessible and affordable for families in both urban and rural communities. Thankfully, Governor Ahmed Aliyu has shown a determination and commitment to making that difference through sustained action and people-oriented policies. That is the benchmark by which the long-term impact of these efforts will be judged in the years ahead.



Gov Aliyu

Winifred Oyo-Ita, EFCC And The Triumph Of Justice

By Kammonke Abam

THE recent landmark judgment by Justice James Omotosho of the Federal High Court Abuja in which he discharged and acquitted the former Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Winifred Oyo-Ita, alongside her personal assistant, Ubong Effiok, and seven others, of all 18 counts brought against her by the Federal Government has reignited national conversations about justice, accountability, and the excesses of social media.

For many Nigerians who took interest in this case that lasted for over six years, the judgment by Justice Omotosho represented more than a courtroom victory. It became a test of whether allegations alone should be enough to destroy hard earned reputations and terminate flourishing careers. The outcome now forces the nation to reflect on the delicate balance between combating corruption and protecting the constitutional rights of citizens.

When allegations were first brought against Mrs. Oyo-Ita, the public reaction was swift and unforgiving. In Nigeria's charged political climate, accusations of corruption often become convictions in the court of public opinion long before evidence is tested before a judge. Media headlines, political narratives, and social

commentary combined to create an atmosphere where guilt was widely presumed. Yet the foundation of justice is not suspicion. It is proof.

Unfortunately, the line between journalism and media chicanery, these days, is so thin and is getting blurry. If social media with its design and orientation is permissive, the mainstream media shouldn't. Journalists, especially professionally trained ones, should be guided by the ethical standards of the revered profession and be more socially responsible in their reportage.

Oyo-Ita, the former Head of Service of the Federation, was first thrust into national consciousness when President Muhammadu Buhari appointed her, at 52 in 2016, as the third woman in Nigeria, after Engineer Ebele Okeke, and Ms Ama Pepple. She then busied herself with designing reforms to make the Federal Civil Service to be more efficient and citizen-centred until three years later when the EFCC announced that she was being investigated for alleged corruption.

Knowing that she did not have any skeletons in her closet, she, with equanimity, promptly honoured the invitation of the EFCC and totally cooperated throughout the investigation. She was then charged to court and she made appearances in all the days of the hearing.

Her trial, like most of the other celebrated and high profile cases, became the subject of much public debates in the media. Sadly, after a while, the matter took a new twist with the surreptitious untruth perpetuated by a section of the media, especially the social media ecosystem, bullying and stalking her in the process. So, while being tried in the court, the media was also carrying out its own trial.

For instance, the first video on the arraignment titled, 'EFCC Investigates HOS, Winifred Oyo-Ita,' released over six years ago on YouTube as posted by Channels TV garnered 18K views. Thereafter, a video surfaced online falsely accusing Mrs. Oyo-Ita of planning to escape out of the country.

In January of this year, Mrs. Oyo-Ita, in a video that trended widely, was

alleged, without video evidence, of having caved in to the enormity of the evidence of the prosecution, and broken down in tears, a completely baseless lie as no such thing happened.

In all of these, the gullible public believed. They ran commentaries that impugned her character baselessly. Strangely, she maintained a dignified silence throughout these harassments as she believed that the matter was before a court of competent jurisdiction and her commentary may amount to sub judice.

However we look at this issue, this misrepresentation of facts on social media have the potential to weigh in on the final outcome if the presiding Judge is not thorough. This is besides the plethora of destructive harm it puts on the victims, including reputational damage and psychological trauma.

Media trials where suspects are tried, convicted, and vilified in the court of public opinion before a legal verdict have significant implications, creating a tension between anti-corruption efforts and the rule of law.

The court's decision to discharge and acquit Oyo-Ita underscores a fundamental principle of democracy: Every accused person deserves a fair hearing, and every prosecution must be supported by credible evidence. The inability to sustain charges after years of litigation inevitably raises questions about investigative standards, prosecutorial diligence, and the broader consequences of prolonged trials.

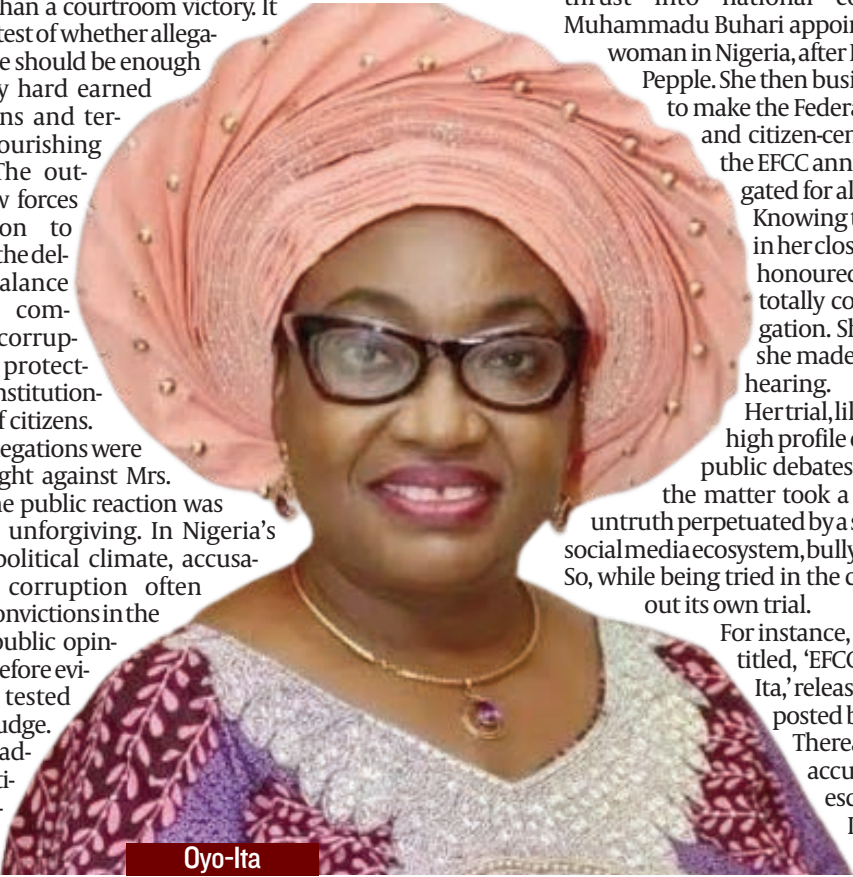
This is not an argument against the EFCC or against anti-corruption efforts. Nigeria desperately needs strong institutions capable of confronting financial crimes, abuse of office, and public sector fraud. Corruption has weakened governance, deepened poverty, and undermined public trust for decades. The EFCC remains a critical institution in that struggle.

However, the fight against corruption must never come at the expense of justice itself.

An effective anti-corruption campaign is not measured merely by the number of arrests or sensational headlines. Its true strength lies in professionalism, evidence-based prosecution, and respect for due process. Where investigations are weak or prosecutions appear politically influenced, public confidence suffers.

Worse still, genuine anti-corruption efforts become vulnerable to accusations of witch-hunting and selective justice.

•Abam wrote from Abuja.



Oyo-Ita

Business

Mine-Tech Unipod: A Bold Research, Innovation Leap For Nigeria's Digital Future

THE unveiling of Mine-Tech University Innovation Pod (Mine-Tech UniPod) at Nasarawa State University marks another milestone in Nigeria's quest to build a knowledge-driven economy anchored on innovation, technology and research. Coming at a time when countries across the world are investing heavily in science, digital transformation and innovation ecosystems, the initiative signals a growing recognition that Nigerian universities must move beyond traditional classroom learning into creativity, enterprise and technological advancement hubs.

The Mine-Tech UniPod, jointly funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), is a strategic intervention aimed at equipping students, researchers and young innovators with the tools, mentorship and collaborative environment necessary to solve real-world problems. In a country where unemployment, underdevelopment and limited industrial capacity remain major concerns, the initiative has the potential to redefine the future of higher education and research in Nigeria.

Key components of the facility include a Mineral Intelligence Laboratory, Materials and Processing Laboratory, Geo-Spatial Innovation Studio, Green Mining and ESG Technology Hub as well as a dedicated prototyping space for designs and testing of new ideas. It also houses a Technology Transfer Office to support research commercialisation, startup incubation and industry collaboration.

The UniPod contains over \$2 million worth of modern equipment, including CNC routers, 3D printers, soil analysers, vacuum formers and other digital fabrication tools. The initiative is expected to strengthen practical learning, encourage entrepreneurship and position Nigerian students and researchers to develop solutions for the country's mining and industrial sectors.

The Mine-Tech UniPod at Nasarawa State

University is one of seven specialised innovation hubs established across universities through a partnership between the UNDP and TETFund to drive innovation and practical learning. The six other UniPods include the AI UniPod at University of Lagos, Agriculture and Food Systems UniPod at Benue State University, Resilience and Recovery UniPod at University of Maiduguri, Manufacturing and Trade UniPod at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Green and Blue Economy UniPod at University of Uyo and the Industrial and Government Technology UniPod at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria – each focusing on advancing research and solutions in critical sectors of national development.

With such innovation, students are no longer confined to lecture halls and textbooks but encouraged to become creators, innovators and entrepreneurs. For researchers, the facility offers an environment that promotes interdisciplinary collaboration and modern research culture. With facilities designed to support innovation and technological experimentation, researchers can now undertake projects with greater relevance to industry and national development. This, pundits say, can lead to breakthroughs in mining technology, environmental sustainability, artificial intelligence, renewable energy and digital solutions tailored for Nigeria's socio-economic realities.

Rather than depend solely on white-collar employment upon graduation, students exposed to innovation ecosystems are more likely to create startups, develop tech-driven businesses and contribute to job creation.

Furthermore, the initiative aligns with the global shift towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution, where economies are being transformed by emerging technologies such as robotics, data science, automation and digital manufacturing. Nigerian students who gain exposure to innovation-driven learning environments stand a better chance of competing



Echono

globally. The UniPod can therefore be a pipeline for producing a new generation of Nigerian innovators capable of building solutions not only for local problems but also for international markets.

Economically, through research commercialisation and technology incubation, innovation pods can stimulate local economies by attracting investments, partnerships and startup ecosystems. Nasarawa State University, Keffi, will gradually evolve into a centre for mining technology and innovation, especially considering the state's vast mineral resources. This linkage between academia, technology and industry is critical for Nigeria's diversification agenda away from oil dependency.

The initiative also has the potential to reduce brain drain among Nigerian researchers and young innovators. According to the Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa, many talented students and academics leave the country because of limited research opportunities and inadequate support systems. Over time, this could strengthen Nigeria's intellectual capital and reduce dependence on imported technologies.

At the heart of this transformative initiative is the pivotal role of TETFund, whose interventions continue to reshape the landscape of tertiary education in Nigeria. Without any doubt, the Sonny Echono-led agency has emerged one of the most important drivers of educational infrastructure, academic development and research support in higher institutions. The Mine-Tech UniPod further reinforces its expanding role beyond traditional infrastructure development into innovation and digital transformation. By supporting innovation ecosystems within universities, TETFund is helping Nigerian institutions transition into globally competitive centres of excellence. Its collaboration with the UNDP reflects the growing importance of international partnerships in advancing educational and technological development. Such partnerships provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, global best practices and access to wider networks of innovation.

The Mine-Tech UniPod initiative also carries symbolic importance for the future of education policy in Nigeria. It demonstrates that government investment in higher education can yield long-term national benefits when targeted at innovation, research and technology.

If properly managed, the Mine-Tech UniPod can become a model for similar innovation ecosystems across Nigerian universities, and inspire a new culture, where students and researchers are empowered not just to consume technology, but to create it.

Interview

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Katsina State Governor, Malam Dikko Umaru Radda, in this interview, gives perspectives on the insecurity in his state and in the country. He maintains that the problem is local; explaining why state police are needed to solve it. The Guardian was there.

Security is local and the governors have clamoured for opportunity and capacity to deal with it. What's your position regarding the insecurity in your state and across the country?

FOR insecurity, you know, it's a long story. It can take us a long time to explain; because when we took over the state in the last three years, about 24 local governments were under siege. In fact, the killings and the kidnapping every day were really mind-boggling. But you know, before I became governor, I came well prepared. So, we said security is our number one, number two, number three priority. And then we realised that it's just a security issue; we have to localise it, it has to be community-based because we have very, very hard-to-reach areas in Katsina.

So, you can imagine if there are bandits attacking such remote places, no matter how proactive we are, it takes hours to reach such places. So, we came up with a mechanism to have people from those locations, who would be willing to give a helping hand before the coming of the security. Then we realised that the best thing we should do is to set up a security outfit made up of well-trained personnel. How did you train them?

We trained them through the military and the police. We equipped them with what we were allowed to give them, that is the pump-action rifle. In the first instance, we supplied them with over 70 Hilux vehicles and over 1,500 motorcycles. We provided them with gadgets, protection, and what have you. We trained them for months, and it was the first thing we did before six months of assuming office. We launched 1,500 combat personnel.

But we selected them from the locations where violence was taking place. Why? Because they will give first-hand support and they need to work in conjunction with the security. We bought a lot of Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs). I think we bought more than 20.

