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The Woman Who Spent 19 Years Promoting Reading Amongst Nigerian Children





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Executive Vice President, Gas, Power and New Energy, Nigeria National Petroleum Company Ltd, Mr. Olalekan Ogunleye (left); Group Chief Finance Officer, Mr Dapo Segun; Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun; and Chief Relations Officer, Mrs Morenike Adewunmi during the visit of Nigeria National Petroleum Company Ltd team to the Governor recently.

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Presidency Orders Quarterly Government-CSO Policy Dialogue

Tinubu Urges Youths To Speak Freely At National Youth Confab

From **Ameh Ochojila**, Abuja

THE Presidency has ordered the establishment of a quarterly government-civil society policy dialogue forum to institutionalise citizens' participation in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.

Meanwhile, President Bola Tinubu has urged Nigerian youths participating in the National Youth Confab 2026 to freely express their views on national issues, including disagreements with government policies.

Tinubu made the call on Friday while declaring the National Youth Confab 2026 open, saying young Nigerians should have more than a symbolic presence in discussions on the country's future.

"When I proposed this Confab, I wanted young Nigerians to have more than a seat in the room. Your experience and ambition should help shape the decisions that affect your lives," the President said.

He urged the participants to speak honestly about their concerns and accompany criticism of government policies with alternative proposals.

"Say what you think. Where you disagree with us, say so, and bring the alternative with you. Our job as a government is to listen and act on what deserves action," Tinubu said.

The President said the virtual consultation phase would run for two weeks and remain open to young Nigerians in the country and in the Diaspora.

He said he looked forward to receiving recommendations from the consultations and promised that proposals considered worthy would receive serious consideration.

The National Youth Confab, themed 'Next Gen Nigeria: Crafting Solutions, Owning the Future,' is designed to provide young Nigerians with a platform to articulate concerns and develop policy proposals on issues including governance, economic transformation, education, technology, climate change and security.

The opening ceremony was held on Friday, October 2, while the virtual zonal sessions are scheduled to continue from October 5. The physical national conference in Abuja is scheduled for October 26 to 30.

The Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume, who represented President Tinubu at the 2026 National Civil Society Organisation Summit in Abuja on Friday, said the forum would provide a structured platform for evidence-based advocacy and ensure that community-level concerns were reflected in government decisions.

The President also pledged to expand civic space for social accountability, including greater collaboration with accredited civil society organisations (CSOs) on public finance transparency, budget tracking and monitoring of humanitarian and grassroots interventions.

Tinubu said the initiative was part of efforts to strengthen public trust and institutional accountability as his administration pursued its reform agenda.

He said the summit, coming shortly after Nigeria's 66th independence anniversary, represented a reaffirmation of the social contract between the state and citizens.

According to him, civil society had historically played a critical role in Nigeria's democratic development by giving voice to vulnerable groups, influencing policy and advocating social justice, human rights, poverty reduction and anti-corruption.

"My administration firmly believes that no nation can achieve inclusive, equitable and sustainable development without a vibrant, credible and responsible civil society operating within an open and enabling civic space," he said.

Tinubu acknowledged the difficulties created by the economic reforms embarked upon by his administration since 2023, but said the country was moving from reforms towards prosperity.

He said economic growth must translate into social inclusion, adding that the government alone could not achieve the objective.

"Hence, we are reaching out to the left out," he said, stressing the need for stronger partnerships among government, civil society and other stakeholders.

The President identified four areas for deeper government-CSO collaboration, beginning with the quarterly policy dialogue forum to be established by the SGF.

He said the forum would facilitate evidence-based advocacy and enable community insights to feed into policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.

Tinubu also pledged to strengthen accountability and transparency by expanding civic space for social accountability and working with accredited CSOs on public finance transparency, budget tracking and monitoring of humanitarian and grassroots interventions.

He said CSOs would also be repositioned as key drivers of efforts to localise the Sustainable Development Goals, with government, the United Nations system, development partners and the private sector supporting capacity building, institutional sustainability and access to technical and financial resources.

The areas identified include poverty reduction, youth and women empowerment, health, education, climate resilience and peace-building.

On national cohesion, the President urged CSOs to remain a stabilising force by countering false information, promoting interfaith dialogue and advocating inclusive governance.



Cross-section of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members administering three hearty cheers to the representative of the Minister of State for FCT, during the swearing-in of 2026 NYSC Batch C Stream I Orientation Course in Abuja on Friday. PHOTO: NAN

NNPC Cuts Administrative Expenses By 28% To N2.6tr, Protects Profitability

• Engages With Ogun Govt On Revival Of $10b Ogun LNG Project
• Abiodun Links Project To $7b Deep Sea Port, Blue Marine SEZ

From **Azeez Olorunlomeru**, Abeokuta

THE Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.) reduced its general and administrative expenses by 28 per cent to N2.6 trillion in 2025, as part of a sustained cost-optimisation drive aimed at protecting profitability amid a softer global oil price environment.

This is even as the company is set to invest an initial $10 billion in the development of the OgunLNG project in Ogun Waterside, Ogun State, as the long-delayed gas project enters a fresh phase of revival.

Group Chief Executive Officer of NNPC Ltd., Bashir Bayo Ojulari, disclosed the cut in administrative expenses while presenting the company's annual financial performance, saying the reduction reflected greater utilisation of internal resources and tighter control of the company's cost base.

According to Ojulari, the company's cost structure remained broadly aligned with activity levels despite a lower revenue environment, helping to preserve profitability during the year.

"General and administrative expenses declined by 28 per cent to N2.6 trillion, driven by sustained cost optimisation and greater utilisation of internal resources," the GCEO said.

He said the cost discipline formed part of a broader strategy focused on factors within the company's control, including operational reliability, capital discipline and execution excellence.

Ojulari said NNPCL's performance in 2025 was achieved against a mixed global and domestic economic backdrop.

Globally, geopolitical tensions, trade frictions and increased supply from both OPEC+ and non-OPEC+ producers contributed to a softer oil price environment.

Despite the headwinds, global economic growth remained resilient at approximately three per cent, supported by a more accommodative monetary policy environment as inflation pressures eased across major economies.

In Nigeria, however, Ojulari said macroeconomic conditions improved during the year, with steady GDP growth, moderating inflation, a stronger and more stable naira and increased foreign capital inflows, which he attributed to the impact of ongoing reforms.

He added that oil and condensate production continued to recover as improved operational efficiency and asset reliability strengthened the sector's contribution to economic growth.

Against this backdrop, NNPCL maintained its focus on operational factors within its control, helping to underpin its 2025 performance.

The company recorded broad-based volume growth across most of its core businesses during the year.

Oil and condensate production increased by five per cent, while natural gas production grew by nine per cent. More significantly, NNPCL's equity volumes increased by 11 per cent across oil, condensate and natural gas, allowing the company to capture a greater share of production and associated value.

The gas business recorded particularly strong growth. Gas transmission volumes rose by 18 per cent, sales volumes increased by 12 per cent, while LNG volumes grew by 11 per cent.

Ojulari said the performance demonstrated the growing contribution of gas to the company's integrated portfolio.

Production growth in oil and condensate was driven primarily by new well additions, targeted interventions at OML 13 and improved asset integrity. These interventions contributed approximately 32,400 barrels of oil per day.

Natural gas production growth, meanwhile, reflected stronger performance from projects including Uzu field gas and Agbada NAG Train 1, as well as major well interventions.

The company also adopted a more proactive approach to asset maintenance, which Ojulari said improved reliability and uptime across the portfolio.

The major exception to the volume growth was white products sales, which declined by 60 per cent. The GCEO linked the decline to the structural change in NNPCL's downstream market role following gasoline price deregulation in 2024.

The improvement in operational performance translated into stronger financial results, according to the GCEO.

Profit after tax increased by 33 per cent to N7.2 trillion, while dividends rose by 35 per cent year-on-year to N5.8 trillion.

Operating cash flow also increased by 16 per cent to N12.8 trillion, strengthening the company's cash-generating capacity and providing greater flexibility to fund strategic priorities.

Return on equity increased by 200 basis points to 16 per cent, reflecting higher earnings generated from the company's equity base.

Ojulari said the results demonstrated the strength of the business and the company's focus on sustainable growth and shareholder returns.

The company also reported progress across its environmental, social and governance agenda.

During 2025, it expanded access to cleaner energy through the delivery of nine new compressed natural gas (CNG) sites, taking its total network to 19 stations.

Its social-impact programmes included the facilitation of more than 6,000 cataract surgeries and financial literacy and workforce-readiness training for more than 300,000 National Youth Service Corps members.

The company also supported more than 15,000 farmers with climate-smart agriculture and market-readiness training.

On the environmental front, NNPC Foundation planted 80,000 trees through its afforestation and reforestation initiative, while NNPCL developed a Net Zero 2050 strategy to guide its longer-term decarbonisation efforts.

Ojulari said women accounted for 23 per cent of the company's leadership, above the stated global industry average of 17 per cent.

Looking ahead, the company is targeting further growth across its integrated value chain.

In the upstream business, it is targeting three million barrels per day of oil and condensate production and 12 billion standard cubic feet per day of natural gas.

The strategy includes lowering unit operating costs, rationalising the portfolio and increasing deepwater production.

Nigerians Should Commit To Rebuilding 'Nigeria Of Our Dream,' Falana Urges

• Personal Interests Threaten Nigeria's Progress – Olujobi

By Victoria Nwachukwu

NIGERIAN lawyer and human right activist, Femi Falana (SAN), has highlighted Nigeria's difficult struggle for independence and underscored Edo State's pivotal role in producing legendary freedom fighters like Chief Anthony Enahoro and Mike Imoudu.

This came as the Artistic Director of DOK Productions Limited, Segun Olujobi, has said that personal interests and individual ambitions that conflict with the collective good remain a major obstacle to Nigeria's progress,

Speaking at the 2026 ITV and Radio Pre-Independence Lecture, titled 'The Nigerian Dream: Still Valid or Dead on Arrival,' held under the theme 'From Ballot to Better Life, What Should 2027 Actually Deliver,' Falana reminded the audience that Nigeria's freedom was hard-won, noting that Edo State stands out historically for its pivotal role in the anti-colonial struggle before questioning the current viability of the Nigerian dream.

Falana said: "The independence of Nigeria's struggle was not won on a platter of gold. Today, I am going to channel such meaningful knowledge of the struggle to our people. And no other city in Nigeria, from my study, can boast of having produced freedom fighters as much as Edo State that led to our demand for independence before 1960.

"What is the Nigerian dream? For some people, it is the hope of owning a house. For others, it is the opportunity to secure good education, obtain gainful employment, establish a successful business, raise a family in safety and dignity, or simply live a life in which hard work is rewarded with a reasonable standard of living.

"For the young Nigerian, it may be the hope of building a successful career without having to leave the country in search of opportunity. For the farmer, it may mean having access to land, infrastructure, markets and security so that you can go to your farm without kidnappers harassing you in the land.

"For the entrepreneur, it may mean operating a business without having to navigate unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles. On film, the success of a business depends more upon political connections rather than enterprise. The Nigerian dream is the belief that Nigeria can become a country in which citizenship is not a disadvantage as it is now.

"It is the belief that a young Nigerian can wake up in the morning and believe that peace or a future is not predetermined by corruption, insecurity, poverty, unemployment, discrimination or political connections. It is ultimately a dream of dignity, opportunity, justice and accountable government. And that dream is not an unreasonable one."

Falana urged Nigerians to ask questions, stressing that those in government have no right to keep or hold on to information.

"You must have the right to ask questions, and if anyone does not allow you to ask questions, let us know," he said.

Olujobi spoke while reflecting on the message of *ÀJÀNÀKÚ: The Musical*, a fictional historical drama staged to mark Nigeria's 66th Independence anniversary.

Set against the backdrop of the ancient Oyo Kingdom and the transatlantic slave trade, the musical tells the story of Àjànàkú, a warrior who returns victorious after rescuing members of his kingdom, only to be betrayed, captured and sold into slavery alongside his pregnant wife, Ademonwura.



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (right) and President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio during the latter's visit to the former in Lagos ... on Friday.

Adams, Nganyandi, Others Seek Restructuring, Effective Security For Nation's Growth

By Suliyat Tella

FOR Nigeria to witness good governance, true development and remain united, restructuring of its governance systems remains non-negotiable.

This was the consensus of speakers at the 2026 edition of Oodua Progressive Union (OPU) Europe Summit held in Luxembourg, with the theme, 'The Yoruba Response to Restructuring, Insecurity and Cultural Erosion in a Struggling Federation of Nigeria.'

Addressing a distinguished gathering of OPU executives, delegates from Europe and other parts of the world, and invited guests, the Aare Ona Kakanfo of Yorubaland and Global Convener of OPU, Iba Gani Adams, noted that the theme was timely and critical for addressing the nation's current challenges.

Adams stressed the critical need to recalibrate Nigeria's federal system to ensure equity, justice and effective governance.

He said the over-centralisation of power at the federal level is counter-productive and identified this system of government as a root cause of inefficiency and marginalisation, particularly for the Yoruba nation.

He advocated for urgent restructuring and true federalism, saying it will grant states of the federation genuine autonomy.

"Restructuring is essential not only for equitable resource distribution but also for fostering national integration and eliminating ethnic discrimination," Adams said.

Economic Growth Meaningless If Workers Cannot Afford Basic Needs, Rotinwa Warns

By Bertram Nwannekanma

A FORMER Head of the Federal Civil Service, Alhaji Babatunde Tajudeen Rotinwa, has warned that Nigeria's economic growth will have little meaning if workers continue to struggle to afford basic necessities, urging the government to ensure that increased revenue translates into improved living conditions.

Rotinwa, who spoke in an interview to herald Nigeria's 66th anniversary, said economic policies and reforms, including petroleum subsidy removal and foreign exchange adjustments, should be accompanied by measures that enable a significant proportion of working Nigerians to benefit from the additional revenue generated.

"Growth that does not reward the populace is not an answer," he said.

He argued that the objective should go beyond salary increases to creating conditions that enable workers to maintain a decent standard of living, particularly as the rising cost of essential goods and services continues to put pressure on household incomes.

Rotinwa identified regular payment of pensions, affordable transportation, accessible healthcare, food security and social protection as key areas requiring government attention.

"If pension does not come, if free transportation and health are perpetually postponed for a promised prosperous Nigeria, public servants will go to the grave feeling abandoned," he said.

He said the rising cost of living had created a widening gap between wages and the cost of essential goods and services, making it necessary for government to focus on measures that improve workers' purchasing power.

"In Nigeria, a permanent secretary cannot afford a new car; a used one costs N30 million, and we still speak of growth," he said.

Rotinwa pointed to public transportation as one area where government intervention could significantly reduce the financial burden on workers. He also advocated stronger healthcare and social protection measures to cushion the impact of rising living costs.

On food security, he urged the government to closely monitor the production and availability of essential commodities, including wheat, rice and beans, while addressing supply gaps that could further drive up prices.

He also called for greater attention to the needs of low-income Nigerians in government housing and development programmes, saying public policies should reflect the circumstances and priorities of the majority of citizens.

Experts Task Workers On Early Preparation For Retirement

By Moyosore Salami

WORKERS in Nigeria who desire not to experience financial strain and loss of purpose during retirement must approach that stage of their lives prepared.

This was the submission of experts during the lunch of the book, Effective Planning for Retirement as an Entrepreneur (A Strategic Outlook), written by Air Commodore Taofiki Oladega (rtd), PhD, held at the Nigerian Army Resettlement Centre, Oshodi, Lagos, recently.

Describing retirement as a phase that every worker must inevitably face, the Chairman of the occasion, Air Vice Marshal Ebenezer Olayinka Alade (rtd), observed that "unfortunately, many approach it unprepared, resulting in financial strain, health challenges and loss of purpose."

He stated that the book addresses these concerns directly and responsibly, noting that the book launch was a celebration of knowledge, foresight and responsible living.

"It represents a commitment to enlightenment, preparation and societal development," he said.

Alade, who is former Commandant, Armed Forces Command and Staff College, Jaji, Kaduna, observed that the publication was timely and relevant, "especially within our socio-economic environment where issues such as delayed pension payments, inflation and limited post-retirement support systems persist."

"By combining retirement planning with entrepreneurship, the author provides a practical framework for ensuring financial stability, personal fulfillment and continued relevance after active service. This approach is commendable and forward-thinking," he noted.

He commended Oladega for the courage, discipline and insight required to produce this book.

"This book reflects not only academic depth but also real-life understanding of the challenges faced by workers and retirees.

"I encourage everyone present here today—workers, senior military officers, retirees, professionals, and policymakers—to see this book as a guide and a call to action. Let us begin to plan early, live responsibly and embrace lifelong productivity. This book deserves to be read, discussed and applied," he added.

On his part, the book reviewer, Prof. MOB Mohammed, noted that retirement remains one of the most critical transitions in the life of every worker. He also stated that unfortunately many individuals approach it with fear, uncertainty and inadequate preparation.

According to him, the book confronts that reality directly and offers practical, well-structured and context-specific solutions, particularly within the Nigerian environment.

Mohammed, who is the Director, Centre for Nigerian Studies, Lagos State University and Chairman, Honeyland Groups of Schools, also noted that the book was timely, relevant and well-researched.

North Central APC Unveils Mobilisation Plan For Tinubu's Re-Election

• Set For Rally On October 10

From Terhemba Daka, Abuja

THE North Central has scheduled a grand rally for October 10 in Lafia, Nasarawa State capital, as part of a coordinated grassroots mobilisation for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Vice President Kashim Shettima ahead of the 2027 presidential election.

The mobilisation programme, unveiled by North Central stakeholders and the region's Grassroots Mobilisation Network, also includes medical outreaches, advocacy tours and town hall meetings across the six states and the Federal Capital Territory.

National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Prof. Nentawe Yilwatda, disclosed this while addressing correspondents at the office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) on Friday.

Court Appoints Receiver Over Disputed Lagos Property

By Joseph Onyekwere

JUSTICE Ambrose Lewis-Allagoa of the Federal High Court, Lagos, has appointed a receiver/manager to take possession and control of a disputed property at No. 68 Molade Okoya Thomas Street, off Ajose Adeogun Street, Victoria Island, Lagos.

This followed a suit filed by Dr. (Mrs) Maryam Sani Abacha against Levitikal Realties & Construction Limited.

In an interim order issued on September 29, 2026, the judge restrained Levitikal Realties, its directors, agents, representatives, servants and persons acting through it from selling, transferring, assigning, mortgaging, leasing, charging, alienating or otherwise encumbering the property, pending the hearing and determination of the applicant's motion on notice for interlocutory injunction.

The order was made in suit marked FHC/LAG/CS/1245/2026, in which Abacha is the applicant and Levitikal Realties & Construction Limited is the respondent.

The property is covered by a Certificate of Occupancy dated July 4, 1988, and registered as No. 32 at Page 32 in Volume 1988B of the Lands Registry

Special

Nigeria At 66: Path To Turning Political Survival To Nation-building, Prosperity

From political survival to nation-building, the question for Nigeria at 66 is whether it can turn endurance into stronger institutions, prosperity and a deeper sense of citizenship. SEYE OLUMIDE writes.



SIXTY-SIX years after independence, Nigeria has answered one question that confronted the country at birth: it has survived. It survived military coups, a civil war, prolonged military rule, economic crises, disputed elections, insecurity, separatist agitations and repeated periods of political uncertainty.

But survival and nation-building are different measures of national progress.

Nigeria remains one political entity, while the larger task of building institutions that consistently deliver security, opportunity, justice and accountable government remains unfinished. President Bola Tinubu, in his October 1 Independence Day address, acknowledged the country's difficult journey, recalling war, military rule, economic crises, insecurity and political upheaval. He also said the country had endured and that his administration had moved from reform towards what he described as an "age of prosperity." The speech placed the anniversary debate around whether the country's resilience can now be translated into improvements that citizens experience in their daily lives.

That question brings the voices of Nigerians, scholars, political actors and religious leaders into the same national conversation.

For development expert and Founding Executive Director of the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development (Centre LSD), Dr. Otive Igbuzor, the starting point is development planning.

"The basic problem we have is that development is not on the agenda. So because development is not on the agenda, the plans, the policies, the budget is not geared towards development," he said.

Igbuzor's argument shifts attention from individual administrations to the relationship between planning, budgeting and measurable outcomes. He called for development plans around housing, water, education, healthcare and transportation, and cited Abuja's housing challenge as an example of what he described as inadequate planning and implementation.

"The land belongs to the government. The government has money. As allocated, one per cent of the budget goes to FCT every year. So you allocate something, build 1,000 houses every year. In 10 years you have solved the housing problem," he said.

He also urged citizens to pay closer attention to government budgets and participate more actively in politics, describing his prescription as "righting leadership, active citizenship and social consciousness."

The first major expectation of independence was that political freedom would be accompanied by material improvement.

At independence, Nigerians inherited a country with substantial agricultural resources, minerals, a growing commercial sector and a large population. Six decades later, poverty, unemployment, inflation, housing deficits, weak purchasing power and uneven access to basic services remain central public concerns.

The National Bureau of Statistics' 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index found that 133 million Nigerians or 63 per cent of the population measured were multidimensionally poor. The survey was conducted in 2021 and early 2022, so it does not provide a direct measurement of conditions in 2026. It does, however, document the scale of the structural challenge before many of the current economic reforms.

The question now is whether economic growth and reform can produce measurable improvements in household incomes, food security, jobs, housing, electricity, education and healthcare.

Tinubu's Independence Day address presented the government's answer in terms of production and cost reduction. He said the administration was expanding mechanised irrigation and dry-season farming, improving access to inputs, investing in storage and transportation, and building or completing infrastructure linking farms and factories to markets. He also said salaries and pensions had been paid on time and in full since 2023, while describing the reforms as a bridge towards wider prosperity.

Whether those measures produce the promised outcomes remains a question of implementation, scale and time.

Security presents another unresolved expectation. Independence implied the capacity of the state to protect citizens and property. Yet Nigeria has continued to contend with insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, communal violence and separatist agitation.

The debate over state police illustrates the institutional dimension of the problem. The Presidency said in June that consultations on a constitutional framework for state police had made significant progress, while acknowledging that constitutional and legal questions required consideration. The issue has also raised questions about funding, accountability, political control and coordination between federal and state security institutions.

The underlying issue is not simply whether state police should exist, but how security responsibilities can be organised so that citizens receive effective protection while safeguards against abuse remain in place.

A similar question surrounds federalism. Nigeria's early federal structure gave the regions considerable administrative and fiscal responsibilities. Military rule subsequently centralised significant powers. Today, states depend heavily on federally collected revenue even though they carry responsibilities for infrastructure and social services.

The debate is essentially about where authority, resources and responsibility should reside within the federation.

A Professor of Law, Olu Ojedokun, also linked Nigeria's development challenge to the structure of government. He advocated comprehensive restructuring to reduce the attraction of the Federal Government and strengthen governance at state and local levels. He also called for a more responsive security architecture, adequate funding for security institutions and a tax system capable of generating resources for public services.

For Ojedokun, decentralisation is connected to responsiveness: when responsibilities and resources are located closer to citizens, governments can be more directly measured against local needs.

A History and Diplomacy scholar at the University of Ilesa, Dr. Adebukola Ayoola, similarly located the problem in the management of Nigeria's resources.

"The main inhibition to achieving that is mismanagement of our natural and human resources," she said, identifying fiscal irresponsibility, misplaced priorities and poor economic decisions as among the obstacles to development.

Her position introduces another expectation of independence: national resources would be managed in ways that expand opportunity across society.

The question of citizenship adds another layer. Nigeria's ethnic, religious and regional diversity has always been part of its national character. The institutional challenge arises when citizens perceive political appointments, economic opportunities, public services or security as being distributed according to identity or political connection.

The recurring debates over zoning and power rotation reflect this concern. So do demands for greater regional representation and complaints about political exclusion in different parts of the country.

Former Deputy National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Bode George, offered a sharper assessment of the distance between independence and development.

"For 66 years, we've gone through a lot of experiences, the good, the bad, and the ugly. Politically, we have not been able to move in the direction of civilised countries," he said.

George pointed to hunger, healthcare, education and political organisation as areas requiring attention.

"For me, the hunger that is germinating the anger, the lacklustre health centres, health support for common people, even the rich, they run away to Europe. The education sector, what is going on? Then the political," he said.

He also questioned the frequency of population censuses and the basis for determining local government areas, arguing that population should be central to such decisions.

"So much went through my mind. And I said, what should we do? Because all is not well," George said.

His intervention provides a political counterpoint to the development argument: the question is not only what resources Nigeria possesses, but whether institutions translate those resources into public goods. Yet the 66-year journey also contains measurable gains.

The most fundamental is territorial survival. Nigeria remained a federation despite the civil war and successive periods of instability.

Power has changed hands through elections rather than military coups. The transfer of power from the PDP to the All Progressives Congress (APC) in 2015 and from Muhammadu Buhari to Tinubu in 2023 occurred within the constitutional order.

That continuity does not remove disputes over elections, parties or institutions. It does, however, provide a political framework within which those disputes are contested.

The 2027 elections will provide another test of that framework. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) lists January 16, 2027, for the presidential and National Assembly elections and February 6, 2027, for governorship and State Assembly elections, while eight states operate on separate governorship cycles. The Commission's published timetable and current election information provide the formal framework for the approaching electoral contest.

Political parties will be required to explain how their programmes address security, economic opportunity, education, infrastructure, public accountability and the structure of the federation.

The quality of political competition will also depend on whether parties organise around programmes and institutions rather than only personalities and electoral alliances.

This is relevant to the opposition as well as the governing party. Fragmented parties can create multiple centres of political mobilisation, but the constitutional system ultimately depends on voters being presented with identifiable programmes and candidates and on institutions applying electoral rules consistently.

Another achievement is the growth of civic participation. Nigerians have repeatedly organised around elections, public policy, social issues and demands for accountability. Civil society organisations, professional groups, journalists, community organisations and young citizens have expanded the space in which government decisions are questioned.

Nigeria's entrepreneurial capacity is another part of the national record. Financial technology, telecommunications, entertainment, creative industries, agriculture and informal enterprise have produced businesses and livelihoods despite infrastructure and financing constraints.

The youth question brings these issues together. Nigeria's young population is frequently described in policy discussions as an asset, but its size also creates pressure on education, employment, housing, healthcare and political participation.

Young Nigerians are not only future voters; they are already workers, entrepreneurs, professionals, students, community organisers and voters. Their relationship with the state will increasingly be shaped by whether education produces opportunities, whether employment provides income, whether public infrastructure supports enterprise and whether political institutions provide meaningful avenues for participation.