We provided them with allowances. But with the setting up of the new security outfit, which we call Katsina

It's A Lie To Blame Insecurity In Nigeria On Foreign Terrorists – Governor Radda

I called a high-level security meeting in this chamber. Do you know that five minutes after the meeting, the bandits' leader called some people and told them what we had just discussed in the meeting. All the things we discussed at the meeting, he was aware of it all.

Community Watch, it became one of the main vehicles that helped us to suppress insecurity. In fact, the criminals fear this Community Watch more than the other conventional security.

But the bandits and criminals keep coming?

Yes. The only setback for our Katsina Security Watch was that they don't carry AK-47s. Their weapons don't go far, and that makes it difficult for them. But with that, and the support of the conventional security agencies, and air power, we were able to reduce insecurity to the barest minimum.

We heard your government negotiated with the insurgents. Is that correct?

I've said it many times; I'm not going to negotiate with bandits. I will not invite any bandit to come for any negotiation. But if the bandits are under pressure and they want us to sit down and provide a roadmap towards peace, then I will be ready to listen to them. But I will not take a phone and call a bandit and ask him to come and negotiate with me.

With our efforts, we were able to suppress it. But things got stuck. At a point, communities were meeting the bandits and negotiating on their own, and they approached us through the local government and said, 'look sir, we have spoken to these people, and they are ready to stop these things, and we are ready to accept them back into society.' I said it's fine.

At least, if we had not put pressure on these people, they would not have asked for negotiation. But since they have asked for it, you can sit down with them, but I'm out of it. But I will not fight it, because I'm here sitting as a governor because of your mandate, and if that is your wish, you get it. So, we allowed them to negotiate. So, at a point, particularly in Jibia, for one and a half years, nobody was killed. That place was a theatre zone, because we border Niger and some of

them moved in from Niger Republic.

But I followed suit and now it's one year and two months; nobody was killed in Safana, and all these frontline local governments. In fact, there was a time in Katsina State, for about six

months, nothing happened until recently when we began to witness a breakdown of the peace deal in some local governments. In two of them, we know the person responsible; he was born there, his parents were born there, his grandparents were born there. So, all our security issues are really local.

But there are stories of foreign terrorists coming into the country...

The issue of some people coming from other countries is a lie. Even if there are foreigners involved, 95 per cent of those perpetuating this act are our own people; they were born and bred here.

What is complicating the issue now, and even before, is compromise – compromise by the security agencies and even the communities because nobody will come and attack any village without information. It's a lie to blame it on foreign terrorists.

You know there is this particular notorious person they are talking about, who attacked people just in the last two days or three. He's being protected by the community. Yes, he's being protected. You can imagine.

Last two weeks or last week, I called a high-level security meeting in this chamber. Do you know that five minutes after the meeting, the bandits' leader called some people and told them what we had just discussed in the meeting. All the things we discussed at the meeting, he was aware of it all.

So, how are you going to deal with this situation? Sometimes if police are ambushed, maybe one of them has given out information. When the military is ambushed, maybe one of them has given information to the insurgents. So, this is the situation we are in, where a bandits' leader knows where we are; he has more information than we have. You know that if we don't get the cooperation of the people, we cannot end this. It's really a difficult and dicey situation we are in.

You agree that security is local. How can we get communities and leaders who compromise their positions to pay for their sins?

There's hardly anybody you can trust. This is the situation I am in. And I'm not the one to carry the gun and go. And sometimes I even go along with the security to attack these guys. But by the time you get there, you will meet empty houses. They have all run away because they got the information that you were coming.

And sometimes, if security were informed of an attack, when they go there, they ambush them because they had prior information that they were coming. There was one local leader from the community where there was an attack. Someone called him and he sent me the recorded message.

If he changed his clothes, the person who called him would tell him the colour of the clothes he had changed. If after an hour he went back to his house and changed to another set of clothes, the caller would call and tell him he had changed clothes. So, it means that people around him are spying on him and feeding the criminals.

This is the situation we are in. And that is why I have said it over and again that we need state police. And the time is now. We could not give this local security outfit sophisticated weapons because there is no law backing the outfit. Some people have been talking about politics, saying the governors are going to abuse the state police...

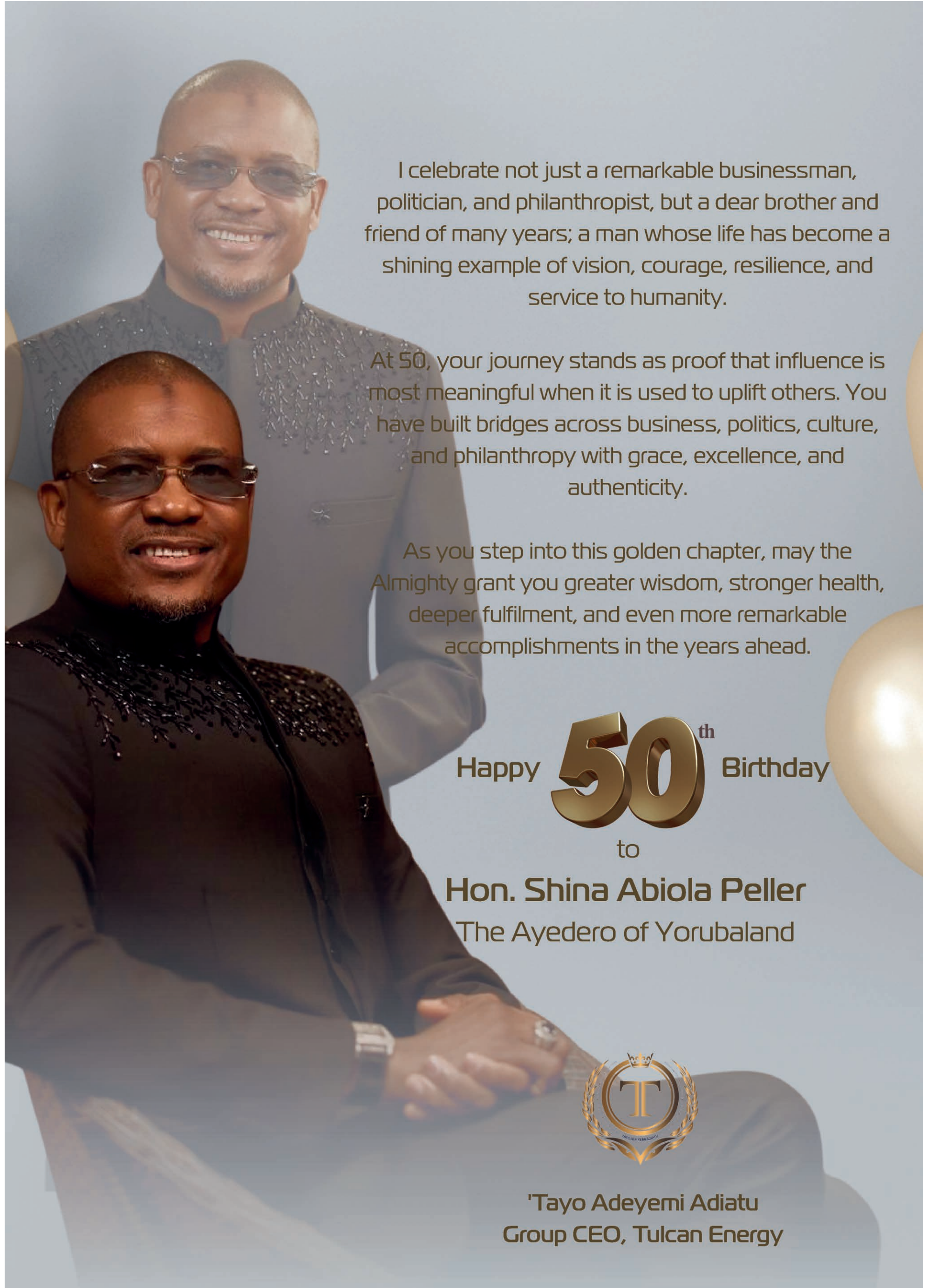
You think the fear of governors abusing state police is misplaced?

Before I became a governor, I used to nurse that fear. But the issue is I can only be a governor for eight years. So, if I use the security apparatus against anybody, that means someone who comes later will also use it against me.

So, it's not about politics. And are we not in Nigeria where a sitting president lost election when he had control of the military and the police? So, what about an ordinary state governor? Will he say he cannot lose election because he has state police? I believe Nigeria is far more sophisticated and there are certain things people can do and get away with. But we are here talking about the lives of people. The money I invested in securing lives, I could have expended it on projects.



Radda



I celebrate not just a remarkable businessman, politician, and philanthropist, but a dear brother and friend of many years; a man whose life has become a shining example of vision, courage, resilience, and service to humanity.

At 50, your journey stands as proof that influence is most meaningful when it is used to uplift others. You have built bridges across business, politics, culture, and philanthropy with grace, excellence, and authenticity.

As you step into this golden chapter, may the Almighty grant you greater wisdom, stronger health, deeper fulfilment, and even more remarkable accomplishments in the years ahead.

Happy **50th** Birthday
to

Hon. Shina Abiola Peller
The Ayedero of Yorubaland



'Tayo Adeyemi Adiatu
Group CEO, Tulcan Energy

Perfect Scores, Uncertain Admissions: The Challenge Of JUPEB Candidates

By Jelilah Bilal

FOR many Nigerian students, gaining admission into the university through the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) is becoming increasingly difficult and frustrating by the day.

As a result of this, many of them are seeking alternative pathways into higher institutions.

One of the most popular and credible alternatives today is the Joint Universities Preliminary Examinations Board (JUPEB). It offers an alternative route for candidates seeking Direct Entry admission into 200 level, allowing successful students to bypass the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) administered by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB).

JUPEB operates like a foundation or pre-degree programme. Candidates are required to choose subjects related to their intended course of study.

At the end of the programme, students write the JUPEB examination. Their performance determines eligibility for Direct Entry admission into 200 level.

Unlike UTME where one examination score largely determines admission chances, JUPEB involves continuous academic assessment over several months.

Over time, JUPEB has become widely used across several Nigerian universities, including the University of Lagos (UNILAG); the University of Ilorin (UNILORIN) Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) and Osun State University (UNIOSUN).

These institutions run affiliated centres where candidates are taught and examined before applying for admission into partici-

pating universities.

JUPEB, formally established in April 2014 by a consortium of 10 partnering universities, led by UNILAG, was approved by the Federal Government in December 2013, with the first examinations conducted in August 2014.

It was created to provide a 10-month Advanced Level (A-Level) programme for Direct Entry admission into 200 Level in Nigerian and foreign universities. It was formed following the suspension of diploma programmes by the National Universities Commission (NUC).

Another alternative is the Interim Joint Matriculation Board (IJMB). Both are advanced-level programmes that allow secondary school graduates to bypass the UTME and gain Direct Entry admission into the 200-level of Nigerian universities.

IJMB was established in 1976 and is governed by Ahmadu Bello University. JUPEB is much newer but both certificates are legally accepted nationwide, though specific preferences exist.

For instance, UNILAG and OAU do not accept IJMB results for admission, strictly preferring JUPEB. Conversely, northern universities heavily favour IJMB. However, JUPEB faces challenges such as administrative, financial, and logistics that impact both students and the credibility of the programme.

The board has experienced issues with the timely release of examination results, leaving many candidates stranded. These delays sometimes prevent students from catching the university admission window, defeating the purpose of the scheme.

The programme is expensive, with total costs—including tuition, accommodation,



A typical JUPEB study centre

and books—sometimes exceeding N500,000.

In 2019, a candidate who obtained the maximum 16 points applied for admission into the University of Ilorin. The application process, including post-UTME screening, was completed within the stated requirements.

At the point of result submission, access to the university admission portal had already been closed. Although JUPEB results are released centrally, universities do not always open their submission windows at the same time.

Some institutions allow earlier access to candidates within their own centres, while others open and close portals independently.

In this case, candidates from one centre would be able to upload results before closure, while others with the same qualification would be unable to do so within the same period.

This creates a situation where eligibility based on academic performance do not guarantee access to the next stage of the admission process.

Responding to how candidates are formally considered for admission, Professor Ibrahim Kayode Adams, Director of the JUPEB Foundation School at the University of Ilorin, explained that the process itself follows a standard structure across universities.

According to him, “candidates who meet the academic requirements are expected to apply through the JAMB Direct Entry form and sit for post-UTME screening. Once they meet the required standard, they are considered for admission, as the system is designed to be open and non-discriminatory.”

Yet, this formal structure does not fully resolve the challenges experienced by candidates, particularly around timing and access to result submission.

Addressing complaints from candidates who reported being unable to upload their results, Adams clarified that the “process is not controlled by individual universities.” He explained that result “uploading is done through the JAMB portal, rather than a university specific platform. As a result, admission processes may already be underway before some candidates are able to upload their results.”

He noted that this situation affects not only

external candidates, but also students within the university’s own JUPEB programme. Adams pointed out that candidates must act promptly once uploading becomes available, as failure to upload within the relevant window makes them ineligible for consideration.

He, however, disclosed that the affected candidates may still explore other opportunity to upload using JAMB.

He said: “The examination body may reopen its portal to allow candidates complete their submissions after verification processes are concluded. In such cases, candidates who upload later can still be considered.”

However, he acknowledged that many external candidates are unaware of this possibility, and often abandon the process or move to other institutions owing to uncertainty and lack of direct communication.