Nigeria therefore enters its 67th year of independence with two records existing simultaneously. One is the record of survival: war did not divide the country permanently, military rule ended, democracy returned and constitutional government has endured. The other is the record of unfinished development: security remains uneven, poverty remains substantial, public services vary widely, infrastructure gaps persist and debates over federalism remain unresolved.

Feature

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Nigeria At 66. . .The Chain Only Changed Hands

By **Bola Lillian Braide**

AS the drums roll for another Independence Day, I wonder and ask what six decades of self rule have truly delivered.

On Thursday, the drums rolled again. The President appeared on television with that familiar, tired cadence, urging us to keep hope alive because our founding fathers laboured for this nation. Governors cut cakes in their state capitals. School children marched under the scorching sun, waving little flags they barely understand. The police band played, radio stations screamed "Happy Independence!", and the green-white-green danced proudly in the wind. And yet, behind all the fanfare, there is a silent cry in the heart of every ordinary Nigerian that no anthem can drown.

I write this not as a member of any political party, not as an admirer of any candidate, but as a wounded citizen. As a Nigerian who is simply tired of pretending that all is well. I write with tears in my eyes and fire in my chest, because some truths must be told before we dance. And as the music fades and you return to a kitchen with no light, to a filling station you cannot afford, to another headline of kidnapping and hunger, you will be forced to ask yourself that question which burns like pepper in the throat: are we truly free?

Sixty-five years after the Union Jack was lowered in Lagos, we must ask with brutal sincerity: what did we really gain? The British left our shores, but did they truly leave our minds? They handed us a flag and an anthem, but they also handed power to a Nigerian elite who learnt the art of colonisation all too well and have since perfected it against their own brothers and sisters. The exploitation is no longer carried out in an English accent; it is now done in our own languages, by our own sons and daughters. And that makes the pain cut deeper. The white master is gone, but he left behind his younger brother, and that younger brother is our ruling class.

Colonisation did not end; it only changed colour. Yesterday, it was a man in London siphoning our palm oil and groundnuts. Today, it is a man in Abuja siphoning our crude oil billions and hiding them in Dubai and London. Yesterday, the colonialist told us we were unfit to govern ourselves. Today, our own leaders tell us, through their actions, that we are unfit to enjoy good roads, decent hospitals and quality schools. What, then, is the difference? The chain remains locked on our ankle; only the hand holding it has changed.

Let us call it what it is. We have failed. Not in one sector, not in two, but in all. I say this with a heavy heart and with an anger no editor can dilute. The acclaimed Giant of Africa now limps like a dwarf, watching smaller nations sprint past us while we struggle to stand.

Begin with education, the very foundation of any free nation. What have we done with it?

In 1960, the University of Ibadan stood shoulder to shoulder with universities in London. Our great secondary schools such as Barewa College, Christ the King College, Government College Ibadan, produced leaders who shook Africa and commanded respect across the world. Those same institutions that gave us Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and Philip Emeagwali are now mere shadows of themselves.

Today, our public schools lie in ruins. Innocent children sit on bare floors, writing on their laps. Our universities have been reduced to strike centres. A child gains admission at 18 and graduates at 28, not because he is dull, but because the government and ASUU are locked in endless battles over funds that politicians loot without remorse. Our children stay at home for eight months at a stretch, and in that idleness, some drift into internet fraud, some into crime, for an idle mind is the devil's workshop. Lecturers are owed salaries. Laboratories have no equipment. Libraries still parade books from 1975. Yet, the sons and daughters of ministers and the rich are in Toronto, in Manchester, in Houston, posting graduation photos on social media, while the children of the poor roast corn by the roadside after waiting eight years for a degree that may never come.

Tell me, is this what Zik and Awo fought for? We have murdered the future right inside the classroom. The privileged return with foreign accents to rule over the very children who were left at home to waste away. We have created two Nigeria, one for the rich and one for the poor, and the bridge between them is broken. The white colonialist deliberately gave us inferior education to keep us as clerks. What, then, are we giving ourselves today?

Go to our hospitals today and see what independence has truly given us. A nation of over 220 million people cannot boast of a single public hospital where even its president can be treated with confidence. In General Hospitals in Lagos and Makurdi, a pregnant woman in labour is asked to provide her own gloves, her own disinfectant, her own blood before a doctor will attend to her. Meanwhile, our leaders, at the slightest headache, fly to London, Berlin or Washington for treatment. They spend public funds to heal themselves abroad while the hospitals they were elected to build are left to rot. Is this freedom? Under colonial rule, the University College Hospital in Ibadan was built, and Nigerians benefited even if only by accident. Sixty-five years after independence and after earning hundreds of billions from oil, our own leaders cannot build one world-class hospital for themselves and for us. If this is not a colonisation of the mind, compounded by wickedness, what then, is it?

Consider Security, the first duty of any government. How can the Giant of Africa, with an army, a navy and an air force, and with trillions budgeted for defence every year, fail to protect its own children? Nigeria is no longer safe. From Sambisa to Zamfara, from the forests of the North-West to the creeks of the South, blood flows daily. Farmers in Benue cannot go to their farms without fear of being killed. Travellers on the Abuja-Kaduna highway recite their last prayers before setting out. Students are abducted from their dormitories in the dead of night like chickens. Our freedom of movement, the most basic proof of independence, has been stolen.

And when these tragedies occur, what do we hear? "We condemn this barbaric act." "We are on top of the situation." Empty grammar with no solution. The blood of innocent Nigerians cries out daily, while the powerful hide behind high walls guarded by policemen. Our soldiers are brave, but they are sent to confront terrorists with inferior weapons while billions meant for arms vanish in Abuja offices. A man who cannot sleep with both eyes closed in his own country is not independent. He is a prisoner in his fatherland.

Talk of the economy and power, and the shame deepens. We remain among the largest producers of crude oil in OPEC, yet we import refined fuel. Our four refineries have gulped trillions of naira in a so-called turnaround maintenance and produce nothing. Fuel subsidy was removed and the poor were told to sacrifice, yet the rich never sacrificed their convoys, their private jets or their mansions in Dubai. A litre of fuel now sells for over N1,000. A bag of rice costs nearly N100,000. The naira, once stronger than the dollar, has become a shadow of itself. A minimum wage of N70,000 cannot buy a bag of rice. Is this not madness?

Our power sector is a national joke. After privatisation and after billions spent, we still generate less than 5,000 megawatts for 220 million people. South Africa, with about 60 million people, generates over 40,000 megawatts. Even smaller Ghana enjoys more stable electricity. Our welders, hairdressers, tailors and small business owners are suffocating because there is no light. Darkness has become our national identity.

What of our roads and infrastructure? The Lagos-Ibadan Expressway took almost a decade to complete. The Abuja-Kaduna road remains a death trap. The East-West Road in the Niger Delta, the very region that produces our oil wealth, is an embarrassment. Every year, floods wash away villages in Kogi, Anambra and Borno, and government officials visit with cameras, distribute wrappers and disappear. We could not maintain what the colonialists left behind, let alone build new ones. The railways were allowed to rot for 40 years before we began borrowing from China to rebuild what we once had.

Our judiciary, our civil service and our electoral system have all been polluted. Justice is now for sale to the highest bidder. The poor man who steals a goat goes to prison for three years; the big man who steals N3 billion arrives in court in a private jet and secures bail within minutes. Our elections have become warfare, characterised by ballot snatching, vote buying and result falsification. The people have lost faith, which is why voter turnout continues to fall. Can you blame them?

Think about this. In 1960, Nigeria had groundnut pyramids in Kano that touched the sky. Cocoa in the West built the first university at Ibadan and the first television station in Africa. Palm oil thrived in the East. We were the pride and hope of Africa. Malaysia came to Nigeria to learn how to cultivate palm oil. Today, Malaysia is one of the world's largest exporters of palm oil, while we import it. Is that not shameful? It is like a man who owns a river yet begs his neighbour for a cup of water. When oil was discovered in Oloibiri in 1956, it should have been a blessing. Instead, it became a curse. Oil made our leaders lazy. They abandoned the farms and the factories. They began sharing oil revenue like national cake in Abuja every month, and whoever found his way to the table ate to excess while the rest of the nation licked the plate.

The most painful part is that we have normalised suffering. We now thank God for things that should be normal. We say, "Thank God we had light for two hours today," as if electricity were a miracle. We say, "Thank God I could buy fuel," as if fuel should be a luxury in an oil producing nation. We celebrate a governor for constructing one road, as if building roads were not his primary duty. Our expectations have been buried. The colonial mentality persists within us; we worship those in power as if they are doing us a favour, when in fact they are our servants. We have been psychologically conditioned to accept crumbs.

Some will argue that we now have democracy and can vote. But is this democracy truly free? Every four years, politicians distribute rice and a few thousand naira to purchase our future. Thugs snatch ballot boxes. Results are written in hotel rooms. Youths who dare to speak are brutalised or dismissed as lazy. The system is designed to recycle the same leaders, from military uniform to flowing *agbada*. And we, driven by hunger and ethnic sentiment, sell our votes and then lament for four years. We are not yet free from mental slavery. Until we liberate our minds from tribalism and stomach infrastructure, we shall remain slaves to politicians.

To all presidential hopefuls parading from state to state today, from the ruling party to the opposition, from familiar faces to new voices, listen and listen well. Nigeria is not a company to be looted. Nigeria is not a throne to be inherited. Nigeria is a mother weeping for her children. If you truly seek to lead, then put Nigeria first, not your ambition, not your party, not your pocket. Stop viewing the presidency as a retirement benefit or a mission of revenge. See it as a sacred trust.

To the incumbent and to those who aspire to replace him, I ask in plain language: when you promise Renewed Hope, do you feel the hopelessness of a father in Kano who cannot afford a bag of rice? When you speak of economic reforms on television, do you understand the pain of a widow in Aba whose shop has closed because she cannot afford diesel? When you boast of security achievements, have you sat with mothers in Benue who have buried their sons, or with parents in Kaduna who sold everything to pay ransom for their kidnapped children? If you have not felt our pain, you are not prepared to heal it.

We appeal to you to do better. Not as politicians, but as human beings. Do better than empty promises. Do better than distributing money during campaigns and distributing hunger after elections. Do better than seeking medical care abroad while our General Hospitals become mortuaries. Do better than sending your children to Harvard and Oxford while our universities remain on strike and our children learn under trees. Do better by creating jobs for the people. If you cannot build a Nigeria where your own children can be treated in a Nigerian hospital and educated in a Nigerian university, you have no moral right to ask for our votes.

Nigeria today is a giant in chains. We are the largest economy in Africa on paper, yet the poverty capital of the world in reality. We produce crude oil but queue for petrol. We have rivers, yet our taps are dry. We have sunshine all year, yet we live in darkness. Our brightest minds, doctors, nurses and engineers, are fleeing in droves. Our airports have become places of tears, where parents wave goodbye to children they may not see for years. This is not freedom. This is a slow national burial.



Braide



Children of former Head of State, late Gen. Sani Abacha: Fatima Abacha (left) and Abba Abacha receiving a posthumous award on behalf of their father from Bayelsa State Governor, Douye Diri (right); and former President Goodluck Jonathan during the Dinner and Awards Night of the Bayelsa at 30 anniversary celebration at the Diepreye Alamieyeseigha Memorial Banquet Hall, Government House, Yenagoa...on Thursday.



Member, Standing Committee (West), Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), Rose Moses (left); Strategic Content Coordinator, Embassy of the United States of America, Rhoda Adesilu; Publisher, *Franktalknow & AF24 News,* Dr Olabisi Deji-Folutile; Vice President (West), NGE/Editor, Weekend Titles of *The Guardian,* Dr Kabir Alabi Garba; Spokesperson, Embassy of the United States of America, Nicole Holler; President, NGE/Editor, *Vanguard Newspapers,* Mr Eze Anaba; Member, Standing Committee (West), NGE/Editor, New Telegraph, Juliet Bumah; Assistant General Secretary, NGE/Editor-in-Chief/ CEO, *Freedom Online*, Gabriel Akinadewo; and Press and Media Specialist, Embassy of the United States of America, Shekinah Olagunju, during a courtesy visit of the delegation of Embassy of the United States of America to Nigerian Guild of Editors' House in Ikeja, Lagos... on Tuesday.



Public Relations Director of Nigeria Yongxing Steel Company, Benin City, Ms. Hazel Han, (left); Chancellor of the Catholic Archdiocese of Benin City, Very Rev. Fr. (Dr.) Michael Oyanoafoh; Managing Director of Nigeria Yongxing Steel Company, Mr Zhang Xianghai; and Very Revd Fr. Benedict Onwugbenu of the Caritas Commission, Catholic Archdiocese of Benin; at the formal handover of a building to the Catholic Charity Home for the Needy donated by Nigeria Yongxing Steel Company, Benin, Edo State.



Chief Executive Officer (CEO), BHM Holdings, Ayeni Adekunle (left); Director of Global Marketing, Communications and External Affairs, The King's Trust International, Yasamin Alttahir; Managing Director, Africa, Allison Worldwide, Claudine Moore; Director, Africa Public Sector Banking, Citi, Hackim Abdul; and Chairman, Blackcod Group, Group Director, Odua Investment Company Limited, Otunba (Dr.) Bimbola Ashiru, during the Africa Breakfast Convos 4.0 held at the World Trade Centre, on the sidelines of UNGA 81 in New York.

Metronotes

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MUSWEN Congratulates Yusuf Olaolu Ali On Crescent University Honorary Doctorate



Ali (SAN)

THE Muslim Ummah of South West Nigeria (MUSWEN) has congratulated Prof. Yusuf Olaolu Ali (SAN), on his acceptance of the conferment of an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D) Honoris Causa by Crescent University, Abeokuta.

The proposed conferment is scheduled to take place on Saturday, October 17, 2026, during the university's 18th Convocation Ceremony.

The congratulatory message jointly signed by MUSWEN President, Alhaji Rasaki Oladejo and Executive Secretary, Prof. Wole Abbas, described the honour as a recognition of Ali's longstanding contributions to the legal profession, education, scholarship and the development of society. It said the conferment was particularly significant because of Ali's distinguished career as a legal practitioner as well as his contributions to the advancement of knowledge and public discourse.

Speeding Claims One Life In Lagos Coastal Road Crash

By **Benjamin Alade**

ONE person was killed while three others sustained serious injuries in a road crash involving a Lexus Jeep along the Coastal Road inward Eko Hotel, Lagos.

The grey Lexus Jeep 350, with registration number LSD 554 KV, reportedly lost control, crashed into a roadside pole and overturned.

Operatives of the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA), who were monitoring traffic around the area, responded to the scene and secured the affected section of the road.

The three injured victims were rescued with the assistance of Good Samaritans and taken to Duck-Yard Hospital within the Military Zone for medical treatment.

Security personnel from Victoria Island also provided reinforcement, while LASTMA officers removed the mangled vehicle from the carriageway to restore normal traffic flow.

Nigerians Should Adopt New Mindset Of Constructive Patriotism — Oshinibosi

By **Suliyat Tella**

CONVENER of Prosperous Naija I See, Abiodun Oshinibosi, has called for a new mindset of constructive patriotism in Nigeria, urging citizens to acknowledge measurable national progress, while remaining committed to addressing the country's economic and social challenges.

Oshinibosi made the call at an event held on the eve of Nigeria's 66th Independence anniversary.

Speaking to business leaders, professionals, entrepreneurs, young Nigerians, media executives and other stakeholders, the convener said Nigeria's development should be viewed as a house still under construction, one requiring continuous investment, maintenance, innovation and collective responsibility.

2027: Expert Seeks Deployment Of Secure, Sustainable Technology To Strengthen Electoral Process

By **Sunday Aikulola**

MANAGING Director and Chief Executive Officer of E-Terra Technologies Ltd., Ifeanyi Ochonogor, has canvassed responsible deployment of technology to strengthen the nation's electoral system.

Speaking at the Nigeria eGovernment Summit 2026 in Lagos, he also addressed challenges of cybersecurity, data protection, infrastructure, public trust and electronic waste. The theme was, "Mainstreaming technologies in Nigeria election management."

Essay Competition To Educate Pupils On Dairy Products Launched In Enugu, Kaduna, Lagos, Rivers, Oyo

By **Opeyemi Babalola**

A NATIONAL initiative focused on strengthening consumer education and awareness about milk and dairy products, the Choose Milk Campaign, has launched an essay competition for primary school pupils across Enugu, Kaduna, Lagos, Rivers, Oyo and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

This maiden edition, open to pupils in Primary Four to Six, aged nine to 11, began on September 15. It will end on October 31, 2026. The initiative aims to educate children on the importance of understanding milk and making informed dairy choices.

100 Days: Biliaminu Records Gains In Revenue, Power, Clinical Services At UITH

THE Acting Chief Medical Director of the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital (UITH), Prof. Sikirullahi Abayomi Biliaminu, has recorded interventions in revenue generation, power supply, diagnostic services, clinical care, infrastructure and staff administration within his first 100 days in office.

The administration's initiatives have focused on strengthening hospital operations, improving patient care and addressing critical infrastructure and service-delivery needs. Among them is an improvement in the hospital's internally generated revenue (IGR), alongside greater stability in electricity supply.

The hospital's diagnostic capacity has also received a boost with the introduction of key laboratory equipment, including a spectrophotometer, Ion Selective Electrode analyser and haematology analyser with reticulocyte capability.



Biliaminu

Rotary Club Of Ikoyi Metro Drives Positive Teen Social Media Debate

THE Rotary Club of Ikoyi Metro, led by its 25th President, Emeka Nwosu, brought secondary school students together recently, for an interschool debate to examine one of the defining questions confronting young Nigerians: whether social media represents a danger or an opportunity for the Nigerian teenager.

Organised as part of the club's Basic Education and Literacy Programme, the debate placed young people at the centre of a conversation that adults, educators, technology companies and regulators have increasingly struggled to resolve.

The topic, "Social Media and the Nigerian Teenager: A Danger or Opportunity?", was deliberately broad enough to require students to confront both sides of digital life, from learning, creativity and entrepreneurship to cyberbullying, misinformation, privacy breaches and potentially harmful interactions.

The debate also continued a programme that has become an important part of the Rotary Club of Ikoyi Metro's education calendar. In September 2025, the club gathered students from five Lagos secondary schools to debate whether artificial intelligence would improve humanity's future or put it at risk.

Local Councils Earn N362billion As Federal Allocation In Seven Months

• Alimosho Tops Nationally, LASG Accounts For 10 Highest Collecting Councils

By **Gbenga Salau**

IN the first seven months of 2026 – January to July, the 20 recognised local councils in Lagos got N362 billion as federal allocation. Alimosho tops the table in terms of the highest federal allocation collected with N23.936 billion. It was followed by Ajeromi Ifelodun which got N19.705 billion. The council with the lowest allocation within the seven months is Ibeju Lekki Local council which got N15.762 billion.This meant that Alimosho allocation for the months under review was about N8.17 billion higher than that of Ibeju Lekki. It also implied that Alimosho share was about 34.2 per cent higher to Ibeju Lekki.

Agege Local Council received N18.141 billion within the same period. Amuwo Odofin got N17.130 billion; Apapa N16.427 billion; Badagry N16.755 billion; Epe N16.384 billion; Eti-Osa N17.153 billion; Ifako-Ijaye N17.927 billion; Ikeja N17.181 billion; Ikorodu N18.819 billion; Kosofe N19.489 billion; Lagos Island N16.352 billion; Lagos Mainland N17.103 billion; Mushin N19.287 billion; Ojo N 19.073 billion; Oshodi-Isolo N19.219 billion; Shomolu N17.726 billion; Surulere N18.441 billion.

The five highest recipients, Alimosho, Ajeromi Ifelodun, Kosofe, Mushin and Oshodi-Isolo, cumulatively received about **N101.64 billion**, which is approximately 28.1 per cent of the total. Alimosho by itself accounted for around **6.6 per cent** of the combined allocation.

A breakdown of the allocation of a monthly basis revealed that Agege in January got N **2.457 billion**, February N**3.854 billion**, March **N2.061 billion**, April **N1.943 billion**, May **N2.707 billion**, June **N2.573 billion**, July N**2.548 billion.**

Ajeromi Ifelodun received N2.706 billion in January, which rose to N4.058 billion in February, N2.248 billion in March, N2.148 billion in April, N2.928 billion in May, N2.794 billion in June and N2.819 billion in July.

On his part, Alimosho in January got **N3.376 billion**, February **N4.609 billion**, March **N2.757 billion**, April **N2.709 billion**, May **N3.527 billion**, June N**3.396 billion** and July **N3.559 billion.**

Amuwo Odofin received **N2.297 billion in January, N3.722 billion in February, N1.939 billion in March, N1.808 billion in April, N2.563 billion in May, N2.428 billion in June and N2.370 billion in July.**


Sesan-Olowa

Apapa in January got **N2.185 billion**, February received **N3.630 billion**, March **N1.854 billion**, April **N1.716 billion**, May **N2.464 billion**, June **N2.328 billion**, and July **N2.248 billion.**

Badagry Local Council was allocated **N2.229 billion in January, N3.668 in February, N1.895 billion in March, N1.763 billion in April, N2.511 billion in May, N2.377 billion in June and N2.309 July.**

For Epe Local Council, January allocation was **N2.167 billion**, February **N3.618 billion**, March **N1.851 billion**, April **N1.716 billion**, May **N2.459 billion**, June **N2.325 billion** and July **N2.246 billion.**

Eti-Osa received **N2.288 billion in January, N3.717 billion in February, N1.943 billion in March, N1.818 billion in April, N2.568 billion in May, N2.434 billion in June and N2.381 billion in July.**

For Ibeju Lekki, January allocation was **N2.077 billion**, February **N3.542 billion**, March **N1.775 billion**, April **N1.629 billion**, May **N2.370 billion, June N2.234 billion** and July **N2.133 billion.**

Ifako Ijaye Local Council in January got **N2.422 billion**, February **N3.825 billion**, March **N2.035 billion**, April **N1.914 billion**, May **N2.676 billion**, June **N2.542 billion, and** July **N2.510 billion.**

Ikeja Local Council received **N2.301 billion as allocation in January, N3.726 billion in February, N1.945 billion in March, N1.817 billion in April, N2.571 billion in May, N2.436 billion in June and N2.382 billion in July.**

Ikorodu Local Council in January got **N2.557 billion as allocation**, February **N3.937 billion**, March **N2.143 billion**, April **N2.036 billion**, May **N2.803 billion**, June **N2.670 billion, and in** July it received N**2.669 billion.**

Kosofe Local Council was allocated **N2.676 billion in January, N4.033 billion in February, N2.222 billion in March, N2.118 billion in April, N2.897 billion in May, N2.762 billion in June and N2.779 billion in July.**

For Lagos Island, in January it received **N2.174 billion**, February **N3.621 billion**, March **N1.845 billion**, April **N1.705 billion**, May **N2.453 billion**, June **N2.317 billion, and** July **N2.234 billion.**

Lagos Mainland got N2.294 billion in January, N3.719 billion in February, N1.935 billion in March, N1.804 billion in April, N2.559 billion in May, N2.424 billion in June, and N2.365 billion in July.

Mushin Local Council in January got **N2.643 billion**, February **N4.005 billion**, March **N2.197 billion**, April **N2.092 billion**, May **N2.868 billion**, June **N2.734 billion** and July **N2.745 billion.**

For Ojo Local Council, in January it received **N2.607 billion as federal allocation**, February **N3.976 billion**, March **N2.172 billion**, April **N2.064 billion**, May **N2.838 billion**, June **N2.704 billion, and** July **N2.708 billion.**

Oshodi Isolo Local Council got N2.631 billion in January, N3.996 billion in February, N2.189 billion in March, N2.083 April, N2.859 billion in May, N2.724 billion in June and N2.733 billion in July.

On its part, Shomolu Local Council in January received **N2.391 billion**, February **N3.8 billion**, March **N2.01 billion**, April **N1.887 billion**, May **N2.648 billion**, June **N2.513 billion and** July **N2.474 billion.**

Surulere Local Council federal allocation in January was **N2.505 billion**, February **N3.893 billion**, March **N2.096 billion**, April **N1.982 billion**, May **N2.749 billion**, June **N2.614 billion, and** July **N2.599 billion**

An analysis of the allocation on a monthly basis showed that February recorded the highest combined allocation at about **N76.96 billion**. This was far above January's **N48.99 billion**. February alone accounted for **21.3 per cent of all allocations received during the seven-month period.**

However, **April was the low point as** the combined allocation fell to about **N38.76 billion.** Compared with February's N76.96 billion, April's allocation was almost **50 per cent lower.** April accounted for about **10.7 per cent of the seven-month total.** The combined allocation rose to **N54.03 billion in May**, an increase of about **39.4 per cent** from April, although it dropped slightly in June and July to N51.34bn and N50.82bn respectively.

In the first six months of 2026, Lagos local councils got N311.20 billion, which is the highest total allocation when compared with other states. It is followed by Kano which received N148.41 billion, Rivers N139.42 billion, Oyo N132.96 billion, and Katsina N116.66 billion.

Similarly, the ten local councils with the highest federal allocation across the federation in the first six months of 2026 were all from Lagos.

Alimosho got the highest allocation at N20.38 billion, Ajeromi/Ifelodun N16.89 billion, Kosofe N16.71billion, Mushin N16.54billion, Oshodi/Isolo N16.49 billion, Ojo N16.36 billion, Ikorodu N16.15 billion, Surulere N15.84 billion, Agege N15.60 billion and Ifako/Ijaye N15.42 billion.

Drive Innovation, Excellence At MDAs, Sanwo-Olu Tells Civil Servants

By **Gbenga Salau**

LAGOS State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has charged participants of the second cohort of the Public Service Accelerator Programme to return to their offices and drive innovation, excellence and improved service delivery.

Sanwo-Olu who gave the charge at the graduation ceremony of the programme, organised by the Ministry of Establishments and Training, said the initiative was designed to build a pool of highly skilled, motivated and innovative public officers capable of transforming the Lagos State Public Service.

The governor urged the one hundred graduates to see their completion of the programme as the beginning of greater responsibility, stressing that their success would be measured by the improvements they introduced in their respective ministries, departments and agencies.

Sanwo-Olu said his administration would continue to invest in human capital, noting that technology, innovation and problem-solving approaches were essential to building a professional and responsive public service that meets the needs of Lagos residents.

The Commissioner for Establishments and Training, Mr. Afolabi Ayantayo, said the programme demonstrated the state government's commitment to developing a new generation of public servants equipped with leadership skills and practical solutions to emerging challenges.

The Head of Service, Mr Bode Agoro, said the programme was designed to identify high-potential officers and develop them into a talent pool capable of providing innovative solutions to public service challenges.

The Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Establishments, Mrs. Oluwatoyin Atanda, said one hundred participants were selected from about three thousand applicants through assessments and interviews, adding that the initiative was also building a leadership pipeline for the future of the Lagos State Public Service.



Politics

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How Grassroots Mobilisation Can Reshape 2027 Polls

Ahead of the 2027 general election, Nigeria's political landscape is witnessing a shift in which grassroots support and candidate appeal increasingly matter alongside party structures. Recent elections suggest that party machinery alone may not guarantee victory as voters assert greater influence over electoral outcomes. ***GBENGA AKINFENWA*** *writes.*



PRIOR to the 2019 general election, Kwara State witnessed one of the most significant political realignments in its recent history.

The movement, popularly known as '*O To G* ', or 'enough is enough', became the rallying cry of a coalition seeking to end the political dominance associated with the Saraki political structure in the state.

The outcome was decisive. The All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate, AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, defeated the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate, Razak Atunwa, with 331,546 votes to 114,754. The APC also won all 16 local councils.

The Kwara experience demonstrated how political structures could be challenged when different interests coalesced around a common electoral objective. But it also raised a question that has become more relevant ahead of 2027: how much of electoral power belongs to political parties, and how much resides with voters and candidates themselves?

Seven years later, that question is resurfacing in different forms across the country.

In Ogun State, a non-partisan grassroots civic advocacy group, Make Ogun State Great Again (MOGA), has emerged from community-based activism around infrastructure and governance concerns in Ado-Odo/Ota Local Council. The group says it is mobilising citizens to demand accountability, monitor public projects and encourage participation in governance ahead of the 2027 elections.

Its activities reflect a wider development in which some civic organisations are attempting to move beyond election-day observation to sustained engagement with communities on governance, accountability and citizens' rights.

A similar initiative emerged in May when civil society and civic technology organisations established the Coalition for Participatory Governance (CPG), aimed at promoting transparency, accountability and improved service delivery, beginning at the local government level. The coalition was convened by TriAfrica Empowerment Foundation and supported by BudgIT and Lagos Island Connect, alongside other civil society organisations.

The coalition said its objective was to encourage citizens to become active participants in governance rather than limiting political participation to voting during elections.

That development is significant because the emerging political currency is no longer confined to party membership, rallies or endorsements. Increasingly, political actors are seeking to understand where voters live, what issues influence their choices, how they behave at polling-unit level and what persuades them to turn out on election day.

The Osun Test

The recent Osun governorship election provides one of the clearest examples of the changing relationship between candidate identity and party platform.

Governor Ademola Adeleke contested the 2026 election on the platform of the Accord Party, having won his first term in 2022 on the PDP platform. He was re-elected with 511,067 votes, defeating APC candidate Bola Oyebamiji, who polled 444,815 votes. Adeleke won 19 of the state's 30 local councils, while the APC won 11.

More significant for the argument about candidate-centred politics is the comparison with 2022.

Adeleke polled 403,371 votes in 2022 on the PDP platform. His 2026 tally of 511,067 therefore represented an increase of 107,696 votes, despite his change of political platform.

The result does not establish that party structures are irrelevant. Rather, it raises questions about the extent to which an incumbent's personal political identity, record, grassroots networks and relationship with voters can travel across party platforms.

For political strategists, therefore, the relevant question may no longer be simply which party controls a state. It is also where each candidate's votes are coming from, the margins involved, turnout levels and the strength of the candidate's network at polling-unit level.

Political commentator, Sanusi Muhammad, argued that federal influence should not automatically be equated with electoral support.

"Federal power is not the same thing as electoral power," he said, noting that the number of governors, ministers, National Assembly members, appointments, financial resources, rallies and endorsements does not necessarily translate directly into votes.

Using Osun as an example, he argued that campaign organisations should look beyond the number of local councils won and examine polling-unit performance, vote margins and turnout.

"A modern campaign dashboard should never simply say: we won 19 LGAs. It should say: where did we win, by how much, with what turnout, among which voter segments, and at what mobilisation cost?" he said.

That distinction is becoming increasingly relevant as political parties prepare for 2027.

From Party Structures To Voter Networks

The changing political environment does not mean that party structures have disappeared. Rather, the relationship between the party, candidate and voter appears to be becoming more complex.

A party may possess governors, lawmakers, political appointees and extensive organisational structures, yet still have to convert those advantages into votes at the polling-unit level.

Conversely, a candidate with strong personal recognition may attract voters beyond the traditional boundaries of his or her party.

This was also part of the lesson of the Kwara election in 2019, when the 'O To G campaign brought together politicians, professionals, civil society actors, youth groups and ordinary voters around a common political objective. The APC's victory across all 16 local councils demonstrated the electoral effect of a broad coalition operating against an established political structure.

The current debate in Kwara is, however, different. The political conversation has shifted from the 2019 campaign to questions of governance and performance under the APC administration. Some residents and political actors have begun using the expression "O Tun Ya" to express dissatisfaction and demand another political change.

Such developments illustrate another feature of Nigeria's electoral politics: slogans and movements may be powerful, but their durability depends on whether the underlying grievances remain relevant to voters.

The Grassroots Question

Coordinator of MOGA, Apostle Kayode Olawoye, believes grassroots mobilisation will be critical in 2027.

For the parties preparing for 2027, the challenge will therefore extend beyond securing endorsements and assembling political structures. They will have to understand the issues that matter to voters, establish durable relationships with communities, build credible candidates and translate those relationships into lawful election-day mobilisation.

"The grassroots are the real voters," he said, arguing that organised citizens could exert greater influence when they act collectively rather than individually.

Olawoye said MOGA was non-partisan and focused on voter education and demands for development.

He also urged eligible citizens to obtain and protect their voter credentials and participate in the electoral process.

His position reflects a wider argument among civil society actors that electoral participation should not begin and end with campaign rallies.

National Secretary of the Campaign for Democracy, Femi Lawson, said citizens needed to understand the influence they exercise through their votes.

"There has been this impression that it is one political leader or godfather or one political party that determines the victory in an election," he said. "But it has shown that when the people are determined, they can actually dictate the direction of where the citizens should vote and who governs them."

Lawson cited the emergence of candidates on relatively smaller party platforms as evidence that electoral competition can extend beyond the dominant political parties. He referred to Olusegun Mimiko's 2007 victory in Ondo State on the Labour Party platform and the emergence of Peter Obi as a major political force under the Labour Party in the 2023 presidential election.

The examples, however, also underline the importance of candidate identity. In each case, the party platform provided the legal vehicle through which the candidate contested, while personal networks, political circumstances and voter sentiment influenced the outcome.

Mobilisation And Turnout

For Lawson, one of the central challenges facing Nigerian elections is low voter participation.

He argued that low turnout can make electoral manipulation and vote buying easier because a relatively small number of active voters can determine the outcome of a contest involving a much larger registered electorate.

The argument places turnout at the centre of grassroots politics. But participation alone is not enough.

Andrew of ActionAid said citizens must also be sufficiently informed to assess candidates and parties on issues such as security, employment, education, healthcare, food prices and poverty.

"The recent Osun governorship election provides some important lessons as Nigeria approaches 2027," he said, noting that turnout remained relatively low despite the large number of registered voters. He also pointed to reports of vote buying and voter inducement as evidence that threats to free electoral choice remain.

The implication, he argued, is that civic mobilisation must move beyond asking people to vote.

Citizens need to know how to verify their voter information, locate their polling units, understand the voting process, recognise electoral offences and report intimidation or other violations.

Civil society organisations, he said, also have a responsibility to reach communities that are often poorly represented in mainstream political conversations, including rural residents, women, young people, persons with disabilities and people living in poverty.

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Emerging Innovations Are Transforming The Business Of Political Marketing – **Mike Dada**

Political marketing is experiencing a fundamental reset, just as data analytics, artificial intelligence and digital platforms are changing how candidates understand voters, shape narratives and compete for attention. In this interview with MOYOSORE SALAMI, Mike Dada, a lawyer, Marketing and Public Relations expert and CEO/ Managing Director of PRM Africa Marketing and Communications Ltd, with close to three decades of experience across strategic public relations, advertising, brand communication and political campaigns, insists the change goes beyond technology. Excerpts:

Though you wear many caps, you have built a career in brand development and corporate communications for close to three decades. How would you describe the growth of the industry, considering where it is coming from?

LET me say, brand development and management, yes, but more than corporate communications. Perhaps you meant Marketing and Public Relations, which are broader disciplines and careers. It is a pleasure to share my perspectives on these developments. Having transitioned from traditional brand building to the high-stakes arena of political marketing, I've witnessed a profound transformation in how we communicate value, whether it's for a product or a presidential candidate. Obviously, the industry has moved from a rudimentary stage of "mere publicity" to a sophisticated era of strategic brand management. In the early days, corporate communications were largely reactive—putting out fires. Today, it is a proactive, data-driven discipline. We have seen a shift from purely traditional media (billboards, television and print) to a holistic ecosystem where the brand is emotional, experiential and digital. The industry has grown to become a cornerstone of corporate governance and business sustainability in Nigeria and around the world. It is also important to note the evolution of the strategic and historic role of the body of knowledge of marketing that birthed other disciplines and legs of communications, with its attendant technological leveraging and impact. There is more precision and exactness these days. Overall, there is a significant leap in improvement and advancement, especially with technology and science.

Since the Abiola 1993 era, the impact of professionals in political campaigns has not been very pronounced until you and some others emerged as key players in the political marketing scene. What informed this development?

The "Hope '93" campaign was a masterclass in political communication for its time, but for nearly two decades afterwards, political campaigns in Nigeria returned to largely "organic" or "thuggish" methods where professional political marketing strategy was sidelined. The political candidates were used to, and many still rely on, the crude and unstructured push strategy that depends on fellow politicians and volunteered relatives as campaign committee members to communicate their intentions and manifestoes to potential electorates. What informed our organisation's, in this case PRM Africa, emergence and the current professionalisation is the realisation that the voter has evolved and become more discerning and critical. You can no longer win solely by "stomach infrastructure" and/or deliberate voter suppression. You need a story or narrative, a compelling, convincing and distinct one, for that matter. We saw a gap where politicians had great manifestos and genuine intentions but zero brand identity and emotional resonance, so we stepped in to provide solutions that treat the candidate as a "brand" that must promise and deliver enduring value.



Mike Dada

Having been involved in the campaigns of a few political candidates and achieved success in them, would you say our political environment is ripe for modern political marketing?

Absolutely! Our environment is more than ripe; it is demanding it. In fact, after managing 16 elections end-to-end over the years and winning all, I am more than convinced that political marketing and communications make a lot of difference in determining who becomes victorious in a democratic election or else the candidate will be winking in the dark. The days of addressing the same crowd at different political rally locations are gone. With a younger (because the median age in Nigeria is 18), more sceptical and more exposed electorate, "politics or electioneering as usual" is falling apart and becoming boringly unfashionable. Modern political marketing—which involves deep and honest situation assessment, demographic and psychographic analysis, voter segmentation and targeted messaging—is now the only way to reach a fragmented and distracting audience that no longer sits in one place watching the same television channel.

Is the impact of political marketing measurable?

Yes, it is highly measurable. We no longer guess. We need to count the numbers for it to count. In any case, democracy is a game of numbers. Through sentiment analysis, digital footprint tracking, evaluation, consistent control and periodic polling, we can measure the "conversion rate" of a campaign. We can see how a specific message moved a specific demographic in a specific geopolitical zone. If your marketing isn't moving the needle in the polls or social sentiment, you know you need to pivot. It is important I point out that political marketing needs to be married with push strategy, on-the-ground (OTG) work for success or for the campaign objective to be achieved.

> *We no longer guess. We need to count the numbers for it to count. In any case, democracy is a game of numbers. Through sentiment analysis, digital footprint tracking, evaluation, consistent control and periodic polling, we can measure the "conversion rate" of a campaign.*

If you were asked to mention one of the most striking campaigns you have handled, which would you mention?

We have many campaigns that stand out. While it is fashionable to have a stand-out campaign, I think it is better to achieve the objective of the campaign in this case, winning an election. I remember a story that I have used many times as a case study whenever I have the opportunity to lecture or teach brand communication, and many of my university mates, friends or comrades at Ife will remember this student union election story. I was the campaign manager with no professional training, and our ideological group lost the student union presidency because our poster looked very expensive (a full-colour poster, not black and white), and our candidate was overdressed. The campaign stood out, but we lost. The students even had a song for us, *e ma tele won oo, awon to te poster olowo nla, e ma tele won.* (Don't follow them; those who printed expensive posters, don't follow them.)

Later in life, during my professional journey, I realised that we were communicating over the heads of the target audience in that students' union election. The students were wondering and interrogating where we got the money to print over 2000 full-colour A2 posters, buy expensive jackets, tie and shoes for our candidate to do photoshoots without realising that the clothes were borrowed from a relative and the posters were donated by a student and comrade whose family business, up to the third generation, are big-time printers.

Many times we handle difficult political marketing projects. Personally, I love challenges. We have had instances where we had to campaign against the tide. We had to take a candidate with a long history of mixed image and reintroduce his core essence—the "Manifesto Chronicles"—to a digital generation that was largely fed on social media narratives. Seeing that strategy translate into a win was incredibly rewarding.

In a world filled with evolving technological solutions, what is the role of digital marketing in political marketing?

Digital marketing is no longer an "alternative" channel; it is the primary battlefield. In a world of evolving tech, digital marketing allows for micro-targeting, precision and measurement. We can send one message to a farmer in the North and a different, tailored message to a tech enthusiast in Lagos, all while maintaining the core brand essence. It provides the feedback loop that traditional media lacks. It is not the future; it is now.

Beyond political campaigns, governments at various levels in Nigeria have been criticised for not engaging professionals to communicate their programmes. What is your take on this?

This is a major challenge in Africa, not only in Nigeria. Governments often treat public affairs communication as "propaganda" rather than "engagement." They use civil servants or "information officers" to do the job of brand specialists. The result is a disconnect and confusion you see everywhere: a government is performing, but citizens feel neglected and distant. Governments must learn that selling a policy is just as important as implementing it. Governments at all levels need to understand the necessity of investing heavily and building intangible assets such as reputation, perception, mutual understanding and trust for the purpose of legitimacy and policy support from citizens.

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How Records, Legacies, History Will Decide 2027 Presidential Election

By **Banji Alabi**

THE run up to next year's presidential election in the country has continued to be land-mined by intrigues and weaponised side and leg kicks including those that go for fouls and outright murder of facts. They are all being employed in outright display of crude and sometimes brazen desperation, all in the name of the end justifies the means. Nigerians must beware of name callings, empty sweet talks, double-speak and playing to the gallery; they must demand issue-based campaigns; they must vote for records, legacies and history, not fabricated history, distorted records, photo-tricks or internet generated legacies.

So far history, records and character assassination have suffered the greatest ordeals and have been dominant victims of this desperation, especially from the two camps of "One chance" and "Last chance." In recent times, history and records have been distorted and even literally murdered, throwing away honour and dignity. Or how best could we describe Atiku Abubakar's 360 degree distortion of history and U-turn when then as the country's number two citizen, he did not only work and campaign extra-hard to sell withdrawal of petroleum subsidy, but actually chaired one of the committee's under the Chief Olusegun Obasanjo Presidency, now only for him to turn around to become the arrow-head of the proponent and exponent of return of subsidy, which he is now weaponising against President Bola Tinubu.

The latest in the assault against history and records is also coming from the camp of "One Chance," Mr. Peter Obi, presidential candidate of Nigerian Democratic Congress (NDC), who at all fora had sermonised it to every ear that he made Anambra an Eldorado state and left it as paradise where nothing is lacking as a state flowing with milk and honey. Today the wind has blown open the anus (yansh) of the fowl; there is no place for Peter Obi to hide. He can no longer hide under the fake record of achievements he had been brandishing at churches, conferences, rallies and IDP camps except he wants to celebrate N127 billion left-behind debt profile, unpaid salary arrears as well as the paltry N2.13 billion left for his successor, as legacies qualifying him to seek Nigerians' votes in next year's presidential election. Of course, this recent report from Anambra State may not be saying anything new except that it complemented and vindicated similar position earlier released to the Nigerian public by one of Obi's closest associate and his running mate in the 2023 elections, Datti Baba-Ahmed, who few weeks ago dropped the bomb-shell that his principal, just like Atiku, lacked the antecedents, pedigree, experience, performance record and competence to lead Nigeria to prosperity, calling on him to withdraw from the presidential race. If anybody still doubted Datti, what about the hard fact coming from Obi's main constituency and his kinsmen in Anambra that public schools and public health institutions were in high deficit or almost non-existence after Obi's departure? The unmistaken message is that it is time Obi stopped parading himself as a Messiah of sorts and heed the message, "physician heel thyself." He can start the self healing processes by returning to Anambra to contest for the Senate or the House of Representatives and come back in another 12 years for the Presidency. And if he insists not to back down and return to his federal constituency, he should be asked what business he has with the larger Nigerian constituency when he could not fix public water supply, public schools and public health as little as dispensaries in his state. If any iota of honour is still left in Obi, now is the time to publicly advertise this honour by resigning from the presidential race as he had publicly vowed to do if found with any infraction negating his self-advertised holier than thou. He cannot give what he doesn't have. The damning revelation about Obi's economic management past in Anambra State has come to confirm the veracity of the general saying that when you point accusing finger to someone, not one, not two but the rest four point to the direction of the accuser. And this is the appropriate junction to put Obi and his sworn political enemy, President Tinubu, on the same lens, especially as both are former state governors and speak to their records.

First, let us examine how both of them handled the economy, particularly the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR). When Tinubu became governor of Lagos State in 1999, he astutely grew the IGR from paltry monthly N600 million to N7 billion when leaving office in 2007. It is absolutely necessary to point out Tinubu's economic wizardry of creating novel support institutions to drive and sustain his IGR revolution. To this end, he established the Lagos State Inland Revenue Service (LIRS) patterned after the central government Inland Revenue Service and the first of its kind by any of the 36 states including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. To support the LIRS, Tinubu established Alpha Beta, and the novel Enron, an Independent Power Producing Plant intended to become the source of energy to drive the emerging Lagos economy.

Obi in Anambra inherited an IGR of N400 million monthly and left it at N1.5 billion per month when leaving office in 2014, seven years after Tinubu had left office and at a period when the international price of crude oil was at its peak. Obi had no LIRS-styled agency nor did he conceive any independent power plant.

Tinubu as governor of Lagos, even to the disbelief of his political adversaries, pioneered the establishment of many novel agencies and institutions to expand and energise the state's economy, modernise the public service, widen the revenue base, create new employment base, build and sustain security of life and property in the state. It was to the admiration of all when he established the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority, the State Waste Management Agency, the State Security Trust Fund, the State Neighbourhood Watch, the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, the BRT and the Lagos Atlantic City Blueprint among numerous developmental initiatives he pioneered as governor.

All these agencies including Kick Against Indiscipline (KAI) automatically led to the creation of thousands of direct and indirect jobs in the state and adjoining state of Ogun. It is a common thing to find similar agencies and institutions across all the states of the federation today. It is however instructive to acknowledge that Tinubu's Lagos holds the "patency rights." All of them including Abuja took after "Eko o ni baje ..."

Obi in his strive to grow the state established the Anambra Integrated Development Strategy (ANIDS) to drive the development of the state with which he embarked on the rehabilitation of some roads and erosion control, especially in Onitsha and its environ. However, he has no institutional-legacy footprint as seen in the case of Tinubu. Obi also did not have mass job creating agencies as in Tinubu's Lagos.

Both Obi and Tinubu have the record of returning mission schools to their original owners – the missionaries – while Obi has the additional record of giving grants to these schools and moving Anambra from 24th position in WASCE to the first position.

Tinubu too was never found wanting in the road rehabilitation sector. He made his mark in road rehabilitation in Victoria Island area, part of Ikeja, Agege, Ikotun, Surulere, Ikorodu, Yaba and Obalende. He also took his first among equals award to be on some federal roads in the state, becoming the first governor to start the initiative of reconstructing abandoned federal roads in the country that are of high economic value to states as he took it upon himself to rehabilitate parts of the famous Agege Motor Road beginning from the Mushin end. He also built the famous Lekki-Epe Road leading to the springing up of new towns and settlements in that axis and decongestion of the traditional Lagos towns of Yaba, Surulere, Ikeja etc.

One of the greatest landmark achievements of the erstwhile Lagos State henchman was his litmus test on the 1999 Constitution when, as opposition governor, he dared a sitting civilian dictator, then President Olusegun Obasanjo, to create 37 new local councils euphemistically called Local Council Development Areas (LCDA) from the existing 20 local councils in the state. The decision rattled the ruling People's Democratic Party, the Presidency and apologists of the 1999 Constitution.

Expectedly, pace-setter Tinubu had drawn the ire of the dictatorship in Obasanjo and his party backed his overwhelmingly controlled National Assembly members, while on the part of Tinubu of the Alliance for Democracy it challenged him to bring out his economic and leadership wizardry to survive the financial blockade imposed on him by Obasanjo, which he survived to the stunning astonishment of the dictator and his cohorts. Obasanjo was to confess later after leaving office that Tinubu and his government survived the financial sanction of stopping federal allocations to the state's local councils was a remarkable testimony to Tinubu's exceptional leadership prowess.

Just as light and darkness cannot be compared, it would be an absolute mismatch comparing Obi and Tinubu in developmental blueprint and mentorship. From Tinubu (now referred to and accepted as Emeritus Governor) to the current Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, it is the economic/developmental blueprint conceived and laid down by Tinubu that till today remains in vogue and applied by every successive governor. Probably for this factor, Lagos remains the only South-West state never governed by another political party since the advent of this Fourth Republic other than Tinubu's party!

This is never the case for Obi's Anambra. Apart from the absence of an Obi laid blueprint, there is no common developmental roadmap for the state just as the state could not enjoy the monopoly of the same political party or ideology governing it from 1999. For Obi's Anambra from all indices, it has been an incongruous affair.

Tinubu's most inestimable political asset is undoubtedly in mentoring, building followers and human capacity building probably second to the late legendary Yoruba leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. This asset dated back to the epochal June 12, 1993, presidential election won by the late MKO Abiola when he successfully assembled associates during their sojourn overseas. This he effectively built on a mega basis when he became governor in 1999. It is not an overstatement to conclude that those mentored by Tinubu as well as direct and indirect beneficiaries of his large-heartedness can constitute a major political party across Nigeria. The names are definitely inexhaustible. He mentored and made all the state governors that came after him, not to mention political heavyweights all over Nigeria who he substantially had a hand in their political fortunes whether it is the "career" presidential contestant, Atiku Abubakar, or the late President Muhamnadu Buhari.

It will be of immense help to this comparative analysis to reference the late old Imo State governor, Chief Sam Mbakwe (the respected weeping governor), who when asked in 1983 why he was not campaigning hard for re-election like candidates from other political parties said, "I don't need to spend money on campaigns anymore after my first tenure. The roads I constructed campaign for me. The industries I built campaign for me. Adapalm, our shoe industry, Imo Poultry, and Aluminum Extrusion campaign for me. Imo Airport campaigns for me."



Banji Alabi

**Alabi Esq., a politics commentator and civil liberty lawyer, is the National Chairman, Ondo Eminent Persons Group.*

Insecurity: Appraising Governor Aliyu's Resolve To Defeat Terrorists In Sokoto

By Emmanuel Ado

THERE is a significant difference between declaring war on the terrorists who have made life miserable for the people and committing the huge resources required to sustain that war. In Sokoto State, Governor Ahmed Aliyu's latest declaration that his administration will continue to wage an unrelenting war against terrorists until they are defeated, life returns to normal and internally displaced persons (IDPs) can return to their ancestral homes is therefore more than a statement of intent. The scale and continuity of the state government's investment in the fight against insecurity provides the overwhelming evidence of that resolve.

The evidence is in the latest decision of the State Executive Council. The government has awarded a contract for the procurement of 30 Toyota Hilux operational vehicles to further support security agencies in the fight against terrorists and other criminal groups. The vehicles are valued at a whopping N1.592 billion. They are in addition to more than 200 Hilux vans and 62 armoured vehicles that it had previously procured and distributed to security agencies. The administration has also constructed a military base at Illela, the border town on Nigeria's border with Niger Republic.

"We'll continue to be tough on the bandits until the IDPs return home," the governor declared while opening the eighth regular meeting of the State Executive Council.

The statement reflects the firm position Governor Aliyu has consistently maintained against negotiating with terrorists, insisting rather on their unconditional surrender. His argument is they have waged war against innocent people, and paying ransom would only embolden them, as experience has shown that such payments often encourage further attacks on the communities.


Aliyu

While Governor Aliyu recognises that tremendous progress has been made in the war against the terrorists, he has wisely refused to become complacent. The latest intervention demonstrates that the government does not consider the security challenge as sufficiently resolved. And the latest procurement is only one component of a much larger security effort.

Since assuming office, the administration has provided more than 200 patrol vehicles to security agencies. It has established the Sokoto State Community Guard Corps and provided it with vehicles and motorcycles to support its operations in the vulnerable communities. They are to help the security forces with intelligence, which is critical in the war.

Security under the Aliyu administration has become a continuing expenditure rather than a one-off intervention, reflecting the government's unwavering commitment to defeating the terrorists. In July 2026, the government procured and distributed 62 armoured security vehicles and other equipment at a cost of more than N27 billion. Barely a month later, the State Executive Council, in reaction to the challenges, approved another N1.759 billion for 1,000 motorcycles for the security agencies. Now comes a further N1.592 billion for 30 operational vehicles. So, if the issue is expenditure, Governor Aliyu cannot be found wanting. Unfortunately, the insecurity is not limited to Sokoto State. It is a regional crisis that cuts across the North-West states.

This regional character of the crisis has informed efforts by the governors of the North-West to strengthen cooperation in the war against the terrorists. The objective is to move beyond isolated, state-by-state responses and improve intelligence sharing, joint planning and the coordination of military operations across state boundaries. Such coordination is important because terrorists do not recognise boundaries; when pressure is increased in one area, they move into another. A more coordinated North-West security response therefore offers a better framework for sustaining pressure on the terrorist groups and preventing them from exploiting gaps between states.

The governors have not limited their efforts to Nigeria. At the just-concluded 81st United Nations General Assembly in New York, the North-West Governors' Forum presented the North-west Peace, Security and Development Framework 2026–2030, signalling their commitment to a coordinated approach to the crisis. The framework brings the seven states together around shared security, development and economic priorities, while seeking stronger international partnerships and support for its implementation.

But the administration's approach goes beyond the purchase of vehicles. It has sought to combine logistics for conventional security agencies with community-based security, intelligence gathering and stronger operational presence in the vulnerable areas. The establishment of a military base in Illela is part of this broader effort.