On whether a more structured communication system could be introduced for such candidates, Adams noted that the responsibility does not lie with individual universities. “Since the uploading process is centralised, any form of notification would need to come from JAMB, and apply uniformly to all JUPEB candidates rather than being tied to a specific institution.”

Beyond issues of timing and access, the question of how performance translates into admission outcomes remains central to the concerns raised by candidates.

Adams described the process as largely predictable in terms of admission itself, but not necessarily in relation to course placement. He noted that there is a clear distinction between gaining admission into a university and securing a place in a preferred course.

According to him, candidates are assessed using a combination of factors, including their JUPEB scores, O’level results, and departmental quotas.”

The JUPEB programme in Nigeria, while providing a valuable pathway to 200-level university admission, faces several significant challenges.

This dynamic was evident in 2023 at OAU,, where candidates from JUPEB centres recorded high scores, with several attaining between 15 and 16 points.

Despite these results, some candidates were unable to secure admission into highly competitive courses such as Medicine.

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LASUSTECH Signs Partnership With Polish Business School

By Suliya Tella

THE Lagos State University of Science and Technology (LASUSTECH) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SGH Warsaw School of Economics, in a move aimed at expanding international academic collaboration, student exchange and research opportunities for the institution.

The agreement was signed on Monday, May 11, 2026, at the SGH campus in Warsaw, Poland. LASUSTECH Vice-Chancellor, Professor Olumuyiwa Odusanya, signed on behalf of the university, while SGH Rector, Professor Piotr Wachowiak, signed for the Polish institution.

The partnership establishes a framework for academic cooperation between both institutions, covering research collaboration, faculty exchange, curriculum development and student mobility.

A LASUSTECH delegation led by Odusanya included the Dean of the College of Applied Social Sciences, Professor Olumuyiwa Olamide, and Dr Ayo Eso. The delegation held meetings with SGH officials and academic leaders during the four-day working visit held between May 11 and May 14.

According to LASUSTECH, the agreement aligns with the Vice-Chancellor's IMPACT development model, which focuses on infrastructural growth, manpower development, institutional culture and stronger partnerships between the university and society. The university added that the collaboration also supports the Lagos State Government's THEME+ agenda on education, economic development and global competitiveness.

Founded in 1906, SGH Warsaw School of Economics is regarded as Poland's oldest business school. The institution currently enrolls more than 10,000 students across

undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral and executive programmes.

LASUSTECH said SGH attained the "Triple Crown" accreditation status in 2025, a recognition held by less than 1% of business schools globally. The accreditations include AACSB in the United States, AMBA in the United Kingdom and EQUIS in Belgium.

The Polish institution also maintains partnerships with more than 300 universities worldwide and belongs to global academic

networks such as the Community of European Management Schools and the Partnership in International Management.

Under the agreement, staff of both institutions will participate in exchange and visiting lectureship programmes aimed at encouraging joint teaching and collaborative research.

The arrangement will also allow eligible LASUSTECH students to undertake short-term exchange programmes at SGH Warsaw

School of Economics, with credits earned recognised as part of their academic qualifications at LASUSTECH.

Both universities are also expected to jointly develop research projects in areas including financial inclusion, development economics, digital economy and African business environments.

LASUSTECH said the partnership would also create opportunities for the institution to benchmark its curriculum against internationally recognised standards.

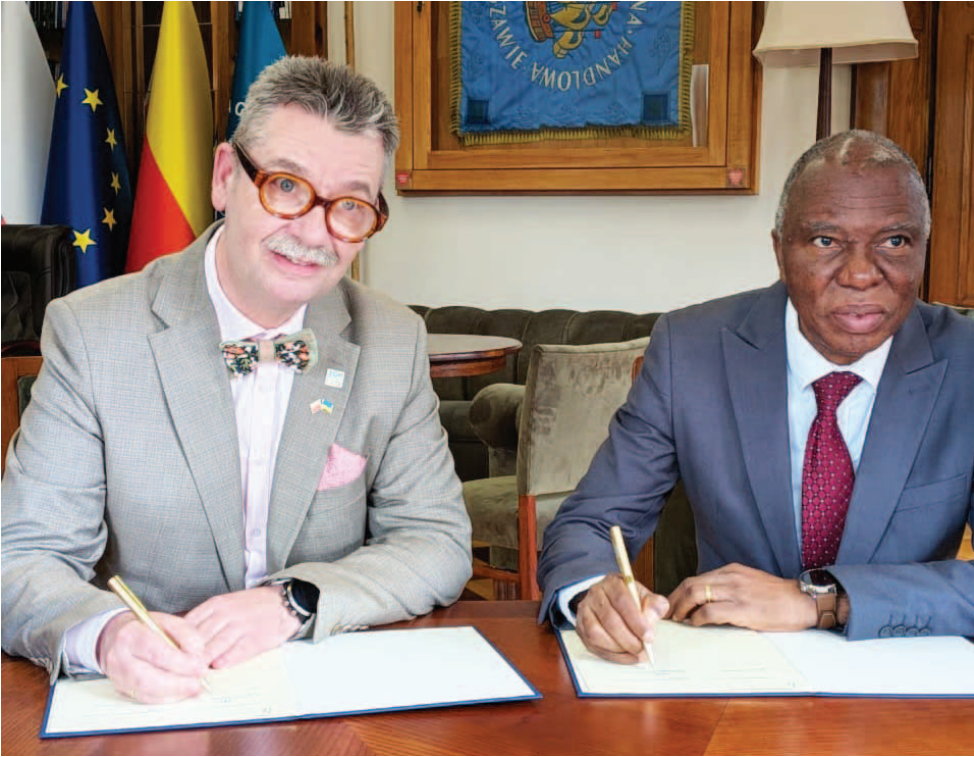
The university noted that the research component of the collaboration could significantly strengthen its academic profile, particularly through access to SGH's economics library, which houses more than 786,000 monograph volumes and about 30,000 foreign electronic journals.

The agreement is also expected to create access to European academic mobility funding and collaborative research grants through SGH's relationship with Poland's National Agency for Academic Exchange and programmes such as Horizon Europe.

Speaking on the development, Odusanya described the partnership as part of LASUSTECH's broader strategy to position the university as an active participant in global academic exchange.

Olamide also said the College of Applied Social Sciences would play a major role in implementing the agreement, particularly in curriculum development, faculty training and improving student outcomes.

The university said the partnership forms part of its wider internationalisation strategy aimed at connecting LASUSTECH programmes with global academic networks, accredited standards and funded research opportunities.



VC, LASUSTECH, Prof Olumuyiwa Odusanya (right) and Rector, Warsaw School of Economics (SGH) - Prof Piotr Wachowiak at the signing of the MoU in Warsaw, Poland.

INC Rekindles Ijaw Nationalism, Demand For New States, Resource Control

By Adamu Abuh

THE inauguration of a new leadership for the Ijaw National Congress (INC) in Warri has reignited debates on restructuring, resource control, and the political future of the Niger Delta, as Ijaw leaders renewed longstanding demands for additional states, expanded local government areas, and stronger internal unity.

The event held on Thursday marked the formal transition of leadership from outgoing President Benjamin Okaba to newly elected President Macdonald Igbadiwei. It drew traditional rulers, political leaders, professionals, youth groups, and delegates from Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Edo, Ondo, and Akwa Ibom States, underscoring the broad geographical spread of the Ijaw nation.

What began as a ceremonial inauguration quickly expanded into a wider political and cultural platform, with speakers revisiting long-standing grievances over marginalisation, environmental degradation, and economic exclusion in the oil-producing region. Despite the Niger Delta's central role in Nigeria's oil output and foreign exchange earnings, many contributors noted that Ijaw communities continue to grapple with poverty, unemployment, weak infrastructure, and ecological damage linked to decades of exploration activities.

In his inaugural address, Igbadiwei described his emergence as both symbolic and historic, noting its significance as a return of INC leadership to the Western Zone. He emphasised that leadership must be rooted in service, sacrifice, and accountability, pledging to run an inclusive administration that unites all factions within the Ijaw nation.

A central issue at the congress was renewed agitation for the creation of Toru-Ebe State and Oil River State. Proponents argued that new states would address structural imbalance, improve political representation, and strengthen inclusion for Ijaw communities, particularly in Edo and Ondo States.

Delegates also intensified calls for the expansion of local government areas in Bayelsa State,

proposing an increase from eight to at least twenty-four. They argued that the current structure limits grassroots development, weakens political participation, and restricts access to federal resources needed for community advancement.

Economic justice dominated discussions, with participants insisting that the issue of resource control remains unresolved. Outgoing President Okaba reiterated that the Ijaw nation must intensify advocacy for greater ownership and control of resources derived from its territory. He argued that decades of oil extraction without corresponding development have deepened inequality in the region.

He further declared that the idea of an "Ijaw Republic" reflects growing frustration over structural neglect, even as leaders stressed that their demands remain within constitutional and restructuring frameworks.

Environmental concerns also featured prominently, with speakers highlighting the continued degradation of farmlands, waterways, and fishing livelihoods due to oil pollution. They

called for stronger environmental accountability and fair compensation for affected communities.

The congress also addressed specific grievances in oil-bearing communities such as Ibeno in Akwa Ibom State, where leaders alleged that host communities have been denied recognition and equitable benefits from oil operations. They pledged to pursue lawful and constitutional means to secure justice and inclusion.

Cultural identity formed another key pillar of the gathering. Traditional rulers and cultural troupes appeared in colourful regalia, reinforcing calls for the preservation of the Ijaw language, customs, and heritage. Speakers warned that cultural erosion poses a long-term threat to identity, particularly among younger generations increasingly influenced by external cultures.

Across the event, unity emerged as a recurring theme. Leaders repeatedly cautioned against internal divisions, political rivalries, and personal ambitions that could weaken the collective struggle of the Ijaw nation.

Okaba urged reconciliation among aggrieved stakeholders, while Igbadiwei promised an open-door policy that would accommodate all interests, including former rivals in the electoral process.

"We are going to reach out to all who contested with us. The INC belongs to every Ijaw person," he said, stressing that inclusiveness would define his leadership approach.

Traditional rulers and elders reinforced this message, warning that disunity could undermine ongoing advocacy for restructuring, resource control, and political recognition. They urged stakeholders to prioritise collective interests over sectional or individual considerations.

The election that produced the new leadership was widely praised for its transparency and peaceful conduct, despite earlier tensions and litigations. Delegates described the transition as evidence of growing democratic maturity within the INC and a sign of institutional stability.

In his valedictory remarks, Okaba cautioned against attempts to impose leadership through "backdoor arrangements," insisting that the will of the people must be respected. He urged the incoming leadership to strengthen internal cohesion and preserve institutional credibility.

Igbadiwei outlined several priorities for his administration, including intensified advocacy for state creation, expansion of local governance structures, and renewed engagement with national institutions on issues of justice and equity. He also highlighted pressing challenges such as youth unemployment, environmental degradation, and cultural marginalisation.

He reaffirmed the INC's commitment to enforcing Supreme Court judgments relating to ward delineation in the Warri Federal Constituency, insisting that legal rulings must be implemented to ensure fairness and stability in contested areas.

He also announced plans to deepen international engagement, including partnerships with United Nations-related bodies and global institutions, to draw attention to Niger Delta issues and strengthen advocacy for development support.



Business

New Programme From Institute Targets Africa's Executive Visibility Crisis

By Sulaimon Salau

STAGE Africa Executive Institute has launched what it describes as the first structured authority engineering programme designed specifically for African executives, a system built not to get leaders featured, but to get them taken seriously.

The Authority Press System also known as APS, is a five-phase, end-to-end media positioning and thought leadership programme that provides structured visibility infrastructure for Africa's founders, executives, and senior business leaders. The programme formally launches in April 2026 and is now accepting enquiries for its inaugural cohort.

The initiative responds to a pattern Stage Africa Executive Institute has observed consistently across Nigerian and African organisations: executives and founders doing significant, impactful work who remain largely unknown outside their immediate business environments.

The consequences, the institute argued, extend beyond personal career trajectories to affect the organisations they lead, limiting their access to partnerships, investment conversations, speaking platforms, and the kind of market trust that increasingly determines business opportunity.

"There is a generation of African business leaders whose expertise, track record, and perspectives deserve to be part of the conversations shaping their industries and the continent. They are not in those conversations not because they have nothing to contribute, but because authority was never built deliberately."

NIVEA Concludes N3b Consumer Promotion With Grand Finale Ceremonies

By Sulaimon Salau

NIVEA has formally concluded its 3 billion National Consumer Promotion, marking the end of a 12-week nationwide campaign that has delivered cash rewards, vehicles, travel experiences, and millions of instant prizes to consumers across Nigeria.

The promotion reached its peak with a series of grand finale ceremonies held over three days, from Friday, April 17, to Tuesday, April 21, 2026, in key cities including Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. In Lagos, the final presentation took place at the Providence Hotel, Ikeja, where winners were officially presented with their prizes in a grand, high-profile event attended by brand representatives, regulators, and other key stakeholders.

The final draw, conducted on April 9, produced 10 grand prize winners. These included recipients of three brand-new SUVs, as well as winners of cash prizes of 5 million, 3 million, and 2 million, respectively. Additional winners secured all-expense-paid trips to Spain to watch Real Madrid play live.

One of the recipients at the grand finale, Oladipupo Demilade, a final-year student at Caleb University and one of the lucky SUV winners, said he initially doubted the notification. "When I received the call, I did not think it was real. I had to verify it before it became clear. It is a significant moment for me, particularly at this stage of my life," he said.

Joy Onwuariakaje, one of the 5 million cash prize winners, related a similar experience. According to her, the first reaction was that of doubt. But that all changed, she said, after she confirmed through the right channels. She said the win has turned into a meaningful opportunity for her and her business.

The Macallan Unveils Adekunle Gold As Brand Ambassador

By Sulaimon Salau

THE Macallan, the world-renowned single malt Scotch whisky, has officially unveiled award-winning singer, songwriter and cultural icon Adekunle Gold as its Brand Ambassador in Nigeria, marking the formal beginning of a partnership built on shared values of craftsmanship, excellence, legacy and intentional creativity.

The announcement follows the successful nationwide unveiling of The Macallan's Timeless Collection across Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, and signals a new chapter in the brand's cultural journey within Nigeria.

The official unveiling took place during The Macallan Timeless Collection launch held in Lagos, where guests from across entertainment, business, culture, and media gathered for an immersive evening celebrating the introduction of the brand's re-designed Double Cask and Sherry Oak Collections.

What many experienced as an unforgettable evening of whisky, music, and storytelling also became the public reveal of a partnership that had been quietly taking shape over the past year.

Speaking on the partnership, Adekunle Gold said: "This partnership is rooted in shared values, craftsmanship, excellence, legacy, class and the beauty of taking time to create something meaningful. Everything I create, whether through music, culture or storytelling, is built with intention, and that is what makes this relationship with The Macallan feel both natural and deeply authentic. We both understand that timeless work is never rushed, and I am excited about what we will build together."

Speaking on the significance of the partnership, Hammed Adebisi, Senior Brand Manager, Nigeria and West and Central Africa at Edrington, said: "Adekunle Gold embodies many of the values that have defined The Macallan for over two centuries.

NISO Rolls Out New Directives To Foster Grid Stability

By Sulaimon Salau

DETERMINED to combat energy theft and ensure a steady electricity supply across Nigeria, the Nigerian Independent System Operator (NISO) has rolled out new directives targeting Distribution Companies (Discos), Generation Companies (GenCos), Eligible Consumers and Large Customers under the Distribution Companies (DisCos). This bold initiative comes in response to the ongoing challenges faced by the nation's power sector, where energy theft has undermined the reliability and efficiency of electricity supply.

But following a crucial meeting held in Lagos with stakeholders from Discos, GenCos, Eligible Customers and Large DisCo Customers on the Ikorodu-Sagamu 132kV DC lines, NISO's Managing Director, Engr. Abdu Mohammed Bello, emphasised the importance of collective responsibility in addressing the rampant issue of energy theft.

The new directives are expected to introduce stricter penalties for those found engaging in fraudulent activities related to electricity consumption. NISO has also disclosed that it would take a tough stance against erring eligible customers who ma-

Threatens To Go Tough On Erring Customers

nipulate meters or engage in any form of energy pilfering.

According to him, NISO hopes to mitigate the financial losses incurred due to energy theft, which have historically impacted the overall stability of the power sector.

Bello said the agency had discovered a very high level of Transmission Loss Factor arising from electricity theft along the Ikorodu-Sagamu transmission line corridor, and they have engaged the major stakeholders to address the "very serious issue" and devising a sustainable solution, checks and controls.

According to him, some of the large customers involved in the electricity theft are directly connected to the Ikeja Electricity Distribution Company and Ibadan Distribution Company.

He said the theft along the line is close to 180 Mega Watts (MW) which is almost equal to the daily allocation of Jos Electricity Distribution Company.

To curtail these challenges, he said the NISO has rolled out directives affecting the GenCos, Discos and the eligible customers.

"The operators should ensure minimum off-take compliance for eligible customers and also metering classification in line with the provisions of eligible customer regulations, 2024 and also in line with the metering code.

"For the Eligible Customers, NISO directed an immediate recalibration of the metering instrument, the current transformers and the voltage transformers, which shall be done by the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN)," he stated.

NISO also directed a mandatory installation of check meters and dedicated current and voltage transformers.

He said: "That is a provision of the metering code and in most instances you will see that these check meters are not there. So it's a mandatory directive we have given them to make sure that the relevant parties install the check meters at each and every interface points.

It also directed full compliance with metering code requirements especially in the area of meters and associated metering installation like CTs and VTs.



Executive Director, Finance and Investment, NEM Insurance Plc, Idowu Semowo (left); Company Secretary/Legal Adviser, Ifunanya Iwuagwu; Managing Director/CEO, Andrew Ikekhua; Group Chairman, Tope Smart; Director, Daphne Dafinone and Non-Executive Director, Kelechi Okoro at the 56th Yearly General meeting of NEM Insurance Plc in Lagos.

PHOTO: SUNDAY AKINLOLU

Onne Customs Generates N77.3b Revenue In One Month, N258.2b In Four Months

By Sulaimon Salau

THE Onne Area II Command of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has declared N77.3 billion in the month of April, 2026.

The Customs Area Controller of Onne Area II Command, PortHarcourt, Rivers State, Comptroller Aliyu Mohammed Alkali, who disclosed this while highlighting his achievements within the period said: "This remarkable achievement reflects the unwavering commitment of the Command to revenue generation, trade facilitation, and the enforcement of extant government fiscal policies.

"Just last month, in April 2026, the Command recorded its highest monthly revenue collection since inception, generating over

N77.3 billion. It is worthy of note that from January to April 2026, the Command generated a total revenue of N258.2 billion. This represents an unprecedented revenue collection in the history of the Command.

While showcasing the Command's significant anti-smuggling achievements recorded over the past four months, Alkali said: "In February 2026, vigilant officers of the Command intercepted an attempted smuggling of one 40-foot container declared to contain plumbing materials, with a Duty Paid Value (DPV) N185.2 million. Upon examination, it was discovered that the perpetrators had concealed the original container number and replaced

it with a fake one in an attempt to unlawfully remove the container from the port without payment of duty.

"Also in the same month, officers of the Command intercepted nine 40-foot containers laden with various items, including bales of fabrics, building and carpentry tools, cartons of LED lights, cartons of solar fans, and bales of garments, among others, with a DPV of N1.2 billion.

"The importers contravened Sections 231, 233, and 246 of the Nigeria Customs Service Act, 2023, through alteration of marks and numbers, document falsification, and attempted smuggling," he stated.

Mobile Network Operators Invest N2.13trn In Infrastructure Upgrade In 2025 – NCC

By Sulaimon Salau

THE Mobile Network Operators invested over N2.13 trillion in network infrastructure and upgrades in 2025, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has said.

The NCC, while acknowledging the recent public outcry over the poor quality of telecommunications services in parts of the country, however assured that efforts to improve network quality are yielding results.

The Head, Public Affairs, NCC, Nnenna Uko-ha, in a statement, said the Mobile Network Operators have invested over N2.13 trillion on infrastructure upgrade, while the tower companies invested an additional N373.8 billion across the sector.

"These investments supported the addition and upgrade of over 2,800 telecommuni-

cations sites nationwide, addressing coverage and capacity gaps in several locations," he added.

Uko-ha said: "NCC recognises the frustration experienced by consumers when calls drop, internet speeds slow down, data services become unstable, or service disruptions affect daily activities."

He pointed out that telecommunications services are central to how Nigerians work, learn, do business, access essential services, and stay connected, therefore consumers must receive value for the services they pay for.

The commission stated that improving quality of service has been one of its top priorities over the past two years, as it has intensified monitoring of Mobile Network Operators, Internet Service Providers and

Tower Companies, strengthened data-driven oversight, and deepened engagement with relevant public institutions to address structural barriers that affect service delivery.

The telecom industry regulator said that the sector is currently undergoing one of its most extensive network expansion and modernisation cycles in recent years, following a prolonged period of under-investment.

The NCC listed the interventions to include the addition of faster 4G and 5G layers on existing sites, expansion of fibre backhaul to improve site capacity and resilience, targeted deployments in high-demand urban locations, rollout into underserved communities, and general network equipment refresh.

SCP 2026: HEDA Laments Gap Between Climate Science, Farmer's Field

By Silver Nwokoro

THE Human and Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA Resource Centre) has lamented the gap between climate science and the farmer's field.

The organisation noted that such gap remains one of Nigeria's most pressing and underappreciated challenges.

This was the outcome of the just-concluded four-day hybrid training programme jointly organised by HEDA Resource Centre, Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet), Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN), Nigerian Association of Women in Agriculture (NAWIA), and Association of Small Scale AgroProducers in Nigeria (ASSAPIN).

They trained and sensitised over 500 farmer leaders, cooperative representatives, extension actors, and agricultural stakeholders on the 2026 Seasonal Climate Prediction (SCP) in local languages across 17 states and all six geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

The training was designed to improve farmers' access to climate information and strengthen their ability to understand, analyse, and utilise seasonal climate forecasts for agricultural decision-making. The initiative also aimed at breaking the communication gap between climate forecasts, policy discussions, and practical implementation at community level.

The programme deliberately mobilised participants with strong community reach and influence, including members of farmer cooperatives, extension networks, women farmer groups, and local agricultural associations who are in turn expected to further share lessons from the training within their communities and support wider awareness on climate-smart farming practices during the 2026 farming season.

The programme combined virtual training with physical community participation. While sessions were delivered online, local partners across several states mobilised and gathered participants in central locations where they jointly participated in the training and sensitisation sessions. This approach ensured that farmers without smartphones, stable internet access, or digital literacy were not excluded from the programme.

The training recorded seven sessions held over four days, covering states including Adamawa, Bauchi, Niger, Kaduna, Oyo, Osun, Kwara, Lagos, Ogun, Benue, Nasarawa, Imo, Abia, Cross River, Bayelsa, Plateau, and Taraba. Participants included smallholder crop farmers.

Why Africa Must Harness Cocoa, Chocolate's Global Market Expansion

By Gbenga Akinfenwa

FROM \$169.12b in 2025, the cocoa and chocolate market is projected to hit \$245.97b by 2031, registering a compound yearly growth rate of 6.44 per cent.

This growth is underpinned by surging demand for dark chocolate on account of its heart health benefits, Europe's dominant market expansion, and the emergence of a cocoa lifestyle culture in Asia, alongside India's steady expansion in both cocoa production and domestic chocolate consumption.

Parallel to cocoa, the global coffee market is projected to reach approximately \$486.2b by 2035 from the present \$284.8b. This growth is fuelled by the rapid growth of coffee culture and a surge in Ready-

to-Drink (RTD) options.

As climate change increasingly threatens Arabica yields, the industry is pivoting toward Fine Robusta and heat-resistant varieties thereby creating a unique and strategic opening for African producers who cultivate these resilient beans.

Despite the robust growth celebrated in boardroom reports, the reality on the ground in West, East, and Central Africa is one of systemic hardship. Reports have it that African cocoa and coffee farmers are currently operating as the economic shock absorbers of the world's appetite.

When global prices fall below the cost of production, farmers are said to be absorbing the losses – a loss that trans-

lates into skipped meals, children withdrawn from school, and the inability to afford basic healthcare.

For many families, cocoa and coffee are not mere commodities, they are the only

We cannot talk about a \$245b cocoa market or a \$486.2b coffee market while the people growing the beans are struggling to put food on their own tables. If the world wants Africa to contribute to the 2031 and 2035 projections, the world must first invest in the dignity and survival of the African farmer.

lifeline. Volatile market prices have prevented farmers from affording the fertilisers, inputs, labour hiring or climate-resilient seedlings needed to protect their crops and investment, leading to a bleak cycle of declining yields and deepening debt.

As temperatures rise, smallholder farmers are being forced to move to higher altitudes or abandon their ancestral lands, often with zero financial safety net from the global brands that profit from their harvest.

According to the Cocoa and Coffee Farmers Alliance Association of Africa (COCEFAAA), the consequences of farmer poverty do not remain at the farm gate, they travel through the entire supply chain.

The Global President of COCEFAAA, Comrade Adeola Adegoke, said when a farmer cannot afford to maintain their land, the quality and quantity of global supply suffer, ultimately threatening the very growth the industry predicts. "A drop in prices does not merely hurt households; it threatens the resilience of the entire global supply chain."

Adegoke noted that in a bid to capture a significant share of the burgeoning value, Africa must move decisively beyond the farm gate and integrate deeper into the global value chain.

"COCEFAAA has identified three strategic pillars – Research and Development to Safeguard Africa's Crops; Domestic Roasting Facility, Processing and Value Addition; and Regional Block Collaboration and Collective Bargaining.

"Africa must urgently prioritise Agricultural R&D with a focus on developing drought, pest, and disease-resistant crop varieties; creating early-maturing crops to shorten the return on investment for smallholder farmers; supporting sustainable agricultural practices that meet increasingly strict global environmental standards.

"The vast majority of the \$245b in cocoa and \$486.2b in coffee valuation are captured at the processing, domestic roasting facility and retail stages, not at the farm. Africa must be intentional in the establishment of domestic roasting facility and processing plants capable of transforming raw beans into other derivatives, thereby retaining the added value within the continent.