The logic is straightforward: Sokoto requires a specific legal framework to complement its operational campaign against banditry. The State Executive Council has approved a bill for the Sokoto State Banditry Special Prohibition Law, 2026, signalling an attempt to strengthen the legal response by specifically penalising and checking the activities of armed bandits. The measure is intended to ensure that the fight against banditry is supported by a legal framework tailored to the particular challenge facing the state.

It is against this background that Governor Aliyu's declaration must be viewed. It is a reaffirmation of a security policy backed by a substantial war chest and political will. Governor Aliyu is a politician who speaks plainly and has consistently matched his words with action.

Since Governor Aliyu's famous Katsina declaration in May 2026 — "We will not negotiate with any criminal, nor will we accept any offer from them unless they surrender unconditionally" — nothing has changed in his position. That declaration is significant because it placed the Sokoto State government's security policy within the broader North-West position.

That position gives greater context to the scale of Sokoto State's security spending.

Nigeria Is A Child Trapped In Cradle For 66 Years – Bishop Otuya

By Suliyat Tella

FOR the Visionary and Founder of KOGA FAITH Foundation Nigeria & US and the first Lay President of UGCAN, the parent body of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Bishop Priscilla Otuya, Nigeria's problem is not lack of ideas or prayers, but a fundamental misunderstanding of faith.

In an exclusive interview, the cleric and social entrepreneur says Nigeria is ripe for what she calls "faith-based solutions," a model that moves beyond religion into practical, profitable and people-impacting development.

A Vision Born At Ota In 2005

Otuya traces her 'Vision for New Nigeria' to a revelation she had during a Democratic Leadership Forum Training Workshop (DLTW) organised by African Leadership Forum founded by His Excellency former President Olusegun Obasanjo in Ota, Ogun State, in 2005.

According to her, the vision for a new Nigeria came to her during the DLTW which she attended twice, and she adopted it as her project after the training. That birthed what she called the New Nigeria Leadership Forum (NNLF) which hosted prominent Nigerians including Dr. Pat Utomi.

"I believe it is a calling. It has been a burden since I was a child. I see things differently and I do things differently," she said.

Avodah: Work, Worship And Service As One

At the heart of her message is the Hebrew concept of 'Avodah,' which means work, worship and service are one.

"There is nowhere in scripture where God said we should separate our vocation from our calling. Dividing worship has been a major setback for us in Africa and we want to correct that," she said.

She argued that countries like the United States of America have long leveraged faith-based initiatives, with a dedicated office in the White House since the era of former President George Bush, and questioned why Nigeria has not adopted same.

"If you do your research, you will find that countries like America work with faith-based initiatives. So, why can't Africa, and particularly Nigeria, do the same?"

We Are Not Beggars, We Are Social Entrepreneurs

Bishop Otuya lamented that the major challenge since 2005 has been misconception. People, she said, confuse faith-driven organisations with charity NGOs looking for donations.

"We are not a charity. We are social entrepreneurs, but faith-driven. You use your money to invest, make profit and use part of it to solve social needs," she explained.

She cited examples of women like Mrs. Ibukun Awosika and Mrs. Folorunsho Alakija as believers doing things on a big scale with their own resources.

"I can show you my bank details; I have never received any donation. It's my money. In my house, when my husband noticed what I was doing with KOGA FAITH Foundation, we agreed to take part of our business profit and put it into the organisation. We don't have to go cap-in-hand to government," she stated.

Her model, she said, is simple: if a General Hospital charges N50,000 for malaria treatment, a Faith-Based Organisation can charge N20,000, take from profit and plough it back to meet social needs.

Why She Stayed Quiet Until Now

On why the vision was not made public earlier, she said there is a time to incubate.

"There is a time to master what you're doing, make mistakes, learn and move. If you launch before your time, you will miss it," she said, quoting the scripture, "On the day of your power, people will be willing."

Nigeria: A Child Trapped In A Cradle

Speaking on the state of the nation, Bishop Otuya described Nigeria as "a child placed in a cradle at birth and never allowed to grow beyond it."

"You cannot keep a child in the same cradle for 66 years and expect normal development. Nigeria was born into a political arrangement. A framework was created and we've operated in it for decades. That's what I call being 'cradlelised'," she said.

She insisted Nigeria is ordained for greatness and being reshaped by God, urging citizens to stop negative confessions about the country.

"God told me to tell us: you will be restored or defiled by the words of your mouth. We should stop saying 'Nigeria is finished'," she said.

Should Men Of God Join Politics?

On politics, she said she does not believe simply having men of God enter politics will automatically change things, but the Church must be involved in how people are governed.

"The Bible says God rules in the affairs of men. In God's original system, there was a relationship between kings, priests and God. Leadership and spiritual authority were not separated," she noted.

She, however, cautioned against Christians constantly fighting government, saying correction should be the goal, not condemnation.

"If God sends a prophet to a leader, the prophet should tell the leader what he's doing wrong and what to do differently. But the objective should be correction, not condemnation. Look at Nathan and David."

2027 And Beyond

Ahead of 2027, Otuya urged Nigerians to stop making everything about the person in the presidential seat and focus on solutions.

"Government cannot solve everything alone. If we have solutions, we should bring them to the table," she said.


Bishop Otuya

Editorial

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Malaria: Subsidising Diagnostic Test Not Enough To Tackle Endemic Threat

FOR the killer malaria fever, the Federal Government's planned intervention primarily focusing on subsidising Rapid Diagnostic Tests (RDTs) and Artemisinin-based Combination Therapies (ACTs) amounts to tokenism, especially when viewed against the magnitude of the country's malaria crisis.

Treating clinical cases after transmission had occurred addresses only the symptoms, leaving out the root cause, an indication of a systemic public health collapse. The scenario is more troubling in view of the fact that malaria is yet to be eradicated over 500 years after a man died of the disease in the country. Over the last couple of decades, initiatives like the Roll Back Malaria Programme, National Malaria Strategic Plans (NMSP), National Malaria Elimination Programme (NMEP) and the Nigeria End Malaria Council (NEMC) have all failed to effectively tackle the disease.

It is in the light of the failure of these initiatives that the Federal Government, through the NMEP, is perfecting a plan to subsidise malaria tests and medicines in a bid to reduce the cost of treatment and improve access to quality-assured medicines for vulnerable Nigerians in rural communities. But the move iis not eliciting the anticipated excitement.

The initiative, known as the Affordable Diagnostics and Medicines Facility for Malaria (ADMFM), will initially target the private sector, particularly patent and proprietary medicine vendors (PPMVs), in underserved communities. The programme, which has over N2 billion in funding from the World Bank-supported IMPACT Project, is expected to provide about four million diagnostic test kits and nearly two million treatment courses.

The National Coordinator of the NMEP, Dr Nnenna Ogbulafor, who disclosed the government's new package in Abuja recently, said it was designed to make malaria diagnosis and treatment more affordable. She stressed the importance of testing before treatment, noting that malaria fever can be caused by several illnesses and should not be automatically treated as malaria. According to her, it is only after malaria has been confirmed through diagnosis that patients should be given appropriate treatment with artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs).

For a country that accounts for 27 per cent of global malaria cases and 31 per cent of malaria-induced deaths, and where studies have revealed that up to 83 per cent of patients are wrongly treated for malaria based on symptoms alone, there is need for a programme that will entrench the culture of laboratory confirmation, using the national guidelines advocating test-based diagnosis before treatment,

Indeed Nigeria still has a long way to go in containing the malaise. The failure of the authorities to prioritise diagnostic testing over the years; poor diagnostic capacity, out-of-pocket treatment costs, as well as public misconceptions, among others, have continued to undermine the country's malaria control efforts and fuel drug resistance.

Also of concern to the general public is the recent revelation of the avalanche of malaria attacks that children are exposed to in the country. With only about 44.9 per cent of the children sleeping inside insecticide-treated nets (ITNs), the remaining 55 per cent remain unprotected from mosquito bites that spread malaria, according to the Nigeria Malaria Indicator Survey (NMIS) 2025. Of the 97 per cent of Nigeria's population reportedly at risk of malaria fever, young children, pregnant women and their unborn are the most vulnerable.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), which considers Nigeria as a global epicentre of malaria, revealed that the country contributes over 54 per cent of the total caseload in West Africa alone, while it also records an estimated 68.5 million malaria cases and nearly 185,000 deaths annually.

With this grim scenario, the direct economic losses to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) due to malaria exceed $1.1 billion annually, and this is caused by concomitant healthcare expenditure, premature mortality, and diminished labour output. Also, with over 70 per cent of health spending in the country occurring out of pocket, malaria bouts are routinely plunging low-income families into medical impoverishment even as the disease accounts for roughly 40 per cent of public health expenditures, 60 per cent of outpatient visits, and millions of lost workdays and school absenteeism days annually.

As the characteristics of malaria change and the disease is mainly becoming resistant to treatment, many Nigerias, including health practitioners, now crave research into a homegrown solution to the problem that is also responsible for alarming cases of morbidity, mortality and impairment of economic development.

Eradication of malaria requires a strategic approach, including looking inward for pharmaceuticals to effectively tackle the ailment. Already, the call for setting up of a National Malaria and Research Control Centre for Afro-centric research into local herbal solutions, which would be cheaper and readily available, is gaining ground. In the interim, no effort should be spared in creating awareness of the use of Insecticide-Treated Nets (ITNs), which is one of the ways to prevent malaria. This has also been proven to significantly reduce child death.

Nigeria must also not relent in getting serious about the much-talked-about movement from the standard Pyrethroid-treated nets to Piperonyl Butoxide (PBO) dual-active nets in order to overcome resistance of Anopheles mosquito to some nets.

Experts are advising the country to be prepared to scale up systematic IRS and environmental larviciding in high-density peri-urban settlements and agricultural zones, in addition to effectively managing municipal drainage and generally improving waste management systems.

Some countries, including Algeria, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Cape Verde, China, and Azerbaijan, have been certified malaria-free by the WHO. This feat is not achieved through single, isolated policy (like testing subsidy)alone but also through sustained commitment of the political leadership, synchronised public health interventions, and rigorous micro-level monitoring.

Algeria, for instance, guarantees 100 per cent free healthcare, including rapid testing, in-patient hospital admission, and full-course antimalarial medications to everyone within its borders as well as foreign migrants in its southern desert regions, while Sri Lanka deploys mobile malaria clinics to affected and rural districts to provide immediate free diagnostic testing and treatment on the spot. This has helped to ensure that no infected person carries the parasite untreated in their bloodstream.

While China and Sri Lanka adopted the "1-2-3" Response Model, which mandates the reporting of any confirmed case to local and national health authorities within 24 hours, and rapid investigation of the patient's travel history and immediate contacts within 48 hours, among others, Algeriab is funding its elimination campaign entirely through its own national domestic budget rather than relying on fluctuating international donor funding.

Nigeria must, therefore, put on its thinking cap and explore all possible avenues of routing malaria out of the country.

LETTER

Nigeria @66: Which Way Nigeria?

SIR: Sixty-six years after independence, Nigeria should be asking itself a question that can no longer be postponed: what exactly has become of the great promise of our nation? A country blessed with enormous human and natural resources should not, at this stage of its journey, still be struggling with problems that ought to have become distant memories. As we mark 66 years of independence, this should be more than another occasion for colourful ceremonies, patriotic speeches and celebrations. It is a time for sober reflection as a people, to examine where we are, where we ought to be and, most importantly, how best to move Nigeria forward.

Undoubtedly, Nigeria is not where it used to be. There have been significant developments in different sectors of the economy and society, and successive administrations have introduced policies and programmes aimed at addressing the country's challenges. However, we must also acknowledge that we are certainly not where we ought to be, considering the enormous human and natural resources available to us. A nation blessed with abundant natural resources, a large youthful population and considerable human capital should be able to provide a higher standard of living for its citizens.

At 66, Nigeria should have no reason to still be battling with inadequate power supply, dilapidated roads, massive unemployment and widespread hunger. These are challenges that have persisted for decades, despite the huge resources committed to addressing them. While some of our past and present leaders may have done, or may still be doing, their best, the reality remains that their efforts alone have not been enough to solve the numerous problems be-devilling the nation. What Nigeria requires is sustained commitment, effective institutions, accountability and policies that go beyond individual administrations.

Corruption and insecurity also continue to pose serious challenges to national development. Resources that should be channelled towards infrastructure, education, healthcare, job creation and other essential services can be undermined by corruption and poor accountability. Similarly, insecurity discourages investment, disrupts economic activities and threatens the lives and livelihoods of citizens. We cannot continue like this as a nation. There must be a collective determination to strengthen institutions, uphold the rule of law and confront the factors that continue to undermine national development.

Unfortunately, the people themselves appear to have become accustomed to many of these perennial problems. This has contributed to a situation where some citizens fail to demand accountability from leaders or make effective use of their democratic power during elections. Democracy gives citizens the opportunity to choose their representatives and to replace those whose performance does not meet their expectations. Elections should, therefore, be about competence, integrity, policies and the ability to serve the public interest, rather than personal loyalty or temporary benefits.

Sycophancy has also become increasingly visible in our political space. Some people praise leaders excessively for personal gain, defend actions they would ordinarily condemn and, in some cases, sell their votes during elections, only to complain about bad leadership afterwards.

Citizens must understand that leadership and followership are interconnected. When voters trade their electoral power for immediate personal benefits, they may be contributing to a system that makes it more difficult to demand responsible governance later. The ballot should be treated as an important instrument for shaping the future of the country.

As Nigeria marks this 66th anniversary, our leaders at all levels must put the interest of the nation at the centre of their decisions and actions. Religious, political and ethnic considerations should not be allowed to take precedence over the collective interest of Nigeria. Diversity should be a source of strength rather than a reason for division. Those entrusted with public office must remember that political positions are temporary, while the consequences of decisions taken in office can affect generations yet unborn.

The people also have an important role to play in moving Nigeria forward. Citizens must obey the law, reject corruption, participate responsibly in elections, demand accountability and contribute positively to their communities. Professionals must give their best in their respective fields, young people must be encouraged to pursue productive opportunities, and the private sector must continue to contribute to economic development. Nation building cannot be left entirely to government. Every Nigerian has a responsibility to contribute to the Nigeria we desire.

At 66, the question, therefore, is not simply which way Nigeria, but what kind of Nigeria do we want to leave for the next generation? The answer lies in our collective willingness to change the things that have held us back, strengthen the institutions that sustain democracy and development, and place national interest above personal, political, religious and ethnic considerations. Nigeria has the resources, talent and potential to achieve greatness.

What is required is the collective will to translate that potential into reality. As we celebrate 66 years of independence, let us renew our commitment to building a peaceful, prosperous and united nation. Nigeria shall be great again.

• *Tochukwu Jimo Obi wrote from Obosi in Anambra State.*



Opinion

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Big Brother Naija: National Value System Paralysis...For Instant Fame And Wealth

By **Sunday Ayodele Enikanselu**

WHEN a nation gives greater visibility to misguided and dysfunctional entertainment architecture than intellectual excellence, what values are we teaching the next generation?

There is nothing inherently wrong with entertainment. Every healthy society needs entertainment, recreation, music, film, sport, drama and other forms of creative expression. Entertainment can educate, inspire, employ, unite and even promote national identity. Nigeria has every reason to be proud of the extraordinary creativity of its entertainment industry and the global influence of its musicians, filmmakers, actors and other creative professionals.

This article is, therefore, not against entertainment. It is against the kind of entertainment architecture represented by Big Brother Naija and the values, behaviours, images and aspirations that its present format can repeatedly project, amplify and normalise before millions of Nigerians, particularly children and young people.

That distinction is fundamental.

The issue before us is not whether Nigerians should be entertained. The issue is what kind of entertainment we are constructing, what kind of behaviour we are rewarding through it, what kind of personalities we are elevating, and what kind of society we are unconsciously building when entertainment becomes one of the most powerful teachers of our younger generation.

Big Brother Naija has long ceased to be merely a television programme. It has become a massive cultural and commercial phenomenon. Its contestants can become household names almost overnight. Their activities generate enormous social-media conversations, media coverage, commercial endorsements and followership. Its influence, therefore, extends far beyond the walls of the Big Brother House.

And precisely because its influence is so enormous, Nigeria must have the courage to interrogate its architecture.

When entertainment becomes a value system

Every major entertainment platform communicates values, whether intentionally or unintentionally. It tells society what is interesting.It tells society what is fashionable.It tells society what is worth watching.It tells society who deserves attention. And, perhaps most importantly, it tells young people what can make them successful. This is where the Big Brother Nigeria phenomenon becomes troubling.

The concern is not simply about individual housemates or isolated incidents. The concern is about a programme architecture in which relationships, confrontations, provocative behaviour, sexualised displays, emotional conflicts, sensational exchanges and other forms of dramatic conduct can become major sources of attention and entertainment.

The programme is built around observation. Contestants live together under continuous surveillance, and their personalities, relationships, conflicts and behaviour become the product. The more dramatic the environment becomes, the greater the entertainment value. The greater the entertainment value, the greater the public attention. The greater the public attention, the greater the commercial value. And the greater the commercial value, the greater the incentive to keep generating attention.

That is an entertainment architecture. But it is also an architecture of incentives. And when the incentives attached to fame are not sufficiently balanced by responsibility, character and social value, we should not be surprised when some young people begin to conclude that visibility itself is achievement.

The most vulnerable audience is watching

The most important question is not what an adult viewer makes of Big Brother Naija. It is what an impressionable child makes of it.

A child does not necessarily possess the emotional maturity, critical reasoning or social experience required to distinguish between entertainment and exemplary behaviour. The child sees what receives attention. The child sees what attracts followers. The child sees what becomes a trending subject. The child sees people becoming famous within weeks. The child sees luxury associated with celebrity. The child sees controversial behaviour generating enormous public conversation. And the child can begin to internalise the dangerous proposition that the shortest road to success is not necessarily through knowledge, discipline, creativity and productive work, but through visibility, popularity and instant fame. This is where the national value question becomes unavoidable.

What happens when a young person begins to believe that becoming famous is more important than becoming educated? What happens when followers become more important than competence? What happens when material possessions become the principal evidence of success? What happens when controversy becomes a strategy for visibility? What happens when sexualised or provocative conduct becomes commercially rewarded? What happens when celebrity becomes more attractive than scholarship?

These are not merely entertainment questions. They are questions about the future character of Nigeria.

Moral dilution does not happen overnight

No society wakes up one morning and discovers that its moral values have disappeared. Moral and cultural dilution usually occurs gradually. Something once considered unacceptable becomes tolerated. What is tolerated becomes familiar. What becomes familiar becomes normal.bAnd what becomes normal eventually becomes culturally defensible.bThat is how social boundaries move. That is why the repeated public display and amplification of behaviours traditionally regarded by many Nigerian families and communities as inappropriate cannot simply be dismissed as harmless entertainment.

The question is not whether every child who watches Big Brother Naija will imitate what is displayed. Of course, many will not. The question is whether continuous exposure contributes to changing perceptions of what is acceptable, desirable or fashionable. That is the more serious concern.

The family must accept its share of the blame. Yet it would be intellectually dishonest to place the entire responsibility at the door of Big Brother Naija. The Nigerian family must also look into the mirror. Parents are the first custodians of the moral development of their children. The home is the first school.nThe parent is the first teacher. Character formation begins long before a child enters a classroom.

Why, therefore, are some parents giving children unrestricted access to smartphones, social media, television and streaming platforms without adequate supervision? Why are some parents exposing teenagers to adult-oriented content and subsequently complaining about the changing behaviour of the same children? Why do some parents allow children to watch programmes whose content they themselves consider inappropriate? We cannot give the media unrestricted access to our children and then complain that the media is raising them. Parents cannot outsource parenting to television. A child needs explanation. A teenager needs boundaries.A young person needs responsible role models. And the family must be sufficiently engaged to help children distinguish between what is entertainment and what constitutes acceptable conduct.

But the programme cannot escape responsibility

While parental responsibility is fundamental, it does not absolve broadcasters and programme producers of theirs.bBig Brother Naija is not an accidental occurrence. It is deliberately designed. Its house is designed. Its rules are designed. Its challenges are designed. Its nomination and eviction mechanisms are designed. Its camera coverage is designed. Its promotional strategy is designed.nIts commercial partnerships are designed. Its publicity is designed. The audience engagement strategy is designed.

In other words, the outcomes are influenced by architecture. Therefore, it is legitimate to ask whether that architecture can be redesigned to retain entertainment value while substantially strengthening its contribution to positive social values. The answer should be yes.

Media houses must also examine their role

The media ecosystem surrounding Big Brother Naija deserves equal scrutiny. The programme does not become a national obsession through television alone. Newspapers, blogs, radio, television discussion programmes and social-media platforms contribute enormously to its visibility.

A quarrel in the House can become a headline. A romantic development can become a major news story. A controversial statement can dominate social media. A housemate can become a celebrity almost overnight. This is the power of the media. But media power carries social responsibility.

If the media repeatedly gives extraordinary visibility to sensational behaviour, it inevitably contributes to the elevation of that behaviour within public consciousness. The question is therefore not whether media organisations should report Big Brother Naija. They certainly can. The question is whether the volume, intensity and character of the coverage are proportionate to its social value. More importantly, where is the corresponding media machinery for intellectual excellence? Where are our young interracial heroes?

• *Professor Enikanselu, retired, wrote from Lagos.*

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

Aiyedatiwa: In Defense Of Ondo's Reputation For Quality Education

By **Debo Akinbami**

WHEN Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, said yes to the puffy demands of the university teachers, the soothing news affected the various layers of interests. That was after the unionists' circle of brickbats proved ineffectual. And, when the dust settled, the teachers depicted the governor differently. They said his actions exemplified profound commitment to the welfare of workers and conveyed a clear message that his administration was worker-friendly.

Academics aren't flippant utterers, ordinarily. To this extent, their words, I believe, profited from the first hand agreeable attitude they have seen the governor displayed repeatedly. Before the university lecturers wrote the letters, the "worker-friendly" sobriquet was deployed to describe Aiyedatiwa by the civil servants, to the near extent of a cliché. The lecturers', however, arrived as a frontal affirmation of the tall rating of Aiyedatiwa.

While it raged, I had, in private conversations, told a few colleagues who were yet to be bitten by the bug of wrong perception that the governor was not an inch unwilling to approve of the demands; that the governor cares for workers as opposed to what the naysayers say. Aiyedatiwa cares about all classes of citizens. He deeply does. But, for too long, the wrong impression was distributed about him by persons who are either befuddled by his style or battled private guilts.

The truth, however, is that there is hardly any legitimate entreaty from any of the state's tertiary institutions' that Governor Aiyedatiwa has refused. Apart from paying the backlog of salaries inherited at the Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, there is no state-owned higher institution in Ondo, as of today, whose monthly subvention has not been increased, for, in the least, twice, under the Aiyedatiwa-led administration.

Even now, the governor has approved the immediate implementation of the FGN Agreement with unions on new salary structure in the state's tertiary institutions. The delivery arrived with substantial increase in the subvention to the tertiary institutions to implement the new salary structure. These rare acts of compassion can only come out of a leader who truly prioritises the well-being of the workforce. For those who must know, Governor Aiyedatiwa makes no rhetoric. Here is a leader who is very intentional with investments in the education sector. He carefully carries matters that bother on this sphere, which is why his acts have since conveyed serious impressions herein. Here he makes deliberate policies and interventions. When last checked, his 2026 budget provides super-size funds for education, from which at least 500 basic schools will be constructed and rehabilitated across the state.

In unusual ways, this is meant to be different. It's a unique way to make learning environments functional, conducive and secure for the young ones. To further position pupils for effective learning, Governor Aiyedatiwa has commenced digital literacy programme for the schools; and, to equip the students with the requisite digital skills to navigate an increasingly technology-driven world, students in 50 public schools have received digital tablets. While he equips the learners, the governor inspires the teachers with tangible motivations. The other day, Aiyedatiwa called out outstanding students and teachers for laurels. He gave enviable jobs to NYSC award recipients. To fifty-four Ondo State students who scored above 300 in the 2026 UTME, the governor gave N1million each; as he honoured, with substantial cash, students who represented Ondo State and Nigeria in academic competitions.

To ease sundry financial pressures on families and students in the higher institutions of learning, Governor Aiyedatiwa approved N400 million for 13, 360 students of Ondo State origin as bursary and financial fillip. Of the said figure, 11, 907 benefited from the bursary; 614 got scholarships, 239 Law School students received support, including 500 medical students undertaking clinical training and 100 physically challenged students.

Earlier, the governor had approved and released six hundred and thirty-three million, nine hundred and eighteen thousand naira only (N633,918,000.00) for the payment of the 2026 WASSCE registration fees for students in public secondary schools across the state. Governor Aiyedatiwa is doing these feats and more, not just as a social service but as strategic investments in the future of the state.

Asked what drives his many great deliveries in this sector, Governor Aiyedatiwa expressed how he envisioned an Ondo State where no child is denied the opportunity to learn because of poverty; where teachers are respected and motivated; where schools are safe and conducive; where students have access to technology; and where excellence is recognised and rewarded. At this rate, I reckon that the sector, and the future of the state, is in safe hands.

Dr. Akinbami is the Senior Special Assistant to the Governor of Ondo State on Public Communication.

One Year Of Arusa I: The Servant-Leader On The Throne Of His Forefathers

By **Babatunde Ayeleru**

AS His Imperial Majesty, Senator Rashidi Adewolu Ladoja, Olubadan of Ibadanland, turns 82 and celebrates his first anniversary on the throne of his forefathers in grand style, I join the sons and daughters of Ibadan and, indeed, the entire people of Ibadanland in congratulating Kabiyesi and praying for him to enjoy many more years in good health.

In his characteristic and sometimes unpredictable style, Oba Ladoja chose spirituality over fun and merriment to mark his first anniversary on the throne. Rather than indulge in elaborate celebrations, the Olubadan chose to give thanks to Allah by visiting the House of Allah at the Kaabah in Makkah and subsequently paying a visit to the Mosque of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad Al-Ameen.

When Senator Ladoja ascended the throne of his forefathers last year, I told some of my colleagues that, to my knowledge, if there was anything that gladdened the hearts of the majority of Ibadan sons and daughters, and indeed the inhabitants of this ancient city, it was the ascension of His Imperial Majesty, Oba (Senator) Rashidi Adewolu Ladoja, Arusa ma ru tise I to the throne of Olubadan of Ibadanland.

Oba Rashidi Ladoja has always told us that "only God, the Alpha and Omega," chooses an Olubadan of Ibadanland. This has never been in doubt. In his journey to the highly revered throne of the Olubadan, Ladoja completely submitted himself to the will of Allah (SWT).