Coffee Beans

Food Security, Funding Unite NASS, Agric Institutions

From Rotimi Agboluaje, Ibadan

THE National Assembly and agricultural colleges and research institutions in Nigeria have expressed readiness to deepen collaboration on food security, research funding and legislative reforms aimed at strengthening the agricultural sector.

This comes as the Senate Committee on Agricultural Colleges and Institutions concludes arrangements for the maiden Legislative Summit and Extension, scheduled to hold at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan.

The committee is chaired by Senator Sharafadeen Alli, representing Oyo South Senatorial District.

Speaking at a press conference held at the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Press Centre, Iyaganku, Ibadan, Oyo State, to announce the summit, Alli said the initiative had become necessary to address persistent challenges of food insecurity and inadequate funding for agricultural research institutions across the country.

He lamented the disconnect between farmers and research institutions, noting that it had contributed to declining agricultural productivity in Nigeria, despite available innovations.

"Many farmers remain disconnected from modern agricultural innovations despite several breakthroughs recorded by Nigerian research institutions. We must put in place the right legislation to support our institutions, improve curricula, encourage collaboration and strengthen food security."

The lawmaker stressed that agriculture without research would amount to guesswork, adding that Nigerian research institutions had developed improved crop varieties capable of boosting productivity and farmers' income.

He cited improved cocoa and cassava varieties as examples, expressing concern that many farmers were yet to benefit from such innovations due to weak extension linkages.

Alli also lamented Nigeria's declining agricultural influence despite its historical leadership in global crop produc-

tion, recalling that Malaysia once sourced oil palm seedlings from Nigeria but had since overtaken the country.

He disclosed that the summit would bring together over 28 agricultural institutions, development partners, diplomatic missions and policymakers to deliberate on practical solutions to challenges in the sector.

According to him, participants are expected from the European Union, GIZ, the British High Commission, the Malaysian Embassy and other international partners.

He added that discussions would focus on youth and women empowerment through mechanised agriculture, improved access to inputs, and enhanced market systems.

Alli further noted that partnerships were being developed to support farmers with land preparation, production, harvesting and market access, while also reducing post-harvest losses through the deployment of solar-powered drying technology.

Earlier, the Chairman of NUJ, Oyo

State Council, Akeem Abas, described the planned summit as a timely intervention capable of boosting agricultural productivity and economic development.

Also speaking, the Executive Director of the National Horticultural Research Institute, Professor Mohammed Attanda, said the summit would help strengthen legislative frameworks guiding agricultural research and training institutions.

He noted that Nigerian agricultural institutes possess skilled manpower and globally competitive innovations but require stronger coordination and funding support.

Similarly, the Acting Executive Director of the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria, Dr. Adedeji Rasheed, called for increased private sector participation in funding agricultural research.

He said government alone cannot not sustain adequate research funding, urging stakeholders in the agricultural value chain to contribute more to research and development.

Alleged N36m Fraud: EFCC Arraigns Blessing CEO

By Yetunde Ayobami Ojo and Ngozi Egenuka

THE Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has arraigned social media influencer and self-styled relationship therapist, Okoro Blessing Nkiruka, popularly known as Blessing CEO, before the Federal High Court sitting in Ikoyi, Lagos.

She was arraigned before Justice Deinde Dipeolu on a two-count charge bordering on obtaining N36 million by false pretence and stealing.

According to the EFCC, the alleged offences involve the sum of N36,000,000, said to have been fraudulently obtained from one Mrs. Ifeyinwa Nonye Okoye under the guise of leasing a six-bedroom detached duplex in Lekki, Lagos.

At the commencement of proceedings, defence counsel, P.I. Nwafor, informed the court that his client had made a partial refund of N24 million to the nominal complainant.

He urged the court to grant a short adjournment to allow for settlement of the outstanding balance.

"We have an application to make. The defendant approached the nominal complainant and refunded N24 million out of the N36 million."

Sokoto 2027: Ex-Deputy Gov Emerges As ADC Governorship Candidate

From Tunde Omolehin, Sokoto

FORMER Deputy Governor of Sokoto State, Manir Muhammad Dan'iya, has emerged as the consensus governorship candidate on the platform of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) for the 2027 general election in the state.

Dan'iya, a close political ally and former deputy to ex-governor Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, confirmed the development in a statement issued by his former Press Secretary, Aminu Abdullahi Abubakar, on Friday. He expressed gratitude to party leaders, stakeholders, and supporters for the confidence reposed in him.

The former deputy governor, who also holds the traditional title of Walin Sokoto, described his emergence as a major responsibility and pledged to work for unity, stability, and development across the state.

He particularly appreciated Tambuwal for his support, guidance, and commitment to the political growth of Sokoto State, noting that the backing from elders, youths, women's groups, and political associates reflected a shared vision for the future of the state.



Director, Legal Department, Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC), Olufemi Kushimo (left); Judge of the National Industrial Court, Justice Maureen Esowe; President, National Industrial Court, Justice Benedict Kanyip; Member of the Investment and Securities Tribunal (IST), Felix Onwuneme and Executive Director, Corporate Services, NDIC, Emily Osuji, during the NDIC and National Judicial Institute 2026 Sensitization Seminar in Lagos...on Friday.

PHOTO: AYODELE ADENIRAN

Police Dismiss Officers For Robbing Victims Of N19m In Phone-point Heists

From Obinna Nwaoku

ELEVEN police officers have been arrested, dismissed or declared wanted in Rivers State after investigators linked them to a series of armed robberies in which victims were forced at gunpoint to transfer funds from bank accounts and cryptocurrency wallets, said to be more than N19.7 million.

The disclosure came during a press briefing by the Command's Force Public Relations Officer, DCP Anthony Okon Placid, who described the criminal operations as "a grave betrayal of the trust placed in them by the people of Rivers State."

Placid disclosed that the officers operated in minibuses, posed as stop-and-search teams, targeting motorists at

illegal checkpoints before abducting them and draining their accounts.

He said: "In one incident on November 3, 2025, a victim identified as Festus Saturday was stopped on Igbo Etche Road, Port Harcourt, by six officers armed with AK-47 rifles.

"Finding nothing incriminating, the officers, nonetheless, abducted and assaulted him, seized his phones, and transferred N4.5 million from his OPay account and the naira equivalent of USD 1,742 from his cryptocurrency wallet, a combined N7.3 million.

"Three inspectors—Ayanniyi Jelili, Durojaye Francis, and Olayemi Titus—have been arrested in connection with the case. Three others, Inspectors Awele Ogbogu, Prosper Aghotor, and

Corporal Favour Onwuchekwa, remain at large. Aman hunt is ongoing."

Placid further disclosed that a separate syndicate of five officers attached to the Command's Department of Operations Patrol Team carried out similar attacks on at least three other victims between September 2025 and January 2026.

"Mr. Okparaocha David Ugochukwu was robbed of cash, gold jewellery, and a wristwatch valued at over N73 million. Mr. John Godstime lost N1.5 million after officers forcibly obtained his ATM details along NTA Road.

"The combined losses across both cases exceed N19.7 million. Five officers from the DOPS Patrol Team—Inspectors John Okoi, Eyibo Asuquo, Udo

Ndipmong, Bright Nwachukwu, and Anele Ikechukwu—have been dismissed from the Force following orderly room proceedings. Their case file has been forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions, with charges expected within 30 days."

Placid reiterated that the conduct is "a grave betrayal of the trust placed in them by the people of Rivers State," adding that the Command "remains uncompromising in its commitment to accountability."

He added that Three Toyota Sienna buses used in the operations were among exhibits recovered, urging members of the public to contact the Command's control room with information on the fleeing suspects.

Remain Steadfast In Defending Justice, Fairness, Sanwo-Olu's Tells Church At Synod

By Chris Irekamba

LAGOS State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has called on the church to remain steadfast in defending the values of justice, fairness, integrity and human dignity whenever they are threatened.

The governor made the call on Friday while delivering his goodwill message at the Third Session of the Ninth Synod of the Diocese of Lagos West, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).

Sanwo-Olu, who was repre-

sented by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), 'Bimbola Salu-Hundeyin, said that the church does not belong to any political actor, but to God and to the people, adding that it should remain so.

The governor, who quoted Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, stressed that Lagos and indeed Nigeria was experiencing one of those significant seasons of transition, adding that he was grateful to be in the house of God. He described the house of God as the best place to be at a time

like this.

Sanwo-Olu, who commended the Bishop of the Diocese of Lagos West, the Rt. Rev'd. Dr. James Odedeji, and the entire members of the church for their commitment to the diocese and the people of Lagos West, prayed that the church would remain engaged, vigilant, deliberate, intentional, and invested in the life of the community.

He described Anglican Communion as a builder of society, spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving

hope to the weary, comforting the broken hearted, wiping away tears in moments of pain and uncertainty and giving victory when citizens earnestly seek it.

He said through its churches, schools, hospitals, missions and outreach programmes, the Anglican church had consistently demonstrated the love of Christ in action by shaping minds, nurturing characters, strengthening families and contributing immensely to the moral and spiritual foundation of society.

Four Fubara Loyalists Disqualified As APC Clears 21 For Rivers Reps Primaries

From Ann Godwin, Port Harcourt

THE All Progressives Congress (APC) has disqualified four loyalists of Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, from contesting the party's House of Representatives primaries scheduled for Saturday, May 16, 2026.

The development was observed in the final list of aspirants released by the party and made available to journalists in Port Harcourt.

Among those disqualified are

two serving members of the House of Representatives, Awaji-Inombek Abiante and Boma Goodhead.

Abiante and Goodhead are regarded as key allies of Fubara and have remained vocal in their support for the governor since the political rift between him and his estranged political godfather, Nyesom Wike, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory.

Abiante is also said to be among stakeholders who purchased the governorship

nomination form for Fubara.

Others disqualified are retired Air Commodore John Opuene and Anderson Igbiki.

Meanwhile, 21 aspirants, including Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly, Martin Amaewhule, were cleared by the party to contest the primaries.

Amaewhule, who is seeking to represent Obio/Akpor Federal Constituency, is aiming to replace the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives,

Kingsley Chinda.

The APC State Publicity Secretary, Chibike Ikenga, confirmed the list of cleared and disqualified aspirants in a statement issued in Port Harcourt on Friday.

The statement, titled, 'Final List of Aspirants for the House of Representatives Primary Election for Saturday, 16th May, 2026,' said the list was released by the national leadership of the party and advised aspirants to comply accordingly.

Obatala Grove: Gani Adams, Elebuibon Task Osun Govt On Promoting Heritage Site

By David Emokpae

ARE Ona Kankanfo of Yorubaland, Iba Gani Adams and renowned Ifa priest, Araba Ifayemi Elebuibon, have called on Osun State Ministry of Culture and Tourism to support the Obatala grove to become a major heritage and tourist site.

They made the call at the maiden Obatala Festival in Ifon-Orolu, Osun State. The festival was jointly organised by His Royal Majesty, the Olufon of Ifon-Orolu Kingdom, Oba Peter Ipadeola, and the Olokun Festival Foundation (OFF), being promoted by Iba Adams.

While canvassing the support of the state government to expand the festival, Adams said he envisioned the Obatala grove as a major heritage and tourist site that could attract millions of devotees worldwide, including those in Cuba, Brazil, Trinidad & Tobago, and the United States.

Adams underscored the economic and social benefits of the festival, noting its role in attracting visitors from across Yorubaland and beyond, thereby boosting cultural tourism and local businesses.

NBC, BON Strengthen Ties To Deepen Industry Collaboration

By Moyosore Salami

THE National Broadcasting Commission has received the leadership of the Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria (BON) at its headquarters in Abuja, marking a significant step towards deeper industry collaboration.

The BON team, led by the newly-elected Chairman, High Chief Tony Akiotu, was received by the Director General, Mr. Charles Ebuebu, who noted the strong ties between the two organisations.

Akiotu traced the long-standing relationship between the two organisations back to the NBC's inception in 1992, praising the Director-General for his consistent support of BON initiatives.

During the interactions, several critical issues were raised regarding the future of Nigerian broadcasting.

The Chairman of BON requested a formal partnership with the NBC to enhance the training of operational staff across broadcast stations nationwide. He also called for collaboration between the Commission and BON to ensure that there are minimal post-election crises in 2027.

The DG reaffirmed the commission's commitment to working closely with BON's leadership.



CHANGE OF NAME

www.guardian.ng Guardian Nigeria GuardianNigeria GuardianNigeria Guardian Nigeria - C00264288

ADAEZE: I, formerly known as Adaeze Comfort Ayika, now wish to be addressed As Adaeze Comfort Ayika Chibuogwu. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

ADDITION OF NAME: I, formerly known as Melovia Ayoola Chimayanam Oladejo, now wish to be known as Melovia Ayoola Chimayanam Oladejo-Olika. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

ADDITION OF NAME: I, formerly known as Daniella Nkemdinyem Ayomide Oladejo, now wish to be known as Daniella Nkemdinyem Ayomide Oladejo-Olika. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

ADEDEJI: I, formerly known as Miss. Adedeji Kehinde Odunayo wish to be known as Mrs. Sotikare Kehinde Odunayo, all former Documents remains valid, Public Note

AIHEBHO: I, formerly Miss Adesuwa Priscilla Aihebhoh now wish to be addressed as Mrs Adesuwa Priscilla Otenigbagbe. Former documents remain valid. Public take note.