This piece is not an attempt to regurgitate the enviable virtues of Oba Ladoja, which millions of Nigerians, both at home and abroad, have discussed across various media platforms, from digital to traditional media. My focus here is, based on my very close relationship with Oba Ladoja as a follower, mentee and son, to reflect on what I anticipated as the possible, mouth-watering and far-reaching dividends of Oba Rashidi Ladoja's Olubadanship – the unprecedented development and opportunities that could accrue to Ibadan in particular and Oyo State in general.

In my prediction of what Ibadan and Oyo State stood to benefit from His Imperial Majesty, Rashidi Ladoja, in his new role as Olubadan, what I found difficult to resolve in my estimation was how the new Olubadan would negotiate and navigate his well-known "servant-leader" tendencies and approach to leadership alongside the royal and kingly traditions of the throne, where an Oba, nay a Kabiyesi, "rules without questioning" (Ka bii o si), as a traditional or natural ruler ordained by God, rather than as a "servant" in the context of public or civil service.



Ladoja

As we have all witnessed in the last one year, Oba Ladoja has brought his influence and connections to bear in attracting development, peace, sanity and unprecedented recognition to Ibadan and, by extension, to Oyo State and neighbouring states. I remember that, upon becoming Olubadan, Oba Ladoja repeatedly stated that he was no longer a politician but a royal father and the father of all politicians, irrespective of their political leanings. I also remember clearly that when Kabiyesi was promoted to Otun Olubadan, he told us that his politics had become "developmental"—meaning that he was only interested in politics that could bring growth and peace to Ibadanland and Oyo State as a whole. That explains why he supports politicians and non-politicians alike when they approach him on matters concerning the development of society and the wellbeing of the citizenry. Without doubt, we have seen tangible gains of Arusa I as a result of his deliberate choice of developmental politics over unproductive partisan politics.

We all know how active Senator Ladoja was as a member of the defunct National Democratic Coalition (NADECO). We can also remember how and when he left Nigeria and went into self-exile during the military era when the Abacha junta was hunting for him. He invested all that he had in the struggle—money, wealth, assets, time and even the risk to his life. In fact, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu still owes many of us an explanation for the conspicuous omission of Senator Ladoja's name from the list of heroes of June 12 who were recently honoured. I believe that it is not too late for the Federal Government, under the leadership of President Tinubu, to make amends by appropriately honouring Oba Rashidi Ladoja as a hero of June 12.

For a good observer of Oba Ladoja's approach to life, he has always strived for good living, welfare and the wellbeing of everyone around him. Within a period of one year, Kabiyesi has attracted major infrastructure projects and development opportunities for the benefit of Ibadan, Oyo State and neighbouring states such as Ogun and Osun states. The reconstruction and dualisation of the Ibadan-Ijebu-Ode Road was the first request Olubadan Ladoja placed before the President Tinubu. He did not ask for any personal favour or pecuniary gain.

The dualisation of the Ibadan-Abeokuta Road was the second major project associated with the support extended to the Olubadan by the President. Indeed, the Honourable Minister of Works, David Umahi, during the flag-off of Ibadan-Ijebu-Ode road project, openly stated that the two roads being reconstructed and dualised were approved as part of President Tinubu's support for the Olubadan's reign. More recently, the channelisation of Kudeti was also approved by the Federal Government, and work is ongoing on the three projects.

All these gains did not come by accident. Senator Ladoja and President Tinubu served as governors at same times in this 4th Republic: Tinubu from 1999 to 2007, and Ladoja from 2003 to 2007. Before the Fourth Republic, both men served as senators of the Federal Republic of Nigeria during the defunct Third Republic. They were in the trenches and in exile as NADECO warriors. These are men who, in many respects, share a commitment to the development of human capital and the environment.

I can pardon those who ignorantly believe that Oba Ladoja has become partisan because of his closeness to the President. They have probably, or deliberately, failed to understand the inherent relationship between the duo, which dates back many years before Asiwaju's Presidency and Ladoja's Obaship.

From my closeness to Kabiyesi, I can maintain that Olubadan is not partisan. He sees all politicians as his sons and daughters, but Ladoja will never close his eyes to misgovernance or any anti-masses policy. When he was in active politics, he dedicated himself to the welfare and wellbeing of the people, with particular interest in the survival and prosperity of the downtrodden. Ladoja is wealthy in all ramifications. God has been kind to him and this, according to him, underscores the reasons his policies and personal values have always been pro-masses. As a billionaire, Ladoja lives a prudent nay spartan life. Kabiyesi is very judicious and accountable. He respects the laws of the land and enjoins his followers to be law-abiding. Oba Ladoja does not tolerate any acts of indiscipline from his followers and mentees. Olubadan is a man of peace, but when and where he sees the powerful trying to oppress the weak, he will wrestle with powerful individuals because he always insists that power should be used to protect both the weak and the strong in the society.

Within the first two weeks of his installation as Olubadan of Ibadanland, he constituted several royal committees to protect and emancipate the people socially, economically and politically. Such committees include the Anti-Land Grabbing Committee, the Ibadan Economic Development Committee, and a host of others. The membership and leadership of these committees are made up of sons and daughters of Ibadan who are seasoned professionals, former ministers, ambassadors, permanent secretaries and other accomplished citizens.

Let me illustrate one of these attributes of Kabiyesi with a recent personal experience. An illustrious son of Oyo State is in the process of establishing a private university in Ido Local Council, Oyo State. Ido is one of the local councils in what is popularly called Ibadan Less-City. There are others like Oluyole, Akinyele, Egbeda and Ona-Ara. The private university is gradually taking off, and the National Universities Commission (NUC) has conducted its first resource verification visit. But the land grabbers would not allow the proprietor to concentrate on the physical development of the university.

After the first visit, the NUC was very impressed and sent an official letter to Olubadan to garner his support for the university. I was privileged to be part of the team led by our distinguished Professor Dawud Noibi that presented the letter to the Olubadan and his Council at the Oke-Aremo Palace. Kabiyesi Ladoja, a First-Class graduate of Chemical Engineering from the prestigious Université de Liège, Belgium, was visibly excited. He prayed for and thanked the owner of the proposed university, Mr. Zakariya Akinpeju, FCA. He also prayed for the smooth take-off of the institution. Kabiyesi pledged and assured the unflinching support of the Olubadan and his Council for the smooth take-off and for a peaceful and enabling environment for the university.

As is customary in Yorubaland, while visiting a palace, presenting a small gift to the Kabiyesi is not a bad idea. To the surprise of many, except a few of us who are familiar with Oba Rashidi Ladoja's style, Kabiyesi declined to accept the cash gift which the team presented to the Council. Oba Ladoja wondered why he should accept such a gift from someone who had personally invested his resources in the development of his kingdom. Instead, Olubadan directed that the Olubadan-in-Council should use all legal means to rid the university site of the menace of land grabbers and provide a peaceful and conducive atmosphere for the growth of the new university, which will obviously serve the interests of the people of Ibadanland.

To return to my earlier observation at the beginning of this piece, the reason many core Ibadan indigenes, especially market men and women, artisans and a host of others, could not see the difference between Ladoja as governor and Ladoja as Olubadan is justified by the level of landmark development that His Imperial Majesty has attracted to Ibadanland within a short span of one year on the throne. The average Ibadan person, especially those in the grassroots, believes in the enormity of Ladoja's power and influence. There is no doubt that the status and influence of Ladoja reflect a combination of both political and traditional authority, chiefly because Olubadan Ladoja, Arusa I, was and is not a man of small repute. He is what the Yoruba will call "at ba télè ko tó joba."

Kabiyesi, as you celebrate the anniversary prudently and gratefully in the house of your Creator, Kaabah in Makkah, I pray that God Almighty will grant you long life in good health so that you will continue to serve your people, who always count on your support for their wellbeing. May God increase your faith, guide you and continue to protect you. Amen.

I wish you a happy 82nd birthday and a joyous first coronation anniversary.

Bon anniversaire, Votre Excellence, Oba (Sen.) Rashidi Adewolu Ladoja, Arusa I, Olubadan of Ibadanland.

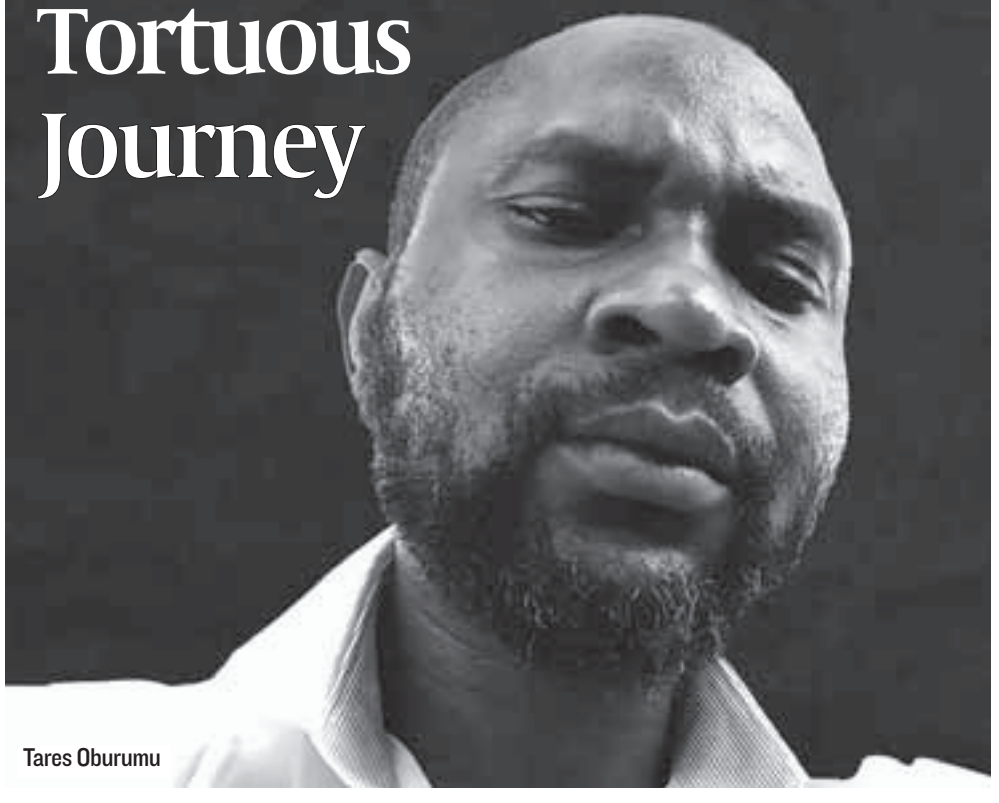
• Professor Babatunde Ayeleru, FNAL is of the Department of European Studies, University of Ibadan and Former Director-General, Nigeria French Language Village, Badagry

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Writing Flora's Love Colony Was Tedious, Tortuous Journey



Tares Oburumu

By **Gregory Austin Nwakunor**

FEELING anxious before the announcement of prize winner is normal. However, pre-competition nerves can become excessive to the point of having a detrimental effect on performance. But not, for this writer, Tares Oburumu. He is positive about the award.

He had the opportunity to share his experience this afternoon when he and his co-finalists—Ogaga Ifowodo and James Eze—spoke with some literary journalists on the 2026 Nigeria Prize for Literature. The interview session was organised by NLNG.

Oburumu, who lives in Yenagoa, the south side of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, is one of the 2026 Nigeria Prize for Literature finalist. He has won the Green Author Prize for poetry. He was paddling a canoe when he came upon a signboard that said: Syma.

Oburumu's manuscript from that encounter, origins of the syma species, won the 2022 Sillerman First Book Prize for African Poets. He received $1,000 and the publication of his manuscript by the University of Nebraska Press, as part of its African Poetry Book Fund Series.

Praising the poems, one of the judges, Phillippa Yaa de Villiers, said that they "conjure an intimacy which draws the reader below the surface of the known world 'where curiosity animates.'" In his new collection of poems, titled, *Flora's Love Colony*, which was shortlisted for the 2026 Nigeria Prize for Literature, you'd wonder how Oburumu captured Nigeria's history in a poetic manner. How did he manage to turn lovers' gist into fine poetry?

"I am one of those who believe that writing involves not just imagination, but also your lived experience," Oburumu said aloud in the room filled by media men.

He added, "when you write about someone else's lived experience, you don't just imagine it—you have to make it your own. There must be a place for empathy when you write. When writing a story that is not yours, you acknowledge that it is not yours, but you try to inhabit the experience that the person or event embodied."

The book is naming and the events that followed. A projection, which many still as a misjudgement on the part of the colonisers, who defined the people merely by geography. Beneath that simple act of naming, there was a false hope and a deliberate blueprint to perpetuate control.

The shy writer whose mind focused on the prize said, "It was a very tedious, tortuous journey moving from imagination to paper—from history to a slim collection of poems. Yet I was able to say a great deal about the history of Nigeria. It started with research and a few pieces of information, which I put onto paper."

He started by concrete imagination. He thought of what Flora was like, what Lugard was like, and how they came about naming Nigeria. What they were thinking in that moment of passion. Thereafter, he began asking himself questions. "They were concrete questions about how it was done—living inside their minds to understand, even in a small measure, how they thought when they named the country. Through that perspective, and with the limited information I gathered, I wrote most of the poems in the collection. It was a tortuous journey, but I had to try," Oburumu quipped.

For him, poetry, was the best option at that time to put the history of Nigeria into a book. "And because I'd seen that in the literary world, particularly the Nigerian side of the perspective, this history hasn't been recorded in art form, I decided to write *Flora's Love Colony*."

Oburumu had to carry out research to make his work believable, but he faced a challenge: access to books— "I don't even have a library, which is something I hanker for—when I decided to write it, the initial point of entry was research," he admitted.

Oburumu then came across a very slim publication online— he Googled it—a slim paper that Flora edited. And he found out that Flora was childless.

"During the period when the name was given, as I said earlier, there was no consultation. So, I kept asking: where were the historians of the country back then when the name was given? I needed books and thorough research, and this research led me into many things that were not previously known to me or others."

Since he lacked access to extensive books, when he got hold of that little bit of information, he had to work with it. "It was challenging, but I had no alternative. So I made do with that text."

That single source broadened his horizons regarding what he wanted to write, eventhough it didn't offer a wide range of expansive knowledge.

"The information I gathered broadened my perspective, and I began to imagine," he breathed with confidence. "So, I would say my book came from a little research combined with a wide imagination."

One of the thematic focus in the volume is the dysphoria of postcolonialism, how Nigeria has failed woefully as a nation despite her promises and potentials.

It started from 1914, when the country was amalgamated. "But before then, we had the slave trade, which is also in Nigerian history. It started with the slave trade, starting from pre-colonial times. It is a little bit like the origin, an original history of Nigeria. But it's not the only story of Nigeria's history. I think long before we became Nigerians, we were a people. There must be a link, a lacuna—a linkage between when the colonial masters invaded us and the time when we were innocent, ruled by our kings. The society was well-structured, so to speak. So there must be a missing link between then and when the colonial masters invaded us."

He revealed, "the message is simple: we continue to be deeply influenced by the British Empire long after its departure. This influence manifests in how we dress, how we speak our native languages, our habits, and our preference for foreign goods."

Oburumu said, "I am trying to send a message to Nigerians that we are long overdue for mental emancipation. We are long overdue to reconnect with our origins and reclaim our individual and collective identities. Ultimately, it is about the past, present, and future—and what we must do to liberate ourselves from residual British influence."

Growing up in a polygamous family under difficult financial circumstances, buying books was not a priority. When he was around 14 and in primary school, he started looking for libraries in his area, but there were none.

"I was only exposed to books at the age of 14—a time when many children have already read extensively. I was not fortunate enough to have early access to literature, and holding a physical paperback book came late for me," he con fessed. "Eventually, I came across a small cupboard containing a few books. That was where I discovered *Treasure Island*, Chinua Achebe's *Chike and the River*, and Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. Those books captivated me and drew me into the world of reading," he said.

Looking back now at his community,he sees that many of the children still lack access to books. They live through the same conditions he experienced at their age. So, he wins this prize, his "goal is to build a community library where children can read freely."

His works have appeared in Connotation Press, Bluepepper, Woven Tales Press, Afrocritik, and Eunoia Review, among many other journals.

ANA Announces Shortlist For 2026 Chinua Achebe Prize For Literature

AS the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) prepares to host its members, writers, literary enthusiasts and stakeholders at its 45th International Convention, the Association has announced the shortlist for the sixth edition of the Chinua Achebe Prize for Literature. The announcement is another significant milestone in ANA's continued recognition and promotion of excellence in Nigerian fiction.

In a statement jointly issued by the President of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Dr. Usman Oladipo Akanbi, and the Acting General Secretary, Wole Adedoyin, the Association announced three works shortlisted for the 2026 edition of the prestigious prize.

The shortlisted authors and their works are Dexter Loko, *The Bako of Zereshe;* Henry Akubuiro, *No Place Like Home* and Oyekitiachi Uzozie Nmezi, *Chikoba*.

According to the statement, the shortlist followed the judges' assessment of the works submitted for consideration. The statement reads in part: "The Association of Nigerian Authors has released the shortlist for the 2026 Chinua Achebe Prize."

The Association noted that the announcement forms part of the activities leading to the 45th International Convention.

The Chinua Achebe Prize for Literature recognises excellence and outstanding achievement in Nigerian fiction. Established in 2021, the prize has, over the years, recognised notable works of Nigerian fiction and celebrated authors whose works have contributed to the development of Nigeria's literary tradition.

Past winners are 2021 – Obinna Ndenwe, Colours of Hatred; 2022 – Sylva Nze Ifedigbo, Believers and Hustlers; 2023 – Nik Campbell, Saro; 2024 – Ifeoma Chinwuba, Sons of the East; and 2025 – Ndidi Chiazor Enenmor, See Morocco, See Spain.

For the 2026–2030 period, the Association of Nigerian Authors expressed appreciation to United Nigeria Airlines (UNA) for its sponsorship commitment of 10 million towards prize money and administrative costs. ANA stated that the sponsorship would support the continued administration of the prize and contribute to the promotion of Nigerian literary excellence.

The winner of the 2026 Chinua Achebe Prize for Literature will receive 1,000,000 (One Million Naira), alongside a plaque and certificate.

The Association congratulated all the shortlisted authors and acknowledged the judges for their efforts in evaluating the submitted works.

Shyllon Museum Hosts First TheMuseumsLab Residency

THE Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art (YSMA), Pan-Atlantic University, has hosted its first Residency under TheMuseumsLab Fellowship, welcoming two cultural professionals from the United Kingdom and Uganda for a week of professional exchange, learning and engagement with Nigeria's museum and creative ecosystem.

The Residency, which ran from September 13 to 19, 2026, marked an important milestone in YSMA's growing international engagement following the Museum's admission earlier this year into TheMuseumsLab Partner Museums Network, a network that currently connects 66 museums and cultural institutions across 21 countries in Africa and Europe.

TheMuseumsLab is an African-European joint-learning programme for emerging leaders in museums, heritage and cultural institutions. Its 2026 Fellowship, themed "Building Futures from Memory: Museums and Memorial Sites as Agents," brings together 50 Fellows from 31 African and European countries and combines learning modules with professional residencies at partner museums.

YSMA's first Residency brought together Jessica Juckes, British Art Network Manager at Tate, United Kingdom, and Jim Joel Nyakaana, Ugandan artist, photographer, curator and researcher associated with Page 4 Cinema Archive.

The Residency was designed around the Fellows' respective professional interests while providing an opportunity for them to encounter YSMA, Pan-Atlantic University and the wider cultural landscape of Lagos. Their programme included guided engagement with the YSMA collection, conversations with the Museum's Director and Curator, meetings with university leadership, engagements with the Pan-Atlantic University students, an artist studio visit, and conversations with cultural organisations and practitioners.

The Fellows also facilitated a workshop for undergraduate students of Pan-Atlantic University, exploring photography, digital storytelling, editorial practice, exhibitions and public installations. The session generated an extensive exchange between the Fellows and students, with the Fellows noting the depth and thoughtfulness of the students' questions and contributions.

Reflecting on his experience at YSMA, Jim Joel Nyakaana said: "What has stood out for me is the way YSMA sits within a university environment and how that creates possibilities for the Museum to engage directly with learning, research and students

Broadcast Content Across Borders

Compiled by Shaibu Husseini

Germany-Nigeria Film Week Opens In Berlin

NIGERIA'S independence day- October 1 was chosen as start day of the German-Nigeria Film Week, an event that the organisers said aimed at bridging the entertainment gap between Nigeria and Germany. Coordinator of the Nigerian end of the film week, Mykel Parish Ajeare, described the hosting of the film week as not just an idea, but 'an economic and creative necessity'. According to Ajeare, who is founder of the touring film festival, Nollywood Travel Film Festival, the film week was founded to become the ultimate platform where industry experts, filmmakers, cultural enthusiast and government officials meet to spark real change, explore implementable policies and co-create massive global opportunities. "Whether you want to network with key decision makers, join high impact workshops, or discover the next big collaboration in cinema, the week is built to make that happen," Ajaere who is popular as Mykel Parish said. The week opened with a keynote speech by the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), Dr. Shaibu Husseini, followed by a fireside chat with Ali Nuhu, Managing Director of the Nigerian Film Corporation. The NFVCB boss had in his speech proposed the development of a Germany-Nigerian screen partnership that involve five pillars of co-production, distribution , training and skills exchange, film preservation and archives as well as festivals and markets. Shaibu noted that "festivals will not merely be for exhibition but for business meetings, pitching, financing and networking." 'The Chronicle of Afrobeat', the film by Oluseun John Abisagboola, was the opening film of the week that will feature panel discussions, workshops and film screenings including the screening of 'EVI' the film by Uyoyou Adia, *Love and New Notes* by Kayode Kasum, *Different Grounds* by Mildred Okwo and the epic film by Ibinabo Fiberisima, *Amanayabo-The Eagle King*. The week will close on October 10 with a closing gala and award ceremony.

Creative Africa Nexus Weekend Holds In Lagos

LAGOS, Nigeria's commercial capital, is to host Africa's largest gathering of creative and cultural industries — Creative Africa Nexus Weekend (CANEX WKND 2026), from November 5 to 8, 2026. CANEX WKND 2026 is being hosted by African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank), in partnership with the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat, and will bring together creatives, investors, policymakers, financiers, buyers and industry leaders to connect talent with finance, markets, partnerships and commercial opportunities. The four-day event will hold at the Wole Soyinka Centre for Culture and Creative Arts, National Theatre Complex, Iganmu, Lagos, with the theme, *One People, United in Culture, Creating for the World: From FESTAC '77 to CANEX'27*, CANEX WKND 2026 will provide a platform to support the development, commercialization and expansion of Africa's creative and cultural industries, with a focus on improving access to finance, markets, skills, partnerships and investment opportunities. The programme will feature activities across film, music, fashion, literature, visual arts, gastronomy and sport. Key programme components will include the CANEX Finance Summit and Deal Room, CANEX Shorts Film Competition, Jollof Wars Competition, CANEX Music Factory Songwriting Camp, and Awards Night, CANEX Mega Concert and Legends Football Match. At the heart of the business programme, the CANEX Deal Room will provide creative entrepreneurs and businesses the opportunity to present projects to financiers and investors, helping strengthen commercially viable creative enterprises and developing sustainable value chains across Africa's creative economy. Commenting on the preparations for CANEX WKND 2026, Mrs Kanayo Awani, Executive Vice President, Intra-African Trade and Export Development, Afreximbank, said the CANEX WKND provides an important platform for converting Africa's creative talent into sustainable commercial opportunities. For Honorable Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment Dr. Jumoke Oduwole, Nigeria's hosting of CANEX WKND 2026 reflects the country's longstanding contribution to Africa's cultural and creative industries and its growing role as a hub for creative enterprise. The Lagos edition will also build on the legacy of FESTAC '77, and serve as a test run for the fifth edition of the biennial Intra-African Trade Fair (IATF2027), which Nigeria will host in November 2027. Registrations are open - https://apo-opa.co/4xQ44Wm



Jumoke Oduwole | Mykel Parish Ajeare | Lateefah Mayaki

Four African Storytellers Selected For 2026 AuthenticA Series Lab,

THE Realness Institute, in partnership with The StoryBoard Collective and supported by the Canada Media Fund and the Series Mania Forum, has announced the four African participants for the 2026 AuthenticA Series Lab, the fifth edition of the programme, which gives screenwriters a unique opportunity to shape their original concepts into episodic storytelling across any genre. The cohort includes Lagos-based writer, director and cinematographer Lateefah Mayaki, award-winning Ghanaian-Canadian writer and filmmaker, Lindsey Addawoo; acclaimed South African writer/director Phumi Morare and multi-hyphenate Cameroonian-born writer, filmmaker and cultural entrepreneur, Sahndra Fon Dufe. AuthenticA is designed to give participants what they need to take their projects to market: a professionally developed pitch deck and completed pilot script, each built to international industry standards. Writers retain full intellectual property rights over all material they develop through the programme. The programme opened with an eight-day in-person residency in Ethiopia from September 17–25, 2026; followed by online sessions running until January 14, 2027. A second in-person residency follows in Geneva, Switzerland, from January 19 to 21 March 2027. The final residency takes place in Lille, France, from March 22–26, 2027, where the fellows will pitch their projects as part of the African Series Pitch at Series Mania Forum — Europe's largest co-production series market and festival. Throughout the six-month journey, the fellows will be mentored by Mehret Mandefro as Director of Producing and Showrunning and Selina Ukwuoma as Director of Writing Programmes. Nigeria's Lateefah Mayaki is a Lagos based writer, director, cinematographer and multimedia journalist whose practice is rooted in close, lived observation of Lagos: its markets, street economies, water bodies and people. She co-directed the experimental documentary *Fluid Lagos*, which screened at DOK Leipzig, Carthage and other international festivals.. Her documentary, *A Feel of Freedom*, funded through the Docubox and Why Foundation collaboration, premiered at the iREP International Documentary Film Festival. Submissions this year came from 144 applications, over 27 countries, covering over 20 genres of television series. For more information visit the Realness Institute website at: www.realnessinstitute.com

In Portugal, Ndikama Museum Revisits Benin's Forgotten Portuguese Encounter

By Gregory Austin Nwakunor

DIPLOMATIC niceties apart, the dignitaries gathered at the Nigerian Embassy in Lisbon as the country marked its 66th Independence anniversary on October 1 were regaled with an exhibition that extended the narrative around the bond between the two countries a little further. No doubt, the event hosted by Ambassador Erelu Angela Adebayo was a celebration of her country's over six decades of nationhood.

Still, as part of the reception, an exhibition organised by the Ndikama Museum, featuring iconic Benin bronze sculptures and running until October 8, lifts the veil on a time when the Benin Kingdom, now subsumed into the geographical expression called Nigeria, rubbed shoulders with the Portuguese. It is this earlier encounter across the Atlantic, between the Portuguese and the court of Benin, that the exhibition, titled Benin-Portugal: Encounters, Art & Cultural Exchange, sets out to revisit.

And this was long before Nigeria came into being. Accounts of the Portuguese reaching the court of Benin towards the end of Oba Ozolua's reign, and more so during the reign of his son, Oba Esigie, disclose that they met a kingdom with its own system of government, diplomacy, commerce and warfare, and with an artistic tradition sophisticated enough to document the encounter itself.

Through them, brass and copper, coral, firearms and other European-manufactured goods found their way into Benin. In the opposite direction, pepper, ivory, textiles and objects made by Benin craftsmen moved towards Portugal. Then diplomats, merchants, missionaries and soldiers moved between Portugal and West Africa. And accounts of Portuguese soldiers fighting alongside Benin forces during Esigie's reign, when the kingdom was consolidating and expanding its power, were rife.

Perhaps, this is what makes the exhibition compelling. For while it is a historical fact that the Portuguese did appear in Benin's art, they did not do so as some intrusive decorative footnote to an otherwise unchanged visual tradition. In royal reliefs and sculpture, Portuguese figures are depicted alongside Obas, warriors and officials, and beside animals whose meanings extend well beyond their physical forms.

So, the depiction of a Portuguese person in Benin art is not simply the representation of a foreigner. It could also be seen as a way of showing how far the Oba's power and influence reached. The same can be said of some of the animals shown in Benin art. The leopard was closely linked with the Oba and royal power. The elephant stood for strength and the power of chiefs. The crocodile and other water creatures were linked to the deity Olokun, who was associated with the sea, wealth and prosperity.



Benin bronze

Then there was Queen Idia, the mother of Oba Esigie. Benin history remembers her as a powerful political figure and warrior. She was also traditionally regarded as the first Iyoba, or Queen Mother. Her story shows that the life of the Benin court was not only about male rulers and their wars. Women could also have great political influence.

The works on display at the exhibition eloquently tell the story of the encounter between Benin and Portugal. In one, the Oba stands among Portuguese visitors and Benin warriors. In another, Portuguese figures appear in hunting scenes, on bangles and knives, and on other everyday objects. And as a reminder that the relationship was not only about trade, there are also images of soldiers in the works.

The artists were therefore doing more than making things to decorate palaces and other places. They were also recording people and events that were important to the kingdom.

The relationship also impacted religion and language. Portuguese missionaries brought Christianity to Benin, while some Portuguese words entered local speech. There are accounts of Portuguese being spoken at the Benin court, and the exhibition points to the presence of a Portuguese Bible there before the British invasion.

Then came the British invasion of Benin City in 1897, during which thousands of royal and sacred objects were looted from the palace, many of them later ending up in museums and private collections far from Benin. Since then, any discussion of Benin art has revolved around that event.

That said, for an exhibition focusing on this important chapter of Nigeria's history, the exhibition deserved more than a passing appearance alongside the diplomatic business of October 1. Indeed, eight days hardly suffices. Nor does an Independence Day reception provide the kind of setting in which visitors are likely to linger long enough to contemplate this group of historically important objects.

That is where the organisers could use the support of institutional partners. An exhibition covering such a wide subject needed more time, wider publicity and a setting where the works could receive proper attention.

The Woman Who Spent 19 Years Promoting Reading Amongst Nigerian Children

By **Suliyat Tella**

*From school visits and reading clubs to a teenage reality show, **Olori Bukola Ladoja** has spent nearly two decades trying to rekindle Nigeria's reading culture.*

Before she became an Olori in one of Nigeria's oldest traditional institutions, Bukola Ladoja had already spent years trying to give children something she believed the country was gradually losing: an appetite for books. Her approach has changed over the years. She has stood before schoolchildren, distributed books, organised competitions, established reading clubs and even created a television reality show in which teenagers competed through debates, essays, quizzes and public speaking. The objective, however, has remained the same. Get Nigerian children to read.

In January 2007, Ladoja established the Reading Awareness Society for Development in Africa (RASDA), after noticing the poor performance of Nigerian students in secondary school examinations. Nearly two decades later, the campaign continues. But the woman behind it now occupies a different public space. In September 2025, her husband, former Oyo State governor Rashidi Ladoja, became the 44th Olubadan of Ibadanland, making Bukola Ladoja an Olori.

It began with examination results

THE figures that caught Ladoja's attention in the mid-2000s were alarming to her. She had been following the results of the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and was troubled by the proportion of students obtaining the credits required to continue their education.

According to figures she cited in a 2021 interview with a national daily, only about seven per cent of candidates achieved the required credits in 2005 and 2006. The figure rose to about 15 per cent before dropping again to between 10 and 12 per cent in 2007. Ladoja did not see the numbers just as an education problem, she saw a problem that could eventually affect the country's workforce.

"I saw them as the next generations of leaders," she said. "Doctors, engineers, accountants, lawyers and every professional stratum will arise from them." Her concern was that if large numbers of young people were unable to progress academically, Nigeria would eventually feel the consequences in the number of professionals it produced. For Ladoja, part of the explanation was that children were not reading enough. So she decided to do something about it. RASDA was born.

The woman behind the campaign

Ladoja's interest in books did not begin with RASDA, It goes back to her childhood. She grew up as the eldest of 20 children in a family where her parents had no formal education. As a child, she sometimes held a book and pretended to be reading so that her father would believe she was studying. Then she actually began reading. A novel from the popular Pacesetters series became a turning point. "After I finished reading it, I was hooked," she recalled.

The books did more than entertain her. They became a source of lessons about life and character. She has singled out *The Director*, one of the novels she read, as a book that taught her about corruption. That experience would later influence the way she spoke about reading.

According to Ladoja, books are not merely academic tools. They can introduce children to ideas, shape their imagination and expose them to possibilities beyond their immediate surroundings. That philosophy became the foundation of RASDA.

Taking books to the children

There was no grand launch strategy at the beginning. Ladoja and her team went to schools. They travelled across Oyo State, including communities in the Oke-Ogun area such as Saki, Tede, Ago-Are and Ago-Amodu. They spoke to pupils about reading and encouraged them to think beyond examinations. The organisation also organised workshops involving teachers and parents, distributed reading materials and put up posters and billboards promoting reading.

But there was a problem. The more schools they visited, the more obvious it became that the approach was difficult to sustain. "I was getting weary about moving from one school to the other," Ladoja said. She began looking for a way to take the message beyond individual classrooms. That search produced one of the most ambitious parts of the RASDA experiment. Television.

When reading became a reality show

In 2012, RASDA launched Read to Lead Africa, a reality television programme for secondary school students. It was deliberately designed to borrow from the popularity of programmes such as Big Brother Africa, but with a very different competition. The teenagers lived together for 30 days. They were tested on their ability to debate, write, speak publicly, think critically and answer questions based on their school syllabus. One contestant would be eliminated after another until a winner emerged.

For Ladoja, it was an attempt to prove that education did not have to be presented to young people as punishment. "It was like Big Brother Africa," she said. "We housed them and we eliminated them one by one until the winner emerged, but in a cerebral way."

The competition also had an incentive that would attract students and their families: money. The winner received a scholarship worth ₦2 million. The first runner-up received ₦500,000, while the second runner-up received ₦250,000.

Ladoja has described the financial rewards as bait. "We instituted some baits because we discovered that they are a generation that loves money," she said. The programme was also intended to reach students who might otherwise have been excluded from such opportunities. Its first season was held at Olashore International School in Iloko-Ijesha, Osun State.

RASDA worked with the Osun State government and later with Rivers State to bring public-school students into the programme. One of the students left a particularly lasting impression on Ladoja.

The boy had lost both parents and was living with his grandmother. A teacher who had been helping him brought him for the entrance examination. Ladoja remembered him as one of the most disadvantaged students selected. He did not win the competition. But after viewers heard his story, people reportedly contributed money to support him. By 2021, Ladoja said he was studying law at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Stories like that helped reinforce her belief that a reading programme could become something larger than a competition.

The price of keeping the dream alive

There was, however, a reality that could not be ignored: television was expensive. Read to Lead Africa lasted for three seasons — 2012, 2013 and 2014. Ladoja estimated that each season cost between ₦60 million and ₦70 million. The money went into everything required to keep a television production running for a month: examination materials, television airtime, cameras, lighting, editing, accommodation and feeding. It was a costly experiment in trying to make reading popular.

And, according to Ladoja, corporate sponsorship proved difficult to secure. She said companies that might have supported the programme were more interested in projects connected to entertainment and sports. Eventually, the show stopped. More than a decade later, it has not returned to television, although Ladoja has spoken about the possibility of reviving it on social media. The end of the programme did not mean the end of RASDA. It simply meant returning to smaller, more sustainable interventions.

One book at a time

Among RASDA's programmes is the Book Clinic, where children meet at weekends and borrow books to read during the week. The idea is deliberately simple. Rather than waiting for children to discover books on their own, the programme creates a routine around reading. RASDA has also promoted the One Child, One Book, One Week initiative, which was launched in Abuja in 2023.

The organisation's activities have extended beyond Oyo State, with Ladoja saying it had established connections with stakeholders in places including Abuja, Owerri and Port Harcourt. World Book Day has become another avenue for the organisation. At the Wole Soyinka Arts Theatre, University of Ibadan, pupils from schools including Emmanuel College High School, Peoples Girls Grammar School, Community High School Agbowo and Abadina College have participated in activities centred on books and reading.

There have been book reviews, interviews and performances. In other schools, the intervention has been less glamorous but perhaps just as practical. At Peoples Girls Grammar School in Molete, Ladoja donated books and gave the library ₦10,000 to buy two newspapers every day. She also encouraged the school's old students to continue funding the arrangement after her contribution ran out.

The school also introduced a termly prize for its best reader. These initiatives reflect the reality RASDA has had to work with: reviving reading culture is not achieved by a single campaign, It requires repetition.

Reading beyond examinations

For Ladoja, one of the biggest problems is the way Nigerian children are taught to think about books. Reading, she argues, has increasingly become synonymous with preparing for examinations. "It is so unfortunate that our children only read to pass examinations; they no longer read for leisure," she said. That distinction matters to her.

A child who reads only because an examination is approaching may acquire enough information to pass a test. A child who reads for pleasure, she argues, develops a relationship with books that can continue long after school. She has also connected reading with leadership.

In 2023, she argued that Nigeria's leadership challenges could partly be linked to inadequate preparation. "We are saying we lack leaders," she said, "but this is perhaps because most of our leaders have leadership thrust on them without sufficient preparations." Her argument is that books contain knowledge that can help people understand and solve problems, but that knowledge is of little use if people are unwilling to read.

Not all of Ladoja's views on education are without controversy. At a government meeting in Abuja on teaching in mother tongues, she argued that local languages should largely remain within the home while schools should concentrate on encouraging children to read for pleasure. The position reflects her wider emphasis on reading, but it also shows that her advocacy is tied to particular ideas about how education should be structured.

Recognition came slowly

For years, RASDA's work remained largely outside the mainstream spotlight. In 2021, however, the Association of Nigerian Authors recognised Ladoja as an ambassador for reading culture on International Literacy Day. The recognition came as the organisation continued to promote reading among young Nigerians. It also highlighted the unusual length of her campaign.

Many educational initiatives attract attention for a few months or years before disappearing. RASDA had survived for more than a decade. Then came another change in Ladoja's life. Her husband was crowned Olubadan. The former first lady of Oyo State was now an Olori in Ibadanland. But the traditional title has not replaced the reading campaign.

A new chapter for RASDA

Ladoja is now developing the RASDA Literacy Development Project, a community-based literacy and reading promotion initiative focused on Ibadanland. The project has a broader community focus. One of its aims is to engage children productively, keep them away from the streets and encourage an interest in reading and learning.

The challenge facing the campaign today is different from the one Ladoja confronted in 2007. Children now have more distractions. Smartphones, social media, online videos and streaming platforms compete directly with books for their attention. A child no longer needs to leave the house to find an alternative to reading.

At the same time, the financial problem that brought Read to Lead Africa to an end remains relevant.



Patoranking Brings Love To Town

By **Eniola Daniel**

FANS and music enthusiasts were already at Terra Kulture, Victoria Island, Lagos two hours before the time, eager to see the Dancehall star, Patrick Nnaemeka Okorie, known popularly as Patoranking, who was set to thrill at the Lord's Trace Live Concert 2026 that night.

The time finally came, at exactly 9:36.p.m, when he entered from the right wing of the stage. This made everyone to bring out his or her phones to capture the moment.

Behold, Patoranking did not merely end the anxiety, he set the stage on fire, elevating the spirit of music lovers.

From *Patoranking* to *Killing Me; No Kissing Baby* to *Alubarika, Girlie O*, then to *My Woman, My Everything* and *Abobi*, Patoranking made fans grind and groove to reggae, dancehall and afrobeats.

Elevating the night was Lord's London Dry Gin, bringing its own flavour of sophistication to an evening already charged with music and energy. Lord's presence went beyond the bottle. The brand helped shape the mood of the night, creating moments of indulgence and effortless enjoyment between performances.

Behind Patoranking was Fire Republik, and what began as a performance quickly became a celebration.

For a night celebrating a decade of *God Over Everything*, Patoranking did not simply perform his biggest songs. He reminded everyone why they became part of the soundtrack in the first place.

Just when it seemed the night had reached its peak, Victor AD appeared at past 11.00p.m. The Nigerian pop star made a surprise appearance towards the end of Patoranking's set, delivering a short, high-energy performance that had the crowd roaring once again. It was the kind of unexpected moment that gave the night another lift.

But Trace Live wasn't done. With the live band offstage, the DJs stepped behind the decks and took over the party. Dancehall classics rolled into Afrobeats favourites before giving way to Amapiano, keeping the floor alive and the energy climbing. The concert had officially become a party and nobody seemed in a hurry to leave.

One thing that set this edition apart wasn't just the spectacle on stage, it was the way Lord's London Dry Gin became part of the experience itself. The dedicated Lord's lounge offered its own pocket of premium sophistication, with sharply dressed mixologists turning every serve into a small performance of its own.

Marketing Manager, Nigerian Distilleries Limited, Gbemileke Lawal, remarked, "Trace Live remains an extraordinary platform for celebrated African talent, and for Lord's Gin, it is the natural stage to create unforgettable moments. Our commitment goes beyond traditional visibility; we aim to curate experiences that align organically with our consumers' lifestyle and celebrations. Lord's Gin embodies elegance, sophistication, and raw energy."



Patoranking on stage

Double Honour For *Sands Of Time* As It Wins TINFF, NEMCEA Awards In One Week

By **Daniel Anazia**

TELEVISION drama series, *Sands of Time,* recorded a major awards haul, winning seven honours in one week across Nigerian and international award platforms. The series and its cast received four awards at the 2026 Nigerian Electronic Media Content Exhibition and Awards (NEMCEA), before adding three international honours from film festivals in Canada.

At NEMCEA, *Sands of Time: We Happy People* won Best Overall Drama Series, while its producer, Stellamaris Duru, was named NTA Best Producer. The production also produced winners in the acting categories, with Hydra Aneme winning Best Actor and veteran actress Chinyere Wilfred taking home Best Actress for their performances in the series.

The awards run continued with three international recognitions as the TV drama series clinched the Best Television Series (Africa) at the Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival (TINFF), Best Television/Web Series at the Brampton International Nollywood Film Festival (BINFF) and Best Television Series (Africa) at the International Comedy and Art Film Festival (TICAFF).

Reacting to the string of recognitions, Duru said the achievement reflects the production team's commitment to creating stories that connect with audiences. "For us, *Sands of Time* is not just about making a television series; it is about telling stories that people can see themselves in and enjoy with their families. The response from audiences and the recognition we are receiving both locally and internationally show us that there is an audience for the kind of stories we are telling," she said.

"Winning these awards is encouraging, but for me, the biggest achievement is knowing that the story is travelling. When a Nigerian series is recognised in Toronto, Brampton and at an international festival, it tells us that our stories can travel beyond the environment in which they were created," Duru stated.

She also pointed to the series' growing television reach across Nigeria, with the production currently airing on several stations throughout the week. "We have tried to make *Sands of Time* accessible to as many viewers as possible. For instance, viewers can watch us on RSTV Port Harcourt on Mondays from 7:00 to 7:30 pm, TVC on Tuesdays from 8:00 to 8:30 pm, and Wazobia Max Lagos on Thursdays from 6:00 to 6:30 pm. We also have other broadcast partners across different parts of the country," she said.

The series also airs on Stellamarisdurutv on YouTube, as well as ITV Benin, OGTV, ITV Abuja, NTA2 Channel 5, Wazobia Port Harcourt, PRTV Jos, STV, Wazobia Max Abuja, WAPTV and EBS TV.

Duru noted that the wide broadcast reach has helped the series connect with viewers across different parts of the country, while its international recognition demonstrates the potential for Nigerian television stories to reach audiences beyond the country.

TEETH 4 TEETH ... With Justin Akpovi-Esade

Coronation Or Ordination?

LAST weekend, T4T was bored and so decided to watch a local news channel. The news item showing was the coronation of the new king of Opobo, HRM, Douglas Jaja. He took the throne of his ancestors, the famous Jaja of Opobo, who history books told us was exiled by the British when the colonial masters ruled over what later became Nigeria, with an iron fist.

This generation of young Nigerians may not have heard of King Jaja of Opobo since History as a subject was removed from secondary and primary school curriculum for years. Heard it has been restored back anyway.

Well, the news is not that His Majesty Douglas Jaja ascended the throne of his forebears, what is news is that instead of traditional kingmakers to preside over the coronation ceremony, T4T was shocked to notice that it was some Christian Bishops that took over the ceremony and even wore the brand new king the crown!

Really?

Was it a coronation or ordination?

Well, it was not something strange to T4T having seen so many kings after ascending the traditional throne will suddenly give their 'lives' to Jesus Christ or Allah while still holding on to the throne. Some even decree they be buried according to rites of their new found faith after enjoying all the perks of the traditional throne.

What is said about eating one's cake and having it the other time?

So Much For Good Samaritans...

DURING the week, the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, police command paraded three suspects connected to the death of a man whose remains were found under a bridge early last month.

This is the story the police boss told the public: The deceased, a married man, took a married woman named Rukayat Muhammad to a hotel. After they did what men and women do, the man, according to the woman who was the only witness, began to breathe hard. He subsequently slumped and died.

Rukayat suddenly realised she was a married woman and should not be near a scene that will require writing a statement at the nearest police station, so, she panicked, took the dead lover's mobile phone and fled the hotel. Long story short, police tracked the phone and arrested her.

You forgot to ask T4T *wetin come kwansign the two other suspects na.* Well, the two other suspects are the hotel staff who found out that a man had died in one of their rooms and because they know how the Nigeria police operate-"*Oga, my hand nor dey o, 500, 000 naira 'bail' money must drop*", decided to secretly take the body and dump it under the bridge where the police found it and investigations commenced.

Now, you have the background information, right? But that is actually not the story.

T4T found out from the police statement that the name of the hotel where the bros died in 'active service' is Good Samaritan Guest House, on Second Avenue, Gwarimpa Area of Abuja!

Let it sink, Good Samaritan!

So, what is Samaritan about the actions of the adulteress and the two hotel staff?

Sometimes, people ask, what is in a name?

Now you know.

Man Of God Vs VDM

T4T did not initially know the reason why social media activist, Martin Otse, otherwise known as VDM, tore viciously into Apostle Arome Osayi and went as far as body shaming him.

The nickel later dropped and T4T got to know that the popular man of God in his recent preaching said Nigeria was not destined to be a technologically advanced country like China, that Nigeria's 'calling' is spiritual revival. In simple terms, "casting and binding out evil spirits as well as delivering people of different afflictions" is the reason why God created Nigerians.

For a non believer like T4T, all he did was chuckle, but VDM did not chuckle. He pulled his gloves off and took on the 'pious man of God'. Typical of VDM, he always does not know when to draw the line. He body shamed the Pastor and that was a turn off for many including T4T.

Well, T4T is not VDM, so, he will ask the man of God to show him any country that has developed through prayers and worships only. China is not a religious country, so are many other developed economies. We should be thankful that a man like Apostle Osayi is not the president of Nigeria. Na everyday we for dey do fasting and praying.

What Really Is The Message Of That Toothpaste Ad?

THERE is this Toothpaste TV ad that airs regularly. T4T is sure you must have come across it and if you have not, then look out for it after reading this piece.

The about eight kids that featured in the ad all have some teeth missing from their mouths. When they all open their mouths to chant the name of the Toothpaste, all what you see are gaps wide enough for a ' keke' to drive through.

It is catching to see beautiful and excited kids displaying childish innocence, but the question T4T wants to ask the Toothpaste company and whoever did that ad copy is, what actually is the message?

The Toothpaste dey make small pikin teeth pull commot or what?

www.guardian.ng

NewsExtra

Wema Bank Trains 500 Business Owners On Export Trade

By Kehinde Olatunji

WEMA Bank has trained more than 500 Nigerian business owners on international trade through the second edition of its Wema Export Trade Academy (WETA), aimed at equipping businesses with the knowledge and resources required to compete in global markets.

The two-day academy, held in Lagos, brought together exporters, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), commodity aggregators, trade associations, regulators and international trade professionals for practical sessions on navigating the export market.

The programme focused on key areas of the export process, including identifying viable export opportunities, meeting international buyer requirements, documentation, regulatory compliance, financing, logistics and risk management.

Participants received guidance from officials and professionals drawn from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), Nigerian Customs Service (NCS), Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), as well as businesses involved in international trade.

Speaking on the significance of the programme, Deputy Managing Director, Wema Bank Plc, Oluwole Ajimisinmi, said Nigerian businesses had the potential to compete successfully in international markets but required the right knowledge, connections, financing and partnerships.



Deputy Managing Director, Wema Bank Plc, Oluwole Ajimisinmi

Ajimisinmi said the bank recognised that the potential of Nigerian businesses in global trade could only be fully realised when they had access to the appropriate knowledge, connections and financial support.

"At Wema Bank, we recognise that the potential of Nigerian businesses in global trade can only be fully realised when they have access to the right knowledge, the right connections, and the right financial support," he said.

He said WETA was designed to bring those elements together by helping businesses understand the export ecosystem, connect with relevant stakeholders and build the capacity needed to participate sustainably in international trade.

Also speaking, Deputy Director, NAFDAC, Oluseyi Sanyaolu, stressed the importance of understanding regulatory processes and requirements for businesses seeking to take Nigerian products into international markets.

"For businesses looking to take their products to international markets, understanding the processes, regulatory requirements and institutions involved is critical to ensuring that their products meet the required standards," Sanyaolu said.

He said initiatives such as the Wema Export Academy were important because they provided businesses with the knowledge and guidance required to navigate the export process and compete more confidently in global markets.

The academy also gave participants an opportunity to assess their businesses from the perspective of international trade and understand the requirements for taking locally developed products and services into new markets.

A participants, Dele Badejo, an importer exploring opportunities in the export market, described the programme as an important step towards understanding opportunities available to Nigerian businesses seeking to diversify into export.

Divisional Executive, Wema Bank, Tajudeen Bakare, said the bank's engagement with participants would continue beyond the completion of the academy.

Bakare said the bank would work with participating businesses to understand their needs at different stages of their growth and provide relevant financial and non-financial support.

ShortStory

Mystery Of The Black He-Goat (3)

By Segun Durowaiye (08055356855)

Continued from GUARDIAN WEEKEND, September 19-20, 2026

THAT critical moment when Adeosun saw a dead black He-goat in his living room, he was frightened and flabbergasted beyond measures and had no clue what was happening to him. He had no option than to run away instantly and he fled for his dear life.

Within the next few minutes, people from other flats and neighbourhood had gathered in large numbers in response to his distress call. His screams were just too much to ignore. The whole area was filled with people, wondering what exactly was the matter.

"What is it, Mr. Koleosho?" they asked, "tell us the problem."

"It's. . .it's a dead, black he-goat I found in my living room! Dear God. . .somebody wants me dead. . .help me. . .They want to kill me!" Adeosun stammered in fear and bewilderment.

"Let's go and see it," chorused the crowd.

Adeosun couldn't muster the courage to follow the crowd to his living room. After so much persuasion, he led them inside.

"Where's the dead, black he-goat?" a tall, dark-skinned man among the crowd asked.

"It was here I saw it. . .God!" stammered Adeosun. "I swear, I saw it here!" he repeated. The people that followed him into the living room shook their heads in disbelief as they left him, some hissing contemptuously.

"Mr. Adeosun, please don't call for help over nothing next time," an elderly man said. They all thought he was out of his mind or going loony. Adeosun stood there motionless, wondering what embarrassment he had brought to himself. But he was sure he actually saw a dead, black he-goat. His senses couldn't be playing tricks on him.

The following Monday when Adesoun met Bose, he narrated what he saw the previous weekend. He told her he suspected some people were jealous of their relationship; that he had never experienced such a thing in his entire life. Bose took the matter lightly and told him there was nobody after his life. She said her husband wasn't even aware of the relationship, and that there was nothing to be afraid of. That same evening Adeosun took Bose to their regular rendezvous, and they made love as usual.

It was 12 noon on Tuesday. Adeosun had reached his office hale and hearty. He was making preparations for his lunch break when he got a message from the receptionist that he had a visitor. He felt disturbed and restless. 'Who could that be?' he thought. In a minute he was out to see the visitor. Surprise! Surprise!! Surprise!!!

Standing at the reception was Bose's husband Taiye Ajisafe, he was boiling and fuming with uncontrolled rage.

"That's the man asking for you," the fair-skinned receptionist gestured at Adeosun.

"Yes, may I help you, Mister. . .?" Adeosun asked the utterly enraged Ajisafe. "Of course, yes!" answered Ajisafe. "I'm the husband of the lady you've been dating for quite some time now!" he said.

"You mean me?" Adeosun asked again. "Yes, you! If you don't steer clear of my wife you'll meet your waterloo in no time! You're playing with the fangs of a deadly snake! I'm giving you the last warning! If you don't stop it you'll die before long, I assure you," the young man said and bolted out of the reception room. Adeosun quickly did an introspective search. 'Yes! This must be the husband of Bose, the only married lady I'm dating among my numerous girlfriends. What should I do now?' he thought. He was totally shocked and frightened. 'How did this young man get to know my office? He must have been aware of my relationship with his wife for a long time, and must have been trailing me,' he thought again.

That same day, in the evening, when Adeosun met Bose, he told her about the surprise visit of her husband to his office and the warning to him never to fiddle with his wife again.

"God, how did he get to know your office?!" Bose asked the bewildered Adeosun. . .

To be concluded.