CHIDINMA: I, formerly known as Chidinma Onyii Diana Okwudinma, now wish to be addressed As Chidinma Onyii Diana Dumebi Okwudinma. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

CHINEDU: I, formerly known as Chinedu Samfabio Okwudinma, now wish to be addressed As Chinedu Sam-Fabio Okwudinma. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

CONFIRMATION OF NAME: That I That, Ishaku Amos Balla and Amos Ishaku Ball and Amos I Balla is one and same person, now addressed as Balla Amos Ishaku. former documents remains valid. Public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, formerly known as Amodu Ibrionke Silifat or Amodu Seelphat Ibrionke now my correct name is Amodu Silifat Ibrionke. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: My name was wrongly captured as Koleosho Waliyat Oriyomi instead of Kolelosa Waliat Oriyomi. Concerned authorities and general public note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: That I, Adegbite Adams Sunday now wish to be address as Adegbite Adam Afolabi. My DOB is 30/06/1984 not 13/ 03/1986. All former documents remain valid. Public note

DANLADI: I, formerly known as Danladi Mary Miller now wish to be addressed as Danladi-David Mary Miller. All documents remain valid. General public take note.

DERRICK: I, formerly known as Derrick Chiagoziem Ayika, now wish to be addressed As Derrick Chiagoziem Chibuogwu. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

EHIGHAME: I, formerly known as Ehimen Raphael Ehighame now wish to be addressed as Ehimen Raphael Ehiakhamen. My DOB is 14-08-1947 not 14-06-1947. Former documents remain valid. Public note.

ELVIS: I, formerly known as Elvis Udochukwu Ayika, now wish to be addressed As Udochukwu Elvis Chibuogwu. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

IBEH: I formerly known as Miss. Grace Chinasa Ibeh now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Grace Chinasa Ihe. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

IFEOMA: I, formerly known as Miss Onah-Iffi, Ifeoma Onyejiuwa now wish to be known as Mrs. Igboke, Ifeoma Iffi. All former documents remain valid. Public notice

ISIOFIA: I, formerly Miss Isiofia Nkechinyere Evelyn, now wish to be known as Mrs. Chigozie Nkechinyere Evelyn. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

JEFFREY: I, formerly known as Jeffrey Chiziterem Chinedu Ayika, now wish to be addressed As Jeffrey Chinedu Chibuogwu. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

KOSISOCHUKWU: I, formerly known as Kosisochukwu Jayden Ayika, now wish to be addressed As Kosisochukwu Jayden Chibuogwu. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

MOBOLANLE: I, formerly known as Fate Adam Mobolanle, now wish to be addressed as Folami Fatai Olanrewaju. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

MODIFICATION OF NAME: That my name was captured as Dunstan Ananyi on my NIN & BVN, instead of Dunstan Chukwue-meke Ananyi. Frmer documentso remain valid. General public, take note.

MUOGHALU: I, formerly Muoghalu chidimma marycynthia now wish to be known as Mrs Agbo chidimma marycynthia. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

NDUKWU: I, formerly Miss. Ndukwu Glory Chinwendu now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Nnanyere Glory Chinwendu. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

NGOBI: I, formerly known as Otuonye Comfort Eziaha, now wish to be addressed as Ngobi Comfort Eziaha. All documents bearing my former names remain valid. Public note.

NNEOMA: I, formerly known as Daniella Nneoma Okwudinma, now wish to be addressed As Nneoma Daniella Ngozi Okwudinma. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

NOSAKHARE: I, formerly known as Miss. Nosakhare Adesuwa now wish to be known as Mrs. Omotoso Adesuwa Nosakhare. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

NWABUEZE: I, formerly known as Nwabueze Nnedimma Happiness now wish to be addressed as Kalu Nnedimma Happiness All former documents remain valid. General public, take note.

NWAFOR: I, formerly Chidinma Benedicta Nwafor now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Chidinma Benedicta Akaeme. All frmer documentso remain valid. General public, take note.

OGU: I, formerly known as Miss Ogu Vera Amarachi, now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Ogebe-David Vera Amarachi. All documents remain valid. General public take note.

OGUNREMI: I, formerly known as Ogunremi Elizabeth Odunayo now wish to be address as Akin-tayo Elizabeth Odunayo. . All documents remain valid. General public take note.

OJELEYE: I, formerly known as Ojeleye Oladapo Owolewa now to be addresses as Owolewa Oladapo Olamilekan. All former documents remain valid General public take note.

OLAYEMI: I, formerly known as Miss. Olayemi Omowunmi now wish to be address as Mrs Mmokuwe Omowunmi. All former documents remains valid. . General public take note.

OLUSEGUN: I, formerly known as Adebayo-Bello Emmanuel Olusegun, now wish to be addressed as Adebayo Emmanuel Oluwasegun. Former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OLUWASEYI: I, formerly known as Ayedun Onifade Adekoya, now wish to be addressed As Oluwaseyi Ayedun Adekoya. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

ONIEWU: I, formerly known as Mrs. Onaewu Muyibat now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Oniewu Muibat. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

ONYEJE: I, formerly known as Miss. Onyeje Adaobi Jessica now wish to be known as Mrs. Ejianya Adaobi Jessica. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

OWOFADE: I, formerly Owofade Damilola Olasubomi now wish to be known as Igbinovia Damilola Olasubomi. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

POT-BALOGUN: I, formerly Mrs Pot-Balogun Musiliat Agbeke now wish to be addressed as Mrs Ilesanmi Musiliat Agbeke. All former documents remain valid. Public note.

RE-ARRANGEMENT OF NAME: I, formerly known as Esther Ojah Egete now wish to be addressed as Edono Ojah Egete. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

STEPHEN: I, formerly known as Stephen Chinedu Ayika, now wish to be addressed As Stephen Chinedu Ayika Chibuogwu. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

TEMITOPE: I, formerly known as Adeyela Joshua Temitope now wish to be known as Adeyela Joshua Ade-bisi. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

UZODINMA: I, formerly known as Uzodinma Eunice Adimchinobi now wish to be addressed as Eze Eunice Adimchinobi. All former documents remain valid. General public, take note.

News Extra

NEPZA MD Re-elected To WFZO Board In Panama

The country's arguably stellar performance in regulating the Special Economic Zones scheme has again attracted global approval with the re-election of the Managing Director of the Nigeria Export Processing Zones Authority (NEPZA), Dr. Olufemi Ogunyemi, to the board of the World Free Zones Organisation (WFZO) in Panama.

Once again, the African participants and their counterparts from Europe and Latin America cast bloc votes that accounted for 85 per cent of the total votes for Ogunyemi. The NEPZA boss had attracted

similar support from these continental blocs, which helped him secure his first victory in Dubai in 2024.

Dr. Mohammed Alzarooni, Chairman of WFZO, described Ogunyemi's re-election as deserved, noting that the entire WFZO family felt his energy, commitment, and leadership throughout his first tenure.

"I simply wish to congratulate Dr. Olufemi Ogunyemi of Nigeria and all other members of the WFZO board of directors on their delightful new tenure and continued exemplary service to the world," he said.

Optimal Greening Commissions Project SWIFT In Ikorodu Communities

By **Gbenga Salau**

Optimal Greening has commissioned the Sustainable Water Initiative for Future Transformation (Project SWIFT) in Isiwu and Eginrin Ekun communities of Ikorodu North LCDA, Lagos State, as part of efforts to improve access to clean water and sanitation in underserved communities.

The commissioning marked the expansion of a community-led Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) model first piloted in Agala, a low-income community in Lagos State. The pilot project earned Optimal Greening the Sanitation Innovation Award from the

Lagos State Ministry of Environment and Water Resources during the 2023 World Toilet Day celebration. According to the organisation, the SWIFT project was designed to provide sustainable and safe water access while strengthening community ownership and participation in WASH management.

Optimal Greening said the intervention was implemented in partnership with the Lagos State Ministry of Environment and Water Resources and Ikorodu local council authorities after a needs assessment revealed that over 88 per cent of residents in the beneficiary communities.

China's Zero Tariff Policy On Exports Will Boost Africa's Local Production – Emewu

By **Ngozi Egenuba**

China's zero tariff on exports for Africa, which commenced two weeks ago, has been lauded as an initiative that would encourage local production and help reposition Africa at the global market.

Speaking at Lagos Forum, themed, 'The Successful Practice of Principles of Sincerity, Real Results, Amity, and Good Faith in Africa,' organised by the Consulate-General of People's Republic of China in Lagos on Friday, Research Director (Africa), Zhejiang Normal University, China, Ikenna Emewu, noted

that Africa exports only four per cent in the global market.

According to him, between Nigeria and China, the percentage of imbalance was 89.5 in 2023.

"While China exported about \$21 billion worth of goods to Nigeria, our response was \$2.37 billion.

"With Africa, it was 64.5 per cent in favour of China. China exported \$348 billion goods to Africa, and the continent responded with \$123.02 billion goods to China," he added.

Emewu said that a nation cannot get richer until it is a major trader, which lies on its available commodities for exchange.

By **Opeyemi Babalola**

The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), on Friday, raised strong concerns regarding what it described as unwarranted assaults on doctors and health workers, citing a recent incident at the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital (UUTH).

According to a statement by the NMA, agents of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) invaded the UUTH premises on

NMA Condemns EFCC Raid Of Teaching Hospital, Implores Tinubu To Probe Invasion

Tuesday, May 12, 2026, in a manner the NMA characterised as reckless and unacceptable.

The NMA statement, signed by its National Publicity Secretary, Prof. Olayinka Atilola, alleged that the EFCC's operation was not focused on apprehending a financial crime syndicate.

Instead, the NMA claims the EFCC's target was the Deputy Chairman, Medical Advisory

Committee (DCMAC), Prof. Eyo Ekpe, a senior medical consultant.

President of the NMA, Prof. Afekhide Ernest Omoti, who condemned the EFCC's actions, stated that the NMA leadership is demanding an explanation of the EFCC's actions, calling for measures to protect healthcare professionals from harassment.

Fraser Suites' New GM Unveils Vision

From **Bridget Chiedu Onochie, Abuja**

The newly appointed General Manager, Fraser Suites, Abuja, Ronin Ronald Endozo, has said his priority is to protect the values that set the facility apart from its peers.

In a statement, on Friday, by the Director, Corporate Services, Haroun Harry Audu, the new GM said over the years the values that distinguished the hotel from others have remained

unchanged and he is prepared to sustain them.

"Fraser Suites, Abuja, is a property I first stepped into in 2017, and leading it now is a singular privilege. What sets it apart has not changed in the years between, a residential ease that belongs in the suites themselves, a service style that is considered without being intrusive and a quiet sense of place that is rare in a working

capital. My focus is to protect those things and to keep earning the trust our guests bring through the door," Endozo said.

According to the hotel, the new appointee will bring more than two decades of international hospitality leadership and a long-standing connection to the property.

"He first joined the team in 2017, serving briefly as Interim General Manager during the property's opening year."

A Short Excursion Into Nigerian Professional Football League

THE 2025/2026 Nigerian Professional Football League season rounds off this week-end in Nigeria.

That means that it's been 36 years since the mission to lift Nigerian football was embarked upon from where it was for 30 years after Independence.

It was in 1990 that professional football started in Nigeria. It was domiciled by the decree that set it up in the Nigerian Football Association but was run by a semi-independent body called the Nigerian Professional Football League. Its original mission was to take Nigerian football to the highest levels in global football.

On May 12, 1990, President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida signed into law the decree to kick-start professional football in Nigeria. The dream was that in seven to 10 years, most of the clubs in the professional league (at least) would be privately owned; the clubs would have their own stadia; administrators would be highly qualified technocrats with solid background in business; the domestic league would be competing for LIVE audiences with European football on TV; standard of play would be the best in Africa; corruption and hooliganism would be a thing of the past; Nigerian referees would be some of the best in the continent; the players would earn wages that would not make them swarm 'abroad' to even Benin Republic chasing a professional career; the league would sustain production of players good enough for the national teams; each club would be running its football properties as a business, with many trading on the stock exchange market; the stadia all around the country would be filled with fans following and patronising their clubs; and so on!

In 1990, those were not far-fetched targets. The indicators were everywhere. In 4 years, riding on the hope of massive changes and still fueled by previous achievements in the country's football, Nigerian players started to attract massive interest by European clubs; migration of players to Europe began; the domestic league continued to throw up succeeding generation of players in Etim Esin, Mutiu Adegboju, Victor Ikpeba, Daniel Amokachi, and so on, all world class youngsters that got to the AFCON finals in 1990, won a global trophy in Japan in 1993, won

AFCON in Tunisia in 1994, went to the World Cup in 1994 where they took the world by storm and lifted the country to fifth place on the global FIFA ranking.

Those were the early days of the professional league that was still riding on the back of a very successful amateur league in Nigeria that produced some of the biggest clubs in Africa - Rangers International, Raccas Rovers, Mighty Jets FC, Bendel Insurance FC, IICC Shooting Stars, Leventis United, Abiola Babes and so on. These were all amateur clubs.

At the birth of the professional football in Nigeria, in the first few years, there was a scramble amongst multinationals for sponsorship of the envisioned League. Nigerian footballers were world class commodities.

Expectations remained high until it became obvious that the level of administration did not meet expectations, and did not match the quality of players being churned out even at that time by an amateur league that was on an upward trajectory from 1960.