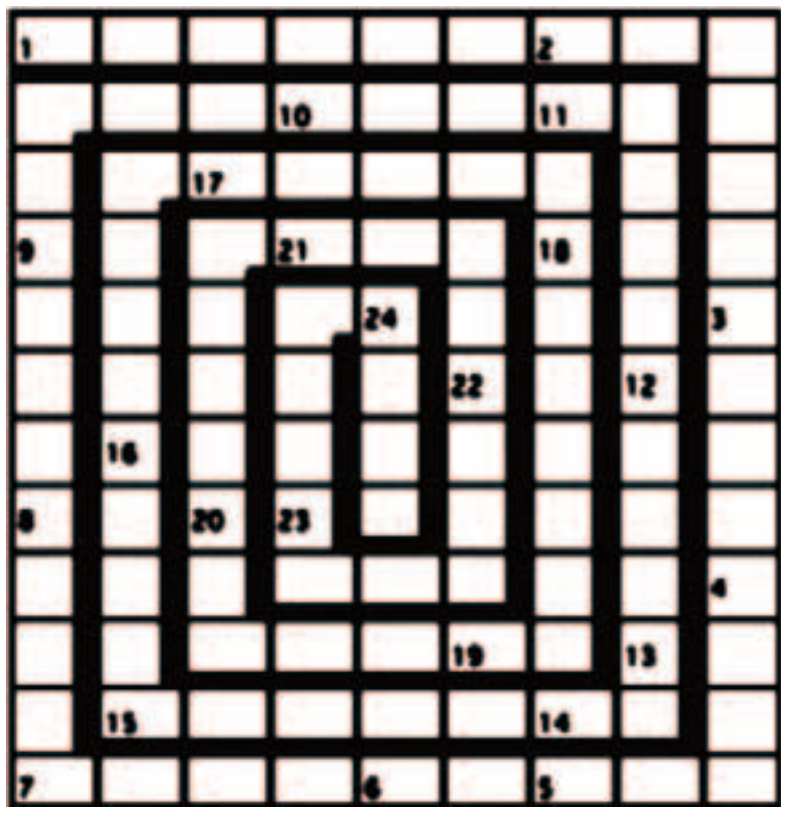
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Overlapping Word Game

with OLULANA KAYODE 08023183727
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Solution

1 Gagarawa
2 Warlock
3 Kinetic
4 Tickle
5 Epic
6 Icing
7 Ganaye
8 Yekini
9 Niagara
10 Radar
11 Armada
12 Akure
13 Eket
14 Eternal
15 Alpaca
16 Calabar
17 Arrest
18 Truncate
19 Ecstasy
20 Symbol
21 Lather
22 Erratic
23 China
24 Awka



Overlapping Word Game

1 Local council in Osun State, (8).
2 Done by people under legal age, (8).
3 Closely related, (6).
4 Song of allegiance, (6).
5 Have particular sense, (4).
6 Displeasure, (5).
7 Local council in Niger State, (5).
8 Combined into one, (6).
9 Able to be eaten, (6).
10 Not difficult, (4).
11 Zamfara State Ex Governor, (6).
12 Local council in Oyo State, (6).
13 State in the N.C. USA, (4).
14 Move back and forth, (6).
15 Make something certain, (6).
16 Let somebody go, (7).
17 Dangerous, (6).
18 Free with difficulty, (9).
19 Raw material used for making fabrics, (7).
20 Modern myth, (6).
21 Go in different directions, (6).
22 Be worthy of something, (7).
23 Dark hard wood, (5).
24 Twelve-month period, (4).

Word Search

Some Capital Cities In Africa

Mali	Bissau	Maseru
Togo	Tripoli	Nairobi
Cairo	Luanda	Bamako
Abuja	Algiers	Pretoria
Niger	Malawi	Conakry
Rabat	Malabo	Porto Novo

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

(c.) Olukayode Olulana

Birthdays

OGUNWUSI, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Babatunde, Ojaja II, traditional ruler and Ooni of Ife will be 52 on October 17, 2026.

Born on October 17, 1974, he started his elementary education at Subuola Memorial Nursery and Primary School, Ibadan and Ibadan District Council, Akobo, Ibadan, Oyo State.

He then proceeded to Loyola College, Ibadan and later to St. Peters Secondary School, Ile-Ife, where he received his secondary school certificate (SSCE). He graduated as an accountant from The Polytechnic, Ibadan.

He is a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria. He is also an Associate Accounting Technician. Oba Ogunwusi is a certified member of the Institute of Directors. He is also a member of the Global Real Estate Institute.

He holds a number of honorary doctorate degrees: one in Public Administration from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, and another in Law from Igbinedion University, Edo State. Oba Ogunwusi is the Chancellor at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

He was selected from the Giesi Ruling House of Ile-Ife, Osun State amongst indigenes who were also heirs to the throne on October 26, 2015. He received his staff of office on December 7, 2015.

He has been described as an astute entrepreneur driven by the need to turn impossibilities into possibilities. Oba Ogunwusi is the spiritual leader of the Yoruba people now saddled with the responsibility of making supplications to God and the Òrì à on behalf of his tribe and the world at large during annual festivals such as Olojo.



Oba Ogunwusi

BABAWALE, Professor Gabriel Olatunde, a Professor of Political Economy at the Department of Political Science, University of Lagos, will be 65 on October 4, 2026. Born on October 4, 1961, at Inisa, in Odo-Otin Local Council Area of Osun State, he had his post primary education at Inisa Grammar School, Inisa,Osun State, from 1973 to1977.



Prof. Babawale

He proceeded to undertake his undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) from 1977 to 1985, where he earned two prestigious academic honours: Scholar, University of Ife, and Departmental Scholarship Grantfor Best Graduate overall performance, at the Department of International Relations, during the1983/84 session.

He began his career in teaching, research, and scholarship at the Government Secondary School, Numan, Adamawa State during his National Youth Service between 1981 and 1982. He was later appointed as an Assistant Lecturer at the Adeyemi College of Education campus of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, in1985, where he made significant contributions to the development of the institution. In 1991, he was appointed Lecturer Grade-1 by the University of Lagos and got to the peak of his academic career with his appointment as Professor of Political Economy in 2002.

He was voted as the best lecturer in the Department of Political Science, University of Lagos by the students, in a University-wide survey, conducted during the 2003/2004 academic session. He was the founding, and until 2006, Managing Editor of the reputable UNILAG Journal of Politics.

Prof Babawale has consulted widely for local and international Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as UNESCO, the AU, etc., and he has also coordinated research funded by Agencies such as the Ford Foundation. He has manned numerous administrative roles including Secretary of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the University of Lagos branch, 1993 to 1996, Assistant Dean of Students Affairs, Unilag, 1998 to 2000, and Dean of Students Affairs, 2014 to 2016.

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

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Events



Akwa Ibom State Deputy Governor, Dr. Akon Eyakenyi (middle); Managing Director, Offshore Operations, Seplat Energy Plc., Mr. Ikponmwosa Ogunmwonyi (left); Chairman, Seplat Energy Plc, ,Senator Udoma Udo Udoma; Chief Executive Officer, Seplat Energy Plc., Effiong Okon, an engineer, and Director, External Affairs and Social Performance, Seplat Energy Plc, Mrs. Chioma Afe at the official launch of the maiden edition of NNPC/Seplat Energy JV "Eye Can See" Programme in Uyo.



Cross section of participants at the Girls Auxiliary Coronation Service 2026, with the theme: "Glory in Godliness and Grace" held at the Pentecostal Baptist Church International, No 2, Coleridge Street, L6 6BS, Liverpool, United Kingdom. It was hosted by Rev. (Dr.) Philip and Rev. Ruth Oyewole ...on Sunday



Head of Business, Starbase Technologies, Emeka Okenwa (left); Content Creator, Salem King; Head of Product, Starbase Technologies, Nonso Ukwandu and Lead Consultant, Dashboard Innovations, George Ugbegua at the Podfest Naija 2026 held at Harbour Point, Victoria Island, Lagos.



Chief Commercial Officer, Zenith Prudential Life, Tosin Bayo-Yusuf (left); Clinical Director, Advance Medical Care Consultancy, Yemisi Ajijola; Convener, Leading Women Conference (LWC)/ Director, Selectables Ventures & Co-Senior Pastor, Grand Assembly, Maryland, Ifeade Adebiyi; Chief Executive Officer (CEO), FIVE28, Funto Ibuoye and Media Personality/Compere, Gloria Babarinde, during the Fourth Edition of the LWC sponsored and held at the Foursquare Gospel Church, Grand Assembly, Maryland, Lagos Nigeria.



Senior Special Assistant on Lagos Liaison to Akwa Ibom State Govenor, Mr Mike Effiong (left); Converner, Prosperous Naija /Managing Director, Abelini Experiential, Mr Abiodun Oshinibosi ; President of EXMAN /Chief Operating Officer, Aster Integrated Marketing Ltd, Mrs Tolu Medebem and Nolywood actor, Mr Yomi Fash Lanso at the Prosperous Naija to mark Nigeria's 66th Independence Anniversary Countdown held in Lagos.

Seven-Up Bottling Company Rehabilitates Sari-Iganmu Primary Health Centre

By **Opeyemi Babalola**

SEVEN-UP Bottling Company Ltd. (SBC), in collaboration with the Apapa-Iganmu Local Council Development Area (LCDA), has unveiled the renovated Sari Primary Health Centre, reaffirming the company's commitment to the wellbeing and development of its host communities.

The unveiling ceremony, held recently, brought together key stakeholders, including Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of SBC, Sari El-Khalil; Oba Abdulfatai Oyeyinka Aremu Aromire II, the Ojora of Ijora and Iganmu Kingdom; Executive Chairman of Apapa-Iganmu LCDA, Jimoh Olawale Saliu; Chairman, House Committee on Health, Lawal Aina Musbau; alongside local council officials, community leaders, healthcare professionals and other key stakeholders.

Apapa-Iganmu holds a significant place in SBC's history. The company rolled out its first bottle from the community in 1960 and has maintained a close relationship with the area for more than six decades.

In his keynote address, Sari El-Khalil, Managing Director, SBC, said Apapa-Iganmu holds a significant place in the company's history as the first bottle of Seven-Up rolled out from the community in 1960. He said SBC has a longstanding relationship with its host communities dating back to more than six decades with the responsibilities that come with being part of them, saying, "Everything that Seven-Up Bottling Company does is part of the community and everything that the community does is part of Seven-Up Bottling Company. Our communities and people are a pillar of our strength. Their wellbeing matters to us, and this is why we continue to identify areas where our intervention can create meaningful and lasting impact. Whether within our operations or in how we choose to impact our communities, for us, it is always about putting people first."



Chairman, House Committee on Health, Lawal Aina Musbau(left); Managing Director, Seven-Up Bottling Company Ltd. Sari El-Khalil; the Ojora of Ijora, Oba Abdulfatai Oyeyinka Aremu Ojora and Executive Chairman of Apapa-Iganmu LCDA, Jimoh Olawale Saliu, at the event.

El-Khalil also noted that giving back has remained part of SBC's heritage, reflected over the years through initiatives such as the Pepsi Football Academy and the Seven-Up Harvard Business School Scholarship, which has sponsored 16 Nigerians to attend Harvard Business School, alongside other interventions in education, youth development, health and community wellbeing.

Reflecting on the longstanding relationship between SBC, the El-Khalil family and the Apapa-Iganmu community, HRM Oba Abdulfatai Oyeyinka Aremu Aromire II, the Ojora of Ijora and Iganmu Kingdom, spoke about the relationship that has developed over the years:"My relationship with Seven-Up Bottling Company and the El-Khalil family goes back many years. I have had the privilege of witnessing the company's growth from the time of the MD's grandfather to the present day. The relationship has grown through this period beyond business into one built on trust, friendship and a shared commitment to the wellbeing of our people," Oba Aromire II said.

The intervention included the renovation of the maternity ward, the construction and equipping of a laboratory where none previously existed, and the installation of solar power infrastructure to support more reliable operations at the centre.

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

Oludotun Baiyewun Jacobs: A Life That Endures Through Times And Seasons

By **Maria Diamond**

EVERYBODY DIES. Death is the eventuality of the human race but when you die what memory would you leave behind?

At the funeral service of the legendary, iconic, creative and extraordinary Oludotun Baiyewun Jacobs (MFR), popularly called Olu Jacobs, those words stirred a sober reflection, as part of a 'sermon on the mount' from the exhortation of Pastor Tony Rapu, the founder of This Present House (TPH) and Senior Pastor, House of Freedom in Lekki Phase 1 where family, friends and well-wishers from every walks of life gathered to bid farewell to a man whose life was well lived with a legacy that endures through times and seasons.

Pastor Tony Rapu reminded the audience that being absent from the body is to be present with God, noting that dying is much like sleeping, an inevitable passage for the human race.

"Death reminds us of the journey of life and the meaning of our existence. Uncle Olu as I fondly called him, worked with Christ. His strength and fortitude tell it all. Uncle Olu died in the Lord. Uncle Olu has gone home. Home is where we came from. When we accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, we make heaven our home. I look forward to seeing Uncle Olu again on the resurrection morning," Pastor Tony Rapu said.

The world did indeed blink when Olu Jacobs, a man whose legacy speaks to seasons and generations of life passed on; and so when he was described as the very definition of national treasure, a talent of unusual depth and distinctions, those were deserving accolades.

Born on July 11, 1942 and died on September 16, 2026, Olu Jacobs leaves imprints that outlive time and seasons, thus, when Pastor Rapu admonished everyone seated at the funeral service to ensure to make the world a better place before they die so their good deeds will follow them, the sermon was clear from a perfect example of the life and death of one of Nigeria's most distinguish actors, theatre practitioners and cultural icons.

For more than five decades, Olu Jacobs who was born in Kano but an indigene of Oke Itoku heritage, Abeokuta, Ogun State, devoted his extraordinary talent, discipline and passion to the performing arts, building a legacy that transcended generations, borders and artistic disciplines.

At the heart of the funeral service was Olu Jacob's wife, Joke Silva who bore it all with grace, poise and elegance of a virtuous woman who loved and stood by husband through thick and thin wearing a beautiful royal blue bubu lace she adorned with the traditional aso-oke headgear and waist wrapper (pele) as she bade goodbye to her loving husband alongside her children Olusoji Jacobs and Olugbenga Jacobs as well as family members.

The event was graced by Governors, Deputy Governors, Senators, other government officials, first ladies, Nollywood veterans, directors, producers, and screen icons including Nigeria's Minister of Art, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy Hannatu Musa Musawa.

The service featured solemn hymns as Olu Jacobs children stepped forward to read scriptures, followed by his first son Olusoji Jacobs who delivered a recitation of his father's legendary biography, a testament not just to a great career, but to a devoted father and patriarch.

Soji Olusoji appreciated Pastor Tony Rapu for reminding them that death is not the end for those who are in Christ.

Meanwhile, the journey to bidding the Icon farewell began on Wednesday, September 30th, as Nollywood stars, veteran filmmakers, and creative icons gathered in a moving display of solidarity for the Night of Tributes held in honour of the late actor at Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos.

The evening was an intimate walk down memory lane, filled with heartfelt testimonies, soul-stirring musical performances, and deeply personal recollections from peers who shared decades on stage and screen with Olu Jacobs.



Funeral Service of Oludotun Baiyewun Jacobs (MFR) at This Present House (TPH) Lekki Lagos on Friday...

A Growing Business Must Eventually Become Bigger Than Its Founder – Elevate 2026

Founders Must Build Structures, People, Systems, Principles To Function Beyond Physical Presence – Elevate 2026

By **Maria Diamond**

WEALTH is anything that has the capacity of returning economic value to you. If you do not know your worth, how can you transfer it to your children? Build your worth on what you know: your skills, your identity, your God.

Those were the words of Sola Adesakin, the Lead Coach and Founder of Smart Stewards during its Summit 11.0 'Elevate 2026' in Lagos recently.

At the heart of Smart Stewards' 'Elevate 2026' was the question, what happens to the value you have built when you are no longer there to run it?

The summit, which moved the conversation beyond income, investments and financial milestones to the harder questions of ownership, succession, institutionalisation and intergenerational stewardship, was attended by about 5,000 participants, both in-person and virtually.

Elevate 2026 brought together conversations about personal worth, financial ownership, professional networks, business systems, mentorship, family succession and institutional growth around a single long-term proposition: wealth must be deliberately built to survive the person who creates it.

Women Must Take Their Place In Politics – Eletu

By **Suliyat Tella**

SIX months into her tenure as Lagos State All Progressive Congress (APC) Women Leader, Alhaja Rofiat Iyabosola Eletu says her focus has been on getting more women involved in politics, strengthening grassroots structures and ensuring women have a greater voice in governance.

Eletu, who assumed office on March 3, 2026, said women could no longer afford to remain on the sidelines of political participation. "Our party has been encouraging women to participate fully in politics. Nobody should be left out. Everybody must participate.

Women, men, young people and anyone who has attained the voting age," she said.

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NIGERIA @ 66: CELEBRATING MOST CREDIBLE ASSET MANAGEMENT FIRMS PROMOTING WEALTH CREATION IN NIGERIA

THE importance of wealth creation for achieving financial independence for both short, medium, and long-term goals cannot be overstated. As the legendary investor Warren Buffet stated, "If you don't find a way to make money while you sleep, you will have to work till you die".

Investments in assets such as mutual funds, equities, bonds, and exchange-traded funds have become critical in generating alternate sources of income. In this context, asset management companies play a crucial role in advising investors on viable investment options, particularly in an era where Ponzi schemes have become rampant.

Asset management firms effectively serve as one-stop investment shops for individuals and organizations, making well-timed investment decisions on behalf of clients to grow their finances and portfolios through diverse investments.

This provides clients access to higher-value options with better capital appreciation prospects while also mitigating risk. Over the past five years, the Nigerian Asset Management Industry has witnessed increased participation from mass affluent and retail clients, a shift from its previous focus exclusively on high net-worth individuals (HNIs).

This trend has significantly contributed to the industry's assets under management (AuM), which has grown at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 29%, largely propelled by the exponential growth in the AuM of retail-focused collective investment schemes.

The industry is currently undergoing positive transformation driven by the innovativeness and customer-centric approaches of reputable players who have leveraged technology and new data techniques to make a remarkable impact.

In recognition of these developments, The Guardian, in commemoration of Nigeria's independence anniversary is publishing this special report to celebrate their impact and and remarkable achievements



ABIOLA OYEKUNLE MD EMERGING AFRICA ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED

KELECHI EKE MD DLM ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED

DR. ODIRI OGINNI MD/CEO UNITED CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT LIMITED

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NIGERIA @ 66: CELEBRATING MOST CREDIBLE ASSET MANAGEMENT FIRMS PROMOTING WEALTH CREATION IN NIGERIA

DLM ASSET MANAGEMENT: Building Trust, Democratizing Wealth, And Preserving Legacies For Nigeria's Future

"We are focused not only on the return on capital, but equally on the return of capital. That philosophy has been central to the trust we have built"...Kelechi Eke, Managing Director, DLM Asset Management Limited.

AT 66, Nigeria's economic narrative is one of resilience, enterprise, and an urgent quest for sustainable wealth creation. In the midst of inflationary pressures, FX volatility, and shifting investor confidence, one firm has remained consistent in its mission to help Nigerians create, preserve and transfer wealth.

DLM Asset Management Limited, licensed and regulated by the Securities and Exchange Commission [SEC], Nigeria, stands tall among Nigeria's most credible asset management firms – not just for its performance, but for its principles. In this exclusive interview with The Guardian, the management of DLM Asset Management shares its philosophy, strategy, and vision for Nigeria's next decade of wealth creation.

ON TRUST: BUILT BY WHAT YOU CONSISTENTLY DO

For DLM Asset Management, trust is the true currency of asset management. "At DLM Asset Management, we have always been guided by a clear and enduring set of principles: integrity, professionalism, transparency, prudent risk management and an unwavering commitment to our clients' interests," the firm states.

"For us, trust is not built by what you say; it is built by what you consistently do. We place our clients at the centre of every decision, remain disciplined in our investment process and communicate transparently about both opportunities and risks."

This responsibility is sacred. "When clients entrust their assets to us, they are entrusting us with the results of years of hard work, and in many cases, their future financial security." Hence, capital preservation remains fundamental. "We are focused not only on the return on capital, but equally on the return of capital."

DEMOCRATIZING WEALTH CREATION: FROM 10,000 TO INSTITUTIONS

DLM Asset Management believes wealth creation should not be the exclusive preserve of a privileged few. "Our approach is anchored on three key areas: investment innovation, accessibility and bespoke investment solutions," the company explains. For high-net-worth, corporate and institutional clients, DLM provides customised portfolios including fixed-income strategies, structured investment opportunities and liquidity management solutions.

For retail investors, the barrier has been broken. "Our collective investment schemes provide an accessible entry point. Our Money Market Fund allows investors to begin with as little as 10,000, while our Fixed Income Fund has an entry point of 50,000." "Democratizing wealth creation is about breaking down the barriers to investing, whether those barriers are capital, knowledge, geography or access.

INNOVATION FOR REALITY: SOLUTIONS FOR NIGERIA'S ECONOMY

Innovation at DLM is not about launching products for their own sake, but about solving real problems. "The Nigerian investment environment requires asset managers to be both disciplined and adaptive," the firm notes. Its Money Market Fund is structured for capital preservation, liquidity and competitive returns through high-quality short-term instruments like treasury bills, commercial papers, and bank deposits. Its Fixed Income Fund caters to investors seeking income and capital appreciation over a longer horizon.

Beyond mutual funds, DLM develops bespoke portfolios that factor in liquidity needs, risk appetite and investment horizon.

DEEPENING THE CAPITAL MARKET

As a key intermediary, DLM Asset Management channels savings into productive sectors – government securities, commercial papers, corporate bonds – supporting the flow of capital to businesses and government. "But capital market development is not only about deploying funds; it is also about building investor confidence and improving financial literacy," the firm adds, emphasizing its ongoing investor education through platforms, engagements and simplified market insights.

"Our philosophy is simple: we want to meet Nigerians where they are – whether in our office or on their mobile phone."

NAVIGATING NIGERIA @ 66: PRESERVATION, THEN GROWTH

As Nigeria marks 66 years of independence, investors are operating in an increasingly complex environment," DLM admits. Its response is centered on capital preservation, active portfolio management, diversification, and disciplined asset allocation. Rather than chasing the highest return blindly, DLM weighs return against risk. The strong industry ranking of the DLM Money Market Fund in July 2026, the firm notes, "reinforces our conviction that disciplined investment management and careful security selection can deliver meaningful value even in challenging conditions."



TECHNOLOGY AS AN INCLUSION TOOL

Technology is central to DLM's inclusion agenda. "A significant step has been DLM Thrive, our digital investment platform, which enables investors to begin and manage their investment journey digitally." From enhanced digital onboarding to seamless portfolio monitoring, DLM Asset Management is investing heavily in technology. "For the client who prefers to walk into our office, that channel remains. But for the young professional who wants to begin investing from a mobile device in minutes, that experience should be equally accessible."

GOVERNANCE: THE NON-NEGOTIABLE

Governance is fundamental because we are custodians of other people's wealth. "Operating under SEC regulation, DLM maintains robust investment oversight, compliance, risk management, internal controls, and KYC/AML/CFT procedures. "Governance for us goes beyond meeting regulatory requirements. It is about creating a culture where accountability, transparency and prudent stewardship are embedded every day."

PEOPLE: THE GREATEST ASSET

"Our people are undoubtedly one of our greatest assets," DLM emphasizes. The firm invests in continuous professional development, industry certifications, and exposure to global best practices. It also contributes to thought leadership and advocacy, believing that "a better-informed investor is ultimately a more confident investor, and more confident investors contribute to stronger and deeper financial markets."

VISION FOR THE NEXT DECADE

Looking ahead, DLM Asset Management's ambition is clear: "Our ambition is to build one of Nigeria's most trusted, innovative, and accessible asset management institutions and to play a meaningful role in helping more Nigerians create, preserve, and transfer wealth." Over the next decade, DLM plans to broaden its solutions, deepen institutional relationships, expand its retail base, and sustainably grow AUM – "not simply for the sake of size, but because every additional investor represents an opportunity to help achieve an important financial objective."

"Ultimately, the goal is for DLM Asset Management to be an institution that Nigerians trust at every stage of their financial journey, from making their first investment to building significant portfolios and eventually transferring wealth to the next generation."

DLM Asset Management Limited is a Member of DLM Capital Group, licensed and regulated by the Securities and Exchange Commission [SEC], Nigeria, as a Fund/Portfolio Manager. The firm offers Money Market Funds, Fixed Income Funds, High Interest Investment Plan (Dollar & Naira), Retirement Plan, Child Education Fund Plan, and bespoke portfolio management services focused on wealth creation, preservation, and transfer.

DLM ASSET MANAGEMENT

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NIGERIA @ 66: CELEBRATING MOST CREDIBLE ASSET MANAGEMENT FIRMS PROMOTING WEALTH CREATION IN NIGERIA

UNITED CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT And The Future Of Inclusive Wealth - Dr. Odiri Oginni, MD/CEO

IN Nigeria's evolving financial landscape, few names command as much trust, performance and innovation as United Capital Asset Management Limited. A subsidiary of United Capital Plc, the firm has consistently ranked among Nigeria's most credible and best-performing asset managers, transforming asset management from an elite preserve into an everyday tool for wealth creation. As Nigeria marks 66 years of independence, the firm's journey is one of discipline, trust and purpose-led investing. In an exclusive chat, Dr. Odiri Oginni, Chief Executive Officer, shares how she is building an enduring institution for wealth.

A Leadership Formula Built on Trust

For Dr. Oginni, asset management is fundamentally a business of trust. "For me, the leadership formula has been a combination of discipline, innovation, people, and trust. Clients entrust us with money that represents years of hard work, their children's education, retirement, business aspirations and their hopes for a better future," she says. That responsibility goes beyond generating returns. It demands disciplined risk management, deep understanding of the macro environment, continuous innovation, and clear communication, especially in difficult markets.



Over the years, United Capital has invested heavily in its people and in building an organisation that can continuously evolve.

"My role as CEO has not been just about growing Assets under Management; it has been about building an institution with the capabilities, culture and resilience to continue creating value. Our growth in AUM is important, but what matters even more is the trust represented by those assets. That is the real measure of our responsibility."

From Elite Product to Everyday Tool

United Capital Asset Management has deliberately shattered the myth that investing is only for the wealthy or for financial experts. The strategy starts with inclusive product design. Its suite today spans Money Market Fund, Bond Fund, Nigerian Eurobond Fund, Global Fixed Income Fund, Equity Fund, Balanced Fund, Sukuk Fund, Wealth for Women Fund and Children Investment Fund, among others.