Up till the early 1990s local clubs filled stadia all over the country with spectators; some clubs were getting to the final rounds, and were even winning some African club championships; some states had stadia that hosted famous foreign clubs from Europe and South America on a regular annual basis; Grade A international matches were being played in stadia in Ibadan, Calabar, Kaduna and Lagos, at least.

Every passing year into the 1990s was accompanied by a high turnover of personnel with the premature exit of experienced administrators for political reasons.

Successors were 'weak' on the original vision of 'the road to travel'. By the end of the 1990s the plane of development was still revving idly on the tarmac. It has not been able to lift off till now, 26 years later.

Well, the journey from 1990 to date needs to be properly documented and studied as a model to scholars of football on how NOT to run a professional football league.

That's where we are in 2026.

Unfortunately, the report card of the current professional football league is not sterling. Only a few beneficiaries from its failures

would conclude otherwise.

The League has become a financial nightmare for all those trying to make it work and become profitable and attractive for any investors. A few stakeholders are still hanging in there in hope of a 'miracle' to happen. The present administrators are working hard, struggling to unknot the damage of three decades, meandering through a maze of challenges that have no solutions.

There is an air of helplessness and hopelessness around the Nigerian Professional Football league.

It needs more than just passion and hope.

The advert on its bill board tells a sad story.

Since professional football was established in Nigeria some 36 years ago, there is not a single club in the country that has declared financial success in its operations.

Owner of, probably, the best-run professional club in Nigeria today, Remo Stars FC of Ikenne, told me in a private conversation how winning the Professional football league is no longer an incentive to participate in the league anymore. The prize for winning the league cannot fund a single continental club match. The league is 'dangerous' for teams that have to traverse the country to distant places by road to honour matches with the maximum insecurity situation in the country. The stadia, except in one or two places, are hardly ever full. Most teams do not own stadia of their own. Most of the teams are still government teams without an iota of business in their structure and operations. Players' wages are some of the lowest in the world. The clubs cannot produce a single player good enough for the national team in recent years. No foreign clubs can play on any turf in the whole country.

There is not even a single sponsor for the league, not to talk of a scramble.

I should stop my own lamentation here of a professional football league that is on life-support!

A very brief history.

I was a member of the Implementation Committee of Professional football in Nigeria in 1990.

It started as an independent body set up by the Ministry of Youth and Sports under Minister of Sports, Emeka Omeruah, in 1986. The NFA refused to recognize the 'independent body' called The Professional Football



Federation of Nigeria (PFFN).

When Emma Omeruah was replaced by Bayo Lawal, it took 3 years of tweaking with the documents before he inaugurated a Professional Football Implementation Committee headed by Nathaniel Idowu to sort out the differences with the NFA and to kick start professional football in Nigeria.

The commencement date was altered a few times in 1989 to enable the guidelines for starting the league to be sorted. It suffered another temporary set back when Bayo Lawal was replaced as Minister by Graham Douglas who did not know much about football and was not excited about the matter.

Nathaniel Idowu, however, single-handedly funded the final documentation by arranging a trip to London by a small team made up of John Ojiodoh of Bendel State FA, POC Achebe of Rangers and the NFA, and Remi Asuni of Oyo State FA.

It was their work that culminated into the first guidelines that heralded the start of Nigerian Professional football League. The league was still considering how many teams to register based on responses to the guidelines when Graham Douglas was also replaced by Anthony Ikhezaboh as Minister of Sports.

He got the President, IBB, to sign off the final decree that birthed professional football in Nigeria. A full council meeting of the NFA followed in December 1989 where the entire project was ratified. 14 clubs were initially to start the league. Some lobbying went on behind closed doors and finally 16 clubs were admitted to start the professional league.

Eight of them are still in the present set up!

FELICITATION

The Ajayi Family celebrates the glorious life of our beloved father, Grand father and patriarch,

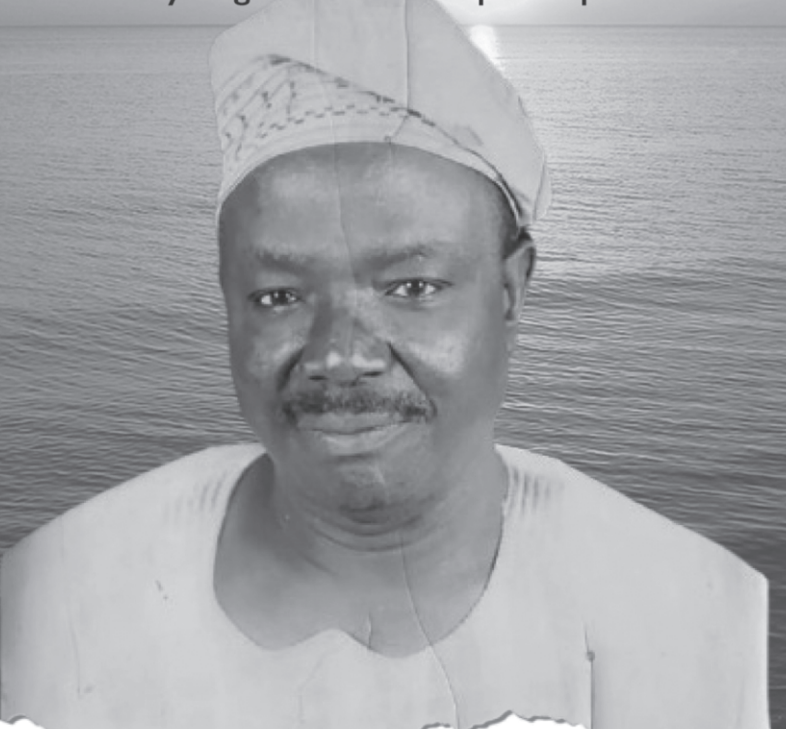
PA. AJAYI SUNDAY OWOLABI

He peacefully passed on in Lagos on the 4th of February, 2026, at the age of 86 years and was laid to rest on the 1st of May, 2026.

His life was filled with love, wisdom, and lasting impact.

He will forever remain in our hearts.

May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace.



Bamidele Ajayi for the entire family.

Akure Agog For South West 3x3 Basketball Fiesta

By Christian Okpara

12 teams from Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti states will light up Akure, the capital city of Ondo State, this

weekend (May 16 and 17) for the South West 3x3 Basketball Challenge organised by the South West Basketball Zone. The championship, tagged Asiwaju Renewed Hope South

West 3x3 Basketball Challenge, will hold at Democracy Park, Oja Oba, Akure.

Speaking ahead of the programme sponsored by the Honourable Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, the South West representative on the board of the Nigeria Basketball Federation, Olumide Oyediji, said the event is another opportunity for basketball players in the zone to experience competitive action.

On the choice of the 3x3 format, Oyediji revealed that with 3x3 already a global phenomenon, it was time for the zone to promote the variant and discover talents within the region.

Beyond the millions in cash prizes to be won, Oyediji further disclosed that all 12 teams will be accommodated, fed and supplied with jerseys. Also, each team will get transportation subsidy.

Asaba To Host Federation Cup Grand Finale, Round Of 64 Begins

THE Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), on Friday, unveiled the fixtures for the men's and women's competitions of this year's President Federation Cup, following a draw ceremony held at the NFF Secretariat in Abuja.

Speaking at the event, NFF General Secretary, Dr. Mohammed Sanusi, emphasized that the draw process was consistent with previous editions and highlighted that no team received a bye into the next round.

He assured participating clubs, officials, and stake-

holders that the country's oldest and most prestigious football competition would be conducted on a level playing field, with all regulations strictly enforced to ensure transparency and fairness.

Defending champions Kwara United were seeded at number one, while last year's runners-up Abakaliki FC were placed at number 64.

As tradition dictates, the tournament will be played strictly on a knockout basis, promising drama and excitement from the very first round.

Amusan Seeks Glory At Shanghai/Keqiao Diamond League After African Title Win In Accra

By Gowon Akpodonor

WORLD Record Holder in women's 100m hurdles, Tobi Amusan, has her attention to the Wanda Diamond League opener in Shanghai/Kepaio this Saturday, where she will begin her bid to reclaim the crown she won three years in a row between 2021 and 2023.

Amusan reaffirmed her dominance on the continental stage by clinching her third consecutive African 100m hurdles title at the 24th African Senior Athletics Championships in Accra, Ghana.

The 29-year-old, who famously set the world record in the event in 2022, described her

latest triumph as a 'historic feeling' and expressed gratitude to God, her team, and supporters.

Writing on her official X account, Amusan declared: 'African Champion x3. Beyond grateful to God, my team, supporters, and everyone who continues to believe in me through every season.'

Nigeria's Best Domestic Players Are Not In NPFL–Oliseh

By Gowon Akpodonor

FORMER Super Eagles' captain and head coach, Sunday Oliseh, has given a knock on the Nigerian Professional Football League (NPFL), saying the nation's best domestic players are not in the league owing to 'poor remuneration'.

As Obinna Nsofor Weeps Over 'Decay'

Oliseh spoke against the backdrop of another calls for the inclusion of home-based players in the Super Eagles' forthcoming roster ahead of the 2026 Unity Cup in London. The former Juventus of

of home-based talents.

"Football is a business," Oliseh told Sports247. "When we were playing, there was never one month that they owed us. It might be small, but we were paid on time. If you want players to stay in Nigeria, ensure the league is conducive and okay," he stated.

Meanwhile, for Super Eagles player, Obinna Nsofor is full of tears, as he laments decay in the nation's football.

Nsofor, known for his accurate bomb-of-a-shot said: "If Nigeria was truly good enough, we would have qualified for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Football is not about big names or social media hype, but about results on the pitch. DR Congo beat us, qualified and proved they deserved to be there more

than Nigeria," he said on Brila FM.

He continues: "The fact is that it has been a very long time since Nigeria, as a country, had the opportunity to host any major tournament. The last one we hosted was in 2000.

"We all know the situation we have in Nigeria as a country in terms of infrastructure. The standard of the stadiums are not at the level required to host a major CAF tournament, and that's the truth.

"Even the national team of Nigeria finds it difficult to play matches in the country."

Nsofor added: "In terms of going to other states for Super Eagles games, we have only one stadium in Nigeria that is up to the standard required to host qualifying matches.

"It's quite unfortunate and sad. In Nigeria, there is no long-term plan because we only plan for the present. We don't have a maintenance culture," Nsofor stated.



NPFL players in a recent league match. Sunday Oliseh says they need good remuneration to stay in Nigeria

NPFL has led to exodus of country's best talents.

Oliseh spoke against the backdrop of another calls for the inclusion of home-based players in the Super Eagles' forthcoming roster ahead of the 2026 Unity Cup in London.

The former Juventus of

Italy, Borussia Dortmund of Germany and Ajax of Netherlands midfielder stressed that better treatment is vital to curbing the rapid migration

BAL Hits Multiyear Collaboration With Qatar Foundation

THE Basketball Africa League (BAL) and Qatar Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation that supports human and social development through programs focused on education, research and innovation, and community development, during week, announced a multi-year collaboration that makes Qatar Foundation the BAL's first Official Community Partner.

Through the collaboration, which is being facilitated by Qatar Sports Investments, Qatar Foundation is supporting the BAL's social impact programming and efforts to make basketball more accessible across the continent, including through court renovations as part of NBA Africa's broader commitment to build 1,000 courts across the continent, and BAL4HER – the league's platform for advancing gender equality in the African sports ecosystem.

As part of the collaboration, Qatar Foundation will also serve as Presenting Partner of the BAL's Ubuntu Trophy, which is awarded annually to a BAL player who has made an impact on the local community during the BAL season. Qatar Foundation's logo is also displayed on the back of all BAL game uniforms.

Vice Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani said: "At Qatar Foundation, we believe that the true strength of a nation lies in the wellbeing and potential of its people.

"We see sport as one of the most powerful tools for positive change. It is not only a means of physical activity, but a catalyst for healthier lives, stronger communities, and more resilient societies. It brings people together, creating bonds across backgrounds and building communities around shared purpose.

"Our vision is to harness this power of sport for good, ensuring that it is accessible, inclusive, and designed to meet the needs of all. We are committed to creating environments where participation is safe, welcoming and inspiring, and where the values of teamwork, discipline and leadership are nurtured," he said. BAL President Amadou Gallo Fall said: "Qatar Foundation shares our commitment to giving back to the youth, fans and communities that support the BAL year-round.

Between Identity, Opportunity, Performance: A Nation's Football Dilemma

By Paul Okoku

WHEN selection becomes perception, the soul of a footballing nation is tested. A national team must reflect not only the best players, but the system that produced them. Football rewards performance, but nations are built on development.

There was a time when the journey to the national team jersey began on dusty pitches, in packed local stadiums, and through the unforgiving grind of Nigeria's domestic league.

I remember conversations with Stephen Keshi, a leader both on and off the pitch, who would often remind me: "Was it not our domestic league that produced you, Paul Okoku, me, Stephen Keshi, and generations of Nigerian football greats like Godwin Odiye, Segun Odegbami, Felix Owolabi, Adokiye Amiesimaka, Mudashiru Lawal, Emmanuel Okala, Chibuzor Ehiogbu, Isa Shofoluwe, Christian Chukwu, and Henry Nwosu?"

That question was not rhetorical,

it was foundational. It spoke to identity, pride, and a system that once worked.

Nigeria's national team selection must strike a deliberate and fair balance between foreign-based professionals and home-based players, recognising that sustainable football excellence depends not only on global exposure but also on the strength, dignity, and development of the domestic league.

The Debate: Meritocracy or Marginalisation?

The argument often presented is simple: select the best players, regardless of where they play. On the surface, this sounds logical. Football, after all, is a performance-driven sport.

But beneath that argument lies a deeper concern: when home-based players are consistently overlooked, the system begins to send an unintended message—that the local league is inferior, irrelevant, or merely a stepping stone with no real destination. That perception is not just inaccurate, it is dangerous.

Because once a nation loses faith in its own development pipeline, it begins to outsource not just talent, but identity.

The Foreign-Based Advantage—And Its Limits

There is no denying that players in Europe and other top leagues benefit from advanced infrastructure, tactical exposure, and high-intensity competition. These advantages often translate into performance at the international level. However, this does not automatically render home-based players incapable or unworthy. In fact, many foreign-based players began their journeys in the Nigeria Premier Football League. The question then becomes: If the foundation is local, why is the finished product valued only when exported?

Eric Chelle's Approach: A Step Toward Balance

The recent initiative by Super Eagles head coach Eric Chelle to scout and integrate players from the NPFL is a welcome development. His strategy—combining domestic

scouting with international selection ahead of the Unity Cup 2026, signals an attempt to restore balance. Encouraged by figures like Austin Eguavoen and Friday Ekpo, this move acknowledges a long-standing concern: the underrepresentation of home-based talent. Yet, the true test will not be in invitations but in trust. Will these players be given meaningful minutes? Will they be judged by the same standards? Or will they simply fill numbers?

Identity vs. Globalisation in Modern Football

Modern football is increasingly global. Dual-nationality players and diaspora talents bring diversity, skill, and international experience. They are assets—no doubt. But a national team must never become detached from its roots. It must reflect the heartbeat of its football culture.

When local players are consistently sidelined, the national team risks becoming a representation of convenience rather than a symbol



Paul Okoku in a handshake with former Nigeria President, the late Shehu Shagari in the good old days of school sports

FA Cup Final: Chelsea In Uphill Task Against Man City

CHELSEA Will face Manchester City in the 2026 FA Cup final this Saturday at Wembley Stadium.

This is City's fourth consecutive appearance in the FA Cup final, but they have some records to set right, after losing their last two finals—against Manchester United in 2024, and then Crystal Palace in 2025. This is City's third trip to Wembley this season, and they have won both the previous games at the national stadium, beating Arsenal 2-0 in the Carabao Cup final and then registering a come-from-behind 2-1 win in the FA Cup semifinal against Southampton a few weeks ago.

For Chelsea, this is a game that will determine whether their season

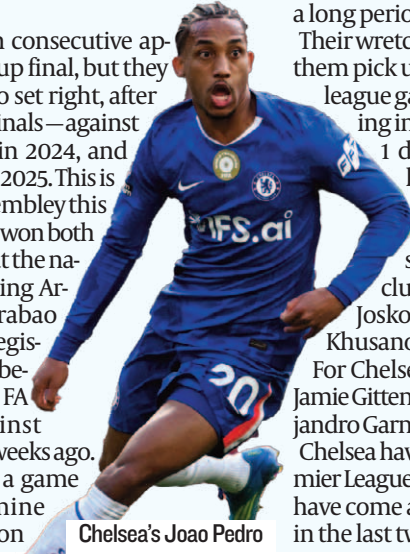
has been an unqualified failure, or if there is some hint of light at the end of what has been a long period of darkness for them.

Their wretched Premier League form has seen them pick up just one point in their last seven league games, with that solitary point coming in an impressive performance for a 1-1 draw against Liverpool at Anfield last weekend.

Manchester City will go into this Saturday's FA Cup Final without the services of some key players, including

Josko Gvardiol, and Rodri. Abdulkodir Khusanov is doubtful.

For Chelsea, the duo of Estevao Willian, and Jamie Gittens are out, just as Robert Sánchez, Alejandro Garnacho, and Pedro Neto, are doubtful. Chelsea haven't won any of their last seven Premier League games. In that span, their only wins have come against Port Vale and Leeds United in the last two rounds of the FA Cup.



Chelsea's Joao Pedro



INSIDE STUFF WITH MARTINS OLOJA

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Leah Sharibu: 23 Jeers To Hope Deferred

THERE are so many issues competing for attention again this weekend. The story of consensus challenges that have plagued the ruling party's primary is worth discussing. Even the defiance in the ancient city of Ibadan, the iconic J.P. Clark once described as the 'running splash of rust and gold—flung and scattered among seven hills like broken china in the sun', where Seyi Makinde dared to scorn defection to the land that is flowing with milk and honey is also topical. The three-years old relentless attack on Citizen Peter Obi and his movement is worth deconstructing too. The BUA chairman's homily in at the CEO and Leaders colloquium in Kigali is also a relevant discussion point. Even our leader's call on African leaders to be constructive with foreign investors is a construct worth examining. Besides, the 'constructive collaboration' of the new PDP with the ruling party in Port Harcourt on the watch of the man I portrayed the other day as "an untouchable genius", should not be ignored by commentators at this time too. What of the 'deregulation', sorry 'separation of powers' of the Office of National Security Advisers, (ONSA) this week? That is a big story that can attract 'matters arising'. But I have decided to follow up the story of our shared humanity: the 2018 story of *The Guardian's* goddess of resistance, Citizen Leah Sharibu who clocked 23 in the captivity of the wicked this week.

It is another time to stir the conscience of the nation and the world again that Nigeria's leaders have failed Citizen Leah, since 2018. The Church of God in Nigeria too appears to have forgotten their 'Daughter of Zion' in the valley. The mainstream media too appears weary of reporting the struggle for Leah's release. This week only *Vanguard* did a fitting anniversary story by Efe Onodjia. What of the CSOs? Only The Para-Mallam Peace Foundation and "Friends of Leah Sharibu" women group led by Mrs Grace Osifekun remembered Citizen Leah through some media events that can be tracked this year. More powers to the elbows of Gideon and Funmi Para-Mallam who have continued to organise remembrance activities on the datelines of Leah. Hearty cheers too to Mrs Osifekun and her group.

As for me, I will continue to prioritise advocacy on attention for her release. I won't stop writing and talking about her until something happens. I met a top national security chief the other day and I touched off the issue of the travail of Leah in captivity since 2018. The response of the security chief was quite disappointing. He told me that Leah was no longer interested in her freedom and she had been assimilated into the wilderness of the wicked where she was said to have given birth to children against her wish. This is a revelation of what the security chiefs must have been telling the commander-in-chief of the armed forces in the absence of regular agitation by the First Ladies of Nigeria, the Ministers of Defence, Interior, and Woman Affairs, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Adamawa State Government, among others.

Even this same Reno Omokri, now an ambassador-designate has forgotten about Citizen Leah Sharibu, he once spent money to write a book about. The original Omokri was the patriot who

researched the roots of Leah and reported in a book that the Sharibus actually hail from Adamawa state. The organic Reno then gave a newsworthy detail in the remarkable book that Leah's father was, in fact, still serving in the Nigeria police force when his daughter was abducted. It was that national service in the Police Force that took the Sharibu's family to Yobe state where the abduction took place. Even the then Peace Ambassador, Omokri has left Leah in the lurch.

This is how The Gideon and Funmi Para-Mallam Peace Foundation celebrated the Leah's birthday this week with prayers: Their invitation letter itself was inspiring: Dear Friend and Partner, they wrote:

"When the world forgets the captive, heaven still hears their name. Every prayer lifted for Leah is a refusal to surrender hope, justice, and the dignity of human life." At just 14 years old, Leah Sharibu was abducted alongside other schoolgirls in Dapchi, Nigeria. Eight years later, she remains in captivity. On the 14th of May 2026, Leah turns 23. While many have moved on, we refuse to forget. We refuse to be silent. We believe prayer still matters, justice still matters, and Leah's life still matters. The Gideon and Funmi Para-Mallam Peace Foundation invites you to join believers, peace advocates, and concerned people from around the world for a special virtual prayer gathering in honour of Leah Sharibu and in continued hope for her release. This will be a moment of intercession, reflection, solidarity, and renewed commitment to stand for truth, peace, freedom, and human dignity..."

Then Mrs Grace Osifekun Group took it from there as recorded by *Vanguard*

Leah Sharibu at 23: Women's group seeks to keep her story alive.

Today, Leah Sharibu turns 23, a painful reminder of the years stolen from a young girl whose only "offence" was refusing to renounce her Christian faith. Since her abduction by insurgents from Government Girls' Science and Technical College, Dapchi, in 2018, Leah's story has become a symbol of courage, resilience, and the continuing tragedy of insecurity and religious persecution in Nigeria. While many of her classmates regained freedom, Leah remains in captivity, her absence continuing to weigh heavily on the conscience of the nation.

To ensure that her story is not forgotten, a group of concerned women under the auspices of Friends of Leah Sharibu, is marking her 23rd birthday with renewed advocacy and public engagement.

Speaking to *Vanguard* during an advocacy and enlightenment visit, the women, led by Mrs. Grace Osifekun, said the campaign is aimed at reminding government, civil society, and international community that Leah is still in captivity and must not be abandoned to silence or



Leah Sharibu

fading public attention. She said every passing birthday is both a heartbreaking milestone and a renewed opportunity to demand urgent action for her release.

Whether politicians who are jostling for election and re-election like it or not, Leah has become a symbol of persecution of Christians. A lot more have been abducted, kidnapped and even killed. But Leah stands out. Her case is unique because she stood her ground and said she was not going to deny her faith.

And so as we shout 24 hearty cheers to a jihadist captive in May 14, 2026, I would like to reiterate my appeal to the Nigerian government and the international community to end their unfathomable and strange silence and help secure the young lady's release. Let's recall that in February 2020, mother of Leah, Mrs. Rebecca Sharibu, raised concerns on the commitment of the federal government to secure the release of her daughter from Boko Haram terrorists. Mrs. Sharibu, who spoke in an interview with the Hausa Service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in London, noted then that she had serious doubts on the willingness of the government to secure the release of her daughter.

As I was saying, *The Guardian* (Nigeria) had in the same 2018 manifested Citizen Leah as its "Person of the Year". Let's recall vividly that Leah had in a clear audio message in 2018 begged President Buhari Muhammadu Buhari as a father to come to her rescue. However, the government said the clip would be verified to be sure that it was Leah's voice. And so on Wednesday, October 3, 2018, Buhari reportedly consoled Leah's biological family and assured her parents that the Federal Government would do its utmost for the safety and security of Leah. The president was quoted as telling Mrs Sharibu: "I convey my emotion, the strong commitment of my administration and the solidar-

ity of all Nigerians to you and your family as we will do our best to bring your daughter home in peace and safety."

As it was recalled here the other day, despite Buhari's assurance to the mother of Leah, the albatross still hangs on the neck of Abuja as the girl who is said to have given birth to two babies in captivity is still being held in an unknown forest. As I was also saying, on so many occasions, notably at the quarterly security briefings at the National Intelligence Agency (NIA headquarters, Abuja) I had raised the grave implications of continued silence of the state actors on "the safety and whereabouts of the only Christian girl on the Dapchi 2018 tragedy".

This is also worth recalling: barely a week after the appointment of Malam Nuhu Ribadu as the National Security Adviser (NSA) in June, 2023, in a chance meeting with Media executives in Lagos, I also raised the thorny issue of the Leah Sharibu challenge to the security and intelligence agencies in Nigeria. The NSA who also hails from Adamawa state, promised to deal with the reproach as quickly as possible. Again, till the present, there has been no update from the NSA's office on the plight of the unlucky girl. It is incredibly reproachful that Nigeria's "goddess of resistance to terror" is still being held hostage. As I was saying here too, this ugly reality is a monumental embarrassment, because the "child" Leah had even cried out to her "father" of the nation then, President Buhari to rescue her.

And so our leader, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu should note today that the story of Leah Sharibu's capture and her continued detention by Boko Haram insurgents as a result of her refusal to renounce her faith is a national tragedy that won't fizzle out until the girl is released. Leah's defiance echoes a bright message of love, selflessness, courage and hope to our nation. The goddess of resistance to terror, should be treated anywhere as the number one soldier on the frontline in defence of Nigeria's now fragile unity, peace and progress. She is a true heroine who should be nominated by stakeholders and Foundations for Nobel Peace Prize.

That is also why I would like to repeat my appeal to our First Lady, Oluremi Tinubu, who has been acknowledged as a respected woman of faith by even the United States President, Hurricane Donald Trump, to step into the Leah Sharibu's reproach to the nation. In the same vein, the Women Affairs Minister, Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim the Adamawa State Governor, Ahmadu Fintiri, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, unarguably Leah's most prominent father in Adamawa, and the National Security Adviser, Malam Nuhu Ribadu, another very significant citizen of Adamawa should work with the very influential First Lady to ensure that this administration celebrates very soon the return of Citizen Leah Sharibu and other missing girls. If the Tinubu administration can remove this albatross from the neck of the Federal Government, the Christian communities worldwide would join Nigeria in hailing this administration for their commitment to peace building and reconciliation in Nigeria as I noted in March this year.

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