With a minimum investment of just 10,000 in its Money Market Fund, the firm has lowered the barrier for first-time investors. Its Wealth for Women Fund was created from a recognition that financial inclusion cannot be gender-neutral if participation patterns are not gender-neutral. It was designed specifically to increase women's access to long-term wealth creation.

"But products alone are not enough. We have to change the language of investing," Dr. Oginni notes. "Instead of telling a young Nigerian, 'You need to buy a mutual fund,' we say, 'How do you want to build your emergency fund? How will you finance your child's education? What does financial independence look like for you?' When investment products are connected to real-life goals, investing becomes less abstract and more relevant."

Preserving Value in Volatile Times

In an environment shaped by inflation, FX volatility and monetary tightening, United Capital's edge lies in diversification and disciplined allocation.

"There is no single asset allocation that is appropriate for every investor or every economic environment," she explains.

In periods of elevated interest rates, fixed income and money market instruments can provide attractive income and liquidity. At the same time, equities remain important for investors with longer horizons because wealth creation cannot rely solely on short-term income.

United Capital
Asset Management

The firm has expanded access beyond traditional naira assets through its Nigerian Eurobond Fund and Global Fixed Income Fund, enabling investors to diversify across asset class, duration, currency and risk.

"Preservation and growth are not competing objectives; they have to be balanced according to the investor's circumstances. Our job is to continuously assess the macroeconomic environment and position portfolios within their mandates while maintaining a disciplined risk-management framework."

InvestNow: Technology Meets Human Trust

Technology sits at the heart of United Capital's inclusion agenda. Its InvestNow digital platform removes traditional frictions. Investors can open accounts, access portfolios, invest and initiate redemptions digitally.

"I do not see technology only as a distribution channel. The bigger opportunity is to use technology to make investing simpler, more transparent and more personalized," Dr. Oginni says.

Historically, the industry has communicated in a language that assumes the investor already understands markets. Technology offers the opportunity to redesign that experience from onboarding and education to reporting and engagement.

It also expands reach. A digital platform allows Nigerians across the country and in the diaspora to participate in professionally managed solutions without physical constraints.

"The future is not digital versus human. It is digital and human, using technology for convenience, accessibility and scale while retaining the professional advice and trust that investors need."

Impact Beyond AUM

While Assets Under Management is a measure of scale, Dr. Oginni measures impact more broadly. Every naira that moves from idle savings into a professionally managed vehicle becomes part of a larger ecosystem financing governments, businesses and economic activity.

But the greatest long-term impact, she argues, is behavioural. "Nigeria does not only have an investment participation challenge; we have a wealth-building challenge. Many people earn income for decades without developing a structured investment habit."

That belief drives the firm's focus on financial literacy and investor education – helping investors understand risk, time horizon, diversification, volatility and the behavioural biases that influence decisions.

Vision to Nigeria @ 66

Looking to the next decade, Dr. Oginni's vision is clear: to help move Nigeria from a culture of earning and consuming to a culture of earning, investing and building wealth.

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NIGERIA @ 66: CELEBRATING MOST CREDIBLE ASSET MANAGEMENT FIRMS PROMOTING WEALTH CREATION IN NIGERIA

EMERGING AFRICA ASSET MANAGEMENT: THE BOUTIQUE POWERHOUSE MAKING WEALTH CREATION ACCESSIBLE TO EVERY NIGERIAN..Abiola Oyekunle, Managing Director

In a market where trust is the ultimate currency, Emerging Africa Asset Management Limited has carved a distinct niche as a boutique yet highly credible player driving wealth creation for Nigerians. As Nigeria celebrates 66 years of independence, the firm stands out not for size alone, but for discipline, governance, and its deep understanding of the Nigerian investor.

Led by Abiola Oyekunle, Managing Director, Emerging Africa Asset Management is reshaping the narrative that investing is reserved for the wealthy elite. Its story is one of accessibility, innovation, and long-term value creation.

Building Trust in a Trust-Driven Business

For Abiola Oyekunle, the journey has always started with one word: trust."Building trust has been at the centre of our journey. In asset management, investors are placing more than money with us; they are placing their confidence in our judgement. That responsibility has shaped how we operate as a firm," she says.



From inception, the firm's focus has been to build an institution that understands the realities of the Nigerian market and the diverse financial goals of its people – whether protecting savings against inflation, supporting a business's investment needs, or helping families plan for the future.

"The Nigerian market presents unique opportunities, but it also requires careful decision-making. Volatility, inflation and changing economic conditions mean investors need partners who can look beyond short-term market movements and make informed decisions."

That strategy – combining experienced investment management with strong governance, transparency, and real-need solutions – has positioned Emerging Africa among Nigeria's most credible wealth creators.

"Our strategy has been to combine experienced investment management with strong governance and transparency. We are not focused only on growing assets; we are focused on building lasting relationships and creating value for the people who trust us with their funds."

Democratizing Wealth Creation Beyond the Elite

For a long time, investing in Nigeria was perceived as exclusive. Emerging Africa Asset Management is deliberately changing that perception.

"Wealth creation should be accessible to more Nigerians. Students, young professionals starting their careers, business owners building capital gradually, or people planning for long-term financial security should have investment options beyond keeping money in a bank account."

EMERGING AFRICA

Its product suite is designed around different stages of an investor's journey. The Emerging Africa Money Market Fund offers stability, liquidity and income generation through professionally managed money market investments – ideal for investors who want their funds to work while retaining access.

For long-term growth, the Emerging Africa Balanced Diversity Fund provides exposure across equities, fixed income and money market instruments, allowing investors to participate in growth opportunities while spreading risk.

Recognizing currency concerns, the firm's Dollar Investment Solutions address a major need for Nigerians at home and abroad who earn in dollars and understand the importance of currency diversification in an era of naira depreciation and global uncertainty.

"The bigger goal is to make investing simpler and more approachable. With accessible entry points from as little as N10,000 and digital solutions like our Emerging Wealth App, we want more Nigerians to start early and build consistent wealth habits," Abiola explains.

Navigating Nigeria's 2026 Realities: Preservation and Growth

In 2026, Nigerian investors face a complex triad of elevated inflation, FX volatility, and interest rate fluctuations. Emerging Africa's response is not one-dimensional."The reality of today's Nigerian economy is that investors cannot afford to take a one-dimensional approach to wealth creation," Abiola notes.

The firm deploys active diversification and portfolio management, considering money market instruments, fixed income, equities and dollar-denominated opportunities tailored to each client's objectives and risk profile.

"For some investors, the priority may be protecting capital and maintaining liquidity. For others, the focus may be long-term growth. The right strategy depends on understanding those differences."

Crucially, portfolios are not static. The team closely monitors economic developments and market opportunities to ensure positioning remains appropriate as conditions change.

"In an environment like Nigeria, there is no single investment solution that works for everyone. The key is having a disciplined approach, spreading risk appropriately and making investment decisions based on research rather than emotion."

Beyond AUM: Deepening Capital Markets and Financial Literacy

For Abiola, impact cannot be measured by Assets Under Management alone."A strong capital market depends on the participation of more Nigerians. When individuals and institutions invest through structured channels, those funds contribute to the broader economy by supporting businesses, markets and productive activities."

Emerging Africa sees financial education as a core responsibility. Many Nigerians want to invest, but face barriers of where to start, understanding risk, and aligning solutions with goals.

Vision @ 66: Technology, Inclusion, and Africa's Wealth Hub

Looking toward Nigeria @ 66, Abiola Oyekunle's vision is bold and inclusive."Over the next decade, we see a future where investing becomes a normal part of financial planning for more Nigerians," she says.

Technology will be central. Platforms like the Emerging Wealth App and Emerging Africa Invest will simplify the investment journey, bringing solutions closer to investors with transparency and convenience.

"The goal is not only to serve existing investors but also to support young Nigerians who are beginning their financial journeys."

At 66, as Nigeria reflects on its journey, Emerging Africa Asset Management represents the new face of credible wealth creation – boutique in size, big on trust, and committed to making wealth creation a reality for every Nigerian.

Prof. Edu Inam. . . Leading The Drive For Equitable Access To Research Infrastructure

From **Ayoyinka Jegede**, Uyo

A NEW PROJECT, Scaling a Research Equipment Database for Equitable Access in Nigeria, is seeking to transform how researchers access scientific equipment across the country. The question is simple: what is the benefit to Nigeria?

The project has significant national value because Nigeria has invested heavily in research equipment across universities, research institutes and polytechnics, but researchers often do not know what exists, where it is located, whether it is functional, who can access it or how to access it.

By making Nigeria's scientific equipment visible, accessible and shareable, the initiative seeks to transform scattered laboratory assets into a connected national research infrastructure – enabling more researchers to conduct better science, reducing duplication, strengthening collaboration and accelerating innovation.

It is not about creating a database. It is about equitable access, resource optimisation, research capacity, collaboration and ultimately national development.

Its 10 key benefits to Nigeria include: Maximising existing investments: Makes equipment already purchased with public and donor funds visible and usable and reduces duplication of expensive equipment.

Equitable access: Researchers from less-resourced institutions can identify and access equipment elsewhere, bridging the gap between better-resourced and less-resourced schools.

Lower research costs: Researchers can locate equipment within Nigeria rather than sending samples abroad or buying unnecessarily. Institutions can share facilities.

Strengthening research quality: Access to appropriate, functional and well-maintained equipment improves quality and reproducibility of research.

Supporting collaboration: Connects researchers, laboratories and institutions around shared facilities, facilitating multi-disciplinary and inter-institutional work.

Better investment decisions: Policymakers can see where critical equipment exists and where gaps remain, so future investments are evidence-based.

Improving maintenance and utilisation: Capturing functionality, maintenance status and utilisation helps identify underused or poorly maintained equipment and plan interventions.

Supporting postgraduate training: M.Sc and PhD students can access equipment not available in their home institutions, strengthening practical training.

Accelerating innovation and industry partnerships: Start-ups and industry can identify labs and specialised equipment for testing, prototyping and product development.

Building a national ecosystem: Moves Nigeria from individual institutional ownership towards a connected model of shared national research infrastructure.

How It Positions Nigeria Globally

FIRST, it changes the narrative. Nigerian and African science is often discussed in terms of what it lacks. A comprehensive equipment database shifts conversation to what capacity already exists, where it is located and how the world can connect to it.

Second, it demonstrates that Nigerian scientists can build infrastructure relevant to their country – an example of how a large country can use digital technology and collaboration to improve utilisation of existing assets.

Third, it helps Nigerians become contributors to global science. Better access means more sophisticated work locally, leading to stronger publications, patents, technologies and innovations from Nigeria. The objective is not simply making equipment visible but making Nigerian scientific capability visible.

Fourth, internationally, research is increasingly collaborative and networked. A platform that facilitates shared access positions Nigeria within this movement.

The ambition is summed up as "from isolated laboratories to a connected national research ecosystem," and ultimately, "from Nigeria being seen primarily as a consumer of scientific technology to being recognised as a contributor to global science, innovation and knowledge production."

About Schlumberger Foundation Faculty For The Future

THE Schlumberger Foundation's Faculty for the Future programme is a long-term investment in developing women scientists, strengthening Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) institutions and creating a pipeline of women leaders. It seeks to accelerate gender equality in STEM by reducing barriers women face, supporting women from low- and middle-income developing economies pursue doctoral and postdoctoral training in very prestigious institutions outside their home countries, with the expectation that they will return home to contribute through teaching, research, entrepreneurship and policy.

"For more than two decades, Faculty for the Future has invested in women scientists from developing countries. With more than 100 Nigerian women having benefited, this investment has helped build a generation of highly trained Nigerian women scientists and STEM leaders. The 2026 Impact Grant represents another dimension – supporting a Nigerian woman scientist to develop a system-level solution that can strengthen research infrastructure across the country," the Foundation noted.

Prof. Edu J. Inam: A Legacy Of Science, Service And Sustainability

PROF. Inam's journey began at the University of Uyo where she earned her Bachelor's and Master's degree in Analytical Chemistry, before earning a doctoral degree in Nuclear and Radiochemistry from Loughborough University,



Inam

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Swift Telephone Network:



From An Umbrella Call Centre To A Licensed Telecom Player

By **Adeyemi Adepetun**

IN 1998, under the shade of an umbrella in Lagos, a small call centre was born. It was a modest operation, set up to support the NUGA Games. Few could have imagined that this humble beginning would one day evolve into Swift Telephone Network (STN), a telecommunications company now officially licensed by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) to provide Unified Access Services.

The story of STN is one of resilience. Founded by the late Mrs. Clara Adetuyi, a lawyer, the company quickly distinguished itself by pioneering innovations. By 1999, STN introduced voicemail services at the University of Lagos. In 2003, it became the first provider of digital landline services in Yaba, ahead of larger operators. That same year, STN helped power WAEC Direct, a card-based platform that revolutionised how candidates checked their examination results.

STN's journey was not without turbulence. In 2010, after boardroom disputes and infrastructure setbacks, STN ceased operations. For many companies, that would have been the end. For STN, it was only a pause. STN breakthrough was made possible through a franchise agreement with Independent Telephone Network (ITN),

In 2017, Oluwole Adetuyi, son of the founder, revived the company with the support of Yetunde Okafor. Together, they rebuilt STN from the ground up, confronting expired licences, tax liabilities and regulatory hurdles. By 2019, STN's licence was reinstated, and operations resumed. Just as momentum returned, the COVID-19 pandemic struck, exposing vulnerabilities in its enterprise-focused model. Once again, STN faced a choice: stand still or transform. It chose transformation.

That decision led to the pursuit of the Unified Access Service Licence (UASL). After years of engagement and persistence, the licence has now been granted. For STN, this is not just a regulatory milestone; it is the culmination of decades of resilience, reinvention and ambition.

Choosing Independence

ALONG the line, there were discussions on the acquisition of ITN by Visafone and so the franchise agreement came to an end.

For STN, this created a defining choice. Rather than simply become part of the new structure, the company chose a more difficult path: independence. STN (trading as YOBOC&Co Ltd back then) pursued its own licensing from the NCC.

In 2005, after extensive engagement and fulfillment of the necessary requirements, STN was granted its own operational licences. A new name was conceived and it had to do a change of name on the licence, which was approved in 2008.

Even as the company moved towards independence, it remained committed to its customers. A new numbering prefix, 01343XXXX, was approved to enable existing customers to retain their lines with minimal disruption. It was an early indication of something that would remain part of STN's character – "when circumstances changed, STN adapted."

Major Setbacks

LIKE many businesses, STN's journey was not without challenges.

The company went through changes in its Board structure and ownership representation over the years. In 2009, it secured funding which created an opportunity for further expansion. But there were lots of issues among which were major infrastructure damage and loss, internal boardroom challenge, etc which hindered the company's progress. By November 2010, STN ceased operations.

For many companies, that might have been the end of the story. For STN, it was only a chapter. In 2018, regulatory issues involving outstanding tax liabilities and operating levies further complicated the company's revival. STN was required to confront its past before it could build its future.

The company settled its tax obligations covering 2010 to 2016 and commenced the process of renewing its licence. After fulfilling the necessary requirements and paying the applicable penalties, STN's licence was reinstated in 2019. By September of that year, operations had fully resumed. It was a significant moment.

STN had come back. Not because the journey had been easy, but because the people behind the company believed that its story was not over. Amid the struggle for balance, STN also had to contend, like every other business, with COVID-19 challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 exposed the vulnerabilities of a business model that was heavily dependent on enterprise customers. With lockdowns and reduced economic activity, demand for enterprise telephony declined sharply.

The Transformation

THE pandemic accelerated a strategic realisation: the future of telecommunications would require STN to think beyond its traditional enterprise telephony model. The company therefore began pursuing a broader telecommunications strategy, including mobile services.

This led to the pursuit of the UASL. The journey towards the UASL began with extensive planning, regulatory engagement and discussions with potential international investors and technology partners.

On February 22, 2022, STN formally submitted its application for the UASL, meeting the stipulated requirements.

What followed was another period of waiting, engagement and persistence. But STN had learnt something from its own history: progress does not always happen quickly. What matters is continuing to move forward. Today, the company has been granted its Unified Access Service Licence by the NCC.

What Is The UASL?

THE Unified Access Service Licence (UASL) is one of the most comprehensive licences issued by the Nigerian Communications Commission. Unlike limited or specialised licences, the UASL allows operators to provide a wide range of telecommunications services under a single regulatory umbrella. This includes mobile services, fixed telephony, internet services and other digital communications offerings. In essence, it gives a company the flexibility to evolve with technology and market demand without being restricted to one segment of the industry.

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From The Rector

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Odedeji Lauds Olusiji Kolawole's Virtues At 70th Birthday Outing

By Chris Irekamba

THE Bishop of Lagos West Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), The Rt. Rev'd James Odedeji has described the retiring Assisting Priest of All Saints' Anglican Church, Oshodi, Lagos, The Venerable OlusijiKolawole as an outstanding Nigerian, extremely humble servant of God and forthright.

The Bishop disclosed this in Oshodi on September 22, 2026 while delivering his sermon at the 70th Birthday Thanksgiving Service and Retirement in honour ofThe Venerable OlusijiKolawole, who statutorily turned 70, the mandatory retirement age for Priests and Bishops in the Anglican Communion.

The cleric who fondly calls the celebrant Brother Siji, said the retiring Priest and Venerable had been of tremendous help to the church right from the day he joined the Diocese of Lagos West.

He also described Venerable Kolawole, who is also a medical doctor by profession as diligent, cool, calm and collected individual. He noted that the celebrant had served in different capacities within the Diocese including All Saints' Anglican Church, Oshodi, as Assisting Priest, Lay Reader, and Vicar, attributing his admiration to the large number of people that attended the event including former Senator and former minister, Senator OlorunnimbeMamora, who led a team of medical doctors to the event.

"He was a staunch member of the Anglican Church of the Ascension where he received the call of God upon his life. We thank God for his life and the life of his wife, Dr. (Mrs) OlubukunolaKolawole, who could be regarded as Romeo and Juliet in their dispositions because they are always together," Odedeji said.

Recalling one experience he had when he took his own wife to Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo, Lagos, where she was having exam, the Bishop said, "I remember one particular occasion, that was 25 to 30 years ago, I drove my wife to LASU at Ojo, she was having an exam.

As I parked under the tree waiting for my wife, about 15 minutes later somebody, I don't want to mention names, who is retiring today, also drove in to take his wife and that was how we met at the LASU field, looking for our wives. Well committed servant of God and husband of one wife and the man that we all respected in all ramifications."

He noted that he would miss the celebrant like wise other members of the Church.



The Venerable Olusiji Kolawole and his wife, Dr. (Mrs) Olubukunola Kolawole (centre); flanked by Vicar/Archdeacon, The Venerable Kelvin Tope-Tapere (third right) and other priests during the 70th Birthday Thanksgiving Service and Retirement in honour ofThe Venerable Kolawole at All Saints' Anglican Church, Oshodi, Lagos on September 22, 2026

Foursquare Church Upgrades Pleasure Missionary District To Full-fledged District

By Isaac Taiwo

FOURSQUARE Gospel Church in Nigeria has upgraded Pleasure Missionary District of the Foursquare Gospel Church inIyanaIpaja, Lagos to a full-fledged District and formally declared Rev'd Charles Fashola as its substantive District Overseer.

Speaking during the first District Convocation and Anniversary of the Church, the General Overseer of the Church, Rev'd Sam Aboyeji, urged Christians to remain steadfast in their faith and always learn to appreciate God, despite the economic challenges confronting the country.

Aboyeji, represented at the event by the Axis Coordinator, Ikeja Axis, Rev'dAyomide Abraham ministered on "Power of Gratitude."

He urged members of the church to remain committed to God while prioritising the development of younger generations. He described the younger generation as critical to the future of the church.

Aboyeji, who described the development as a manifestation of God's faithfulness, expressed optimism that the new status would usher in greater growth and expansion for the district.

He said the District Church had met the requirement for elevation, adding that its membership rose from to 1,000 to 1,500, which is the stipulated benchmark.

Querying Your Husband Verbally

By Charles Ighele

WE were already over thirteen years in marriage and had completed having all our four biological children. There was a financial transaction that needed to go through a banking process. She called me on phone and I informed her about the financial transaction. My wife, Carol screamed with words like, "No. Why should you do something like that? I'm a banker with fourteen years banking experience."(She was a banker)

As she was about to angrily lecture me, I told her to be silent and listen to me. I said words like these, "Girlfriend listen to me. Stop issuing me verbal queries. I am your husband." She kept quiet and I started telling her that she should not dare query me again. I told her that she should correct me in love and not queries.

I concluded by telling her that no normal husband will like to be queried by the wife and that I will want our daughters to be loaded with this truth.

She apologised profusely and said, "It will never happen again." She told me that she loves me so much and that she will always honour me as her husband. I replied by telling her that if she were physically present I would have held her, kissed her and swung her around. We laughed and that was the end of the matter.

It was that day, I finally knew that there is this spirit of leadership in a normal man that will make him to resist when his wife is querying him. He can take a verbal or written query from his male boss in his place of work. He can take a verbal or written query from a female boss in his



Ighele

place of work, but he cannot take any form of query from his wife.

The reason is that Ephesian 5:23 says, "For the husband is the head of the wife." When a husband does not behave wisely like I did, what a wife should do (which my wife, Carol started doing) is to supply her husband with her higher level of wisdom in a respectful and loving manner just as she would do to her boss in the office who is about to take a foolish decision. If she has the temperament not to query her boss, then she should also cultivate the temperament not to query her husband.

I am not saying that husbands should query their wives.

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

Kolawole Warns Against Erosion Of Cultural Values, Identity In Nigeria

By Chris Irekamba

THE Dean of the Archbishop Vining Memorial Cathedral Church (AVMCC), Ikeja, Lagos, The Venerable Emmanuel Kolawole, has warned against the erosion of cultural values and identity in Nigeria while decrying young people's lack of interest in history.

He gave the warning while addressing the congregation at the Cathedral's 2026 National Harvest held last Sunday, at Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral, Ikeja. Lagos.

Providing biblical context for the event, theDean stated that everything done in the Anglican Church is rooted in Scripture. He added, however, that "just because a church practice is not explicitly written in the Bible does not mean it is unbiblical."

He made reference to Bible passages on Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Harvest, and the offering of first fruits.

Giving of first fruits, according to him, is both biblical and cultural.

He underscored the importance of names, cultural identity, and history, stating that no nation can prosper if it fails to take these elements seriously.

"Our names define our identity and reflect our faith. That is why, throughout Scripture, whenever God wanted to transform a person's destiny, He changed their name," he said.

He also emphasised the importance of historical awareness, warning that any nation lacking a sense of history will eventually collapse.

Citing Israel as an example, Kolawole said: "You may not like what Israel is doing, but you cannot deny that they have a deep sense of history. Israel acts as it does because its people remember where they came from. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated he would fight relentlessly for his people.



Chairperson, AVMCC Refurbishment Fund Raising Committee, Mrs Gladys Talabi (left); National Harvest Sub-committee Chairman, Mr Bosun Ogunmoyero; Dean of the Cathedral, The Venerable Emmanuel Kolawole; Vice Chancellor, Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo, Prof Ayodeji Badejo and President of the Host Society, Mr Ayo Alofe during the AVMCC's 2026 National Harvest at Archbishop Vining Memorial Church Cathedral, Ikeja...last Sunday

Created In Righteousness And Holiness

Text: Ephesians 4:24 (KJV) *"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."*

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



MAN was not created merely to exist, but to know God, walk with Him, please God, and reflect the character of God upon the earth. From the beginning, God's purpose was that humanity should live in fellowship with Him and display His righteousness and holiness. Sin, however, entered into the world and brought separation between man and his Creator. But thank God, through Jesus Christ, there is a way back to God, a way of restoration, a way of holiness, and a way of becoming what God originally intended us to be.

The Bible says, *"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."* This is not merely a call to change our appearance or improve our behaviour. It is a call to experience a transformation of life. God wants to make us new from within. Christianity is not simply attending church, carrying a Bible, singing hymns, or bearing a Christian name. Christianity is the life of Christ being manifested in a redeemed human vessel.

When a person comes to Christ, God does not call him to continue living the old life. He calls him into a new life. Second Corinthians 5:17 declares, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

There must be a difference between the life we lived before encountering Christ and the life we live after surrendering to Him. Salvation must produce transformation. Grace does not give us permission to continue in sin; grace teaches us to depart from sin.

Titus 2:11-12 says, *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."*

The question every believer must ask is: Am I becoming more like Christ?

God is concerned about the condition of the heart because what is inside eventually manifests outside. A corrupt heart will produce corrupt actions, while a heart surrendered to God will increasingly produce righteousness.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:8, *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."*

Holiness begins in the heart. Before the hand commits sin, the heart conceives it. Before the mouth speaks evil, the heart entertains it. Before the feet walk into wickedness, the heart has already approved it. Therefore, genuine holiness requires the cleansing of the inner man.

David understood this when he cried unto God in P**salm 51:10,** *"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."* That should be the prayer of every believer. *"Lord, create in me a clean heart." Not merely, "Lord, change my circumstances." Not merely, "Lord, bless me financially." Not merely, "Lord, open doors for me." But, "Lord, change me. Purify me. Make me holy. Make me pleasing unto You."*

God is more interested in who we are becoming than in what we possess.

There are people who desire God's blessings but do not desire God's holiness. They want God's hand upon their lives but do not want God's authority over their lives. They want heaven but do not want holiness. They want God's promises but resist God's commandments.

But the Scripture says in *Hebrews 12:14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."*

Holiness is not optional for the child of God. It is not an outdated doctrine. It is not a standard reserved for pastors, missionaries, or church leaders. Every person who claims to belong to Christ is called to live a holy life.

First Peter 1:15-16 says, "*But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."*

Notice the words: "Be ye holy." God has not called us to imitate the world. He has called us to reflect Him.

The world may celebrate what God condemns, but the child of God must learn to stand for what God approves. The world may call certain things normal, but our standard is not the culture; our standard is the Word of God.

Romans 12:2 says, *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

There must be a renewal of the mind. What we watch, what we listen to, what we read, the company we keep, and the things we continually meditate upon can influence our spiritual lives. We cannot continually feed the flesh and expect to produce the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16 says, *"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."*

The Christian life is a daily walk. Every day, we must choose righteousness. Every day, we must deny ungodliness. Every day, we must surrender ourselves to God.

Jesus said in Luke 9:23, *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."*

Holiness involves self-denial. It means saying no when the flesh says yes. It means walking away when temptation invites you to stay. It means refusing to participate in what dishonours God even when nobody is watching.

The greatest test of holiness is often what we do in secret.What kind of person are you when nobody is watching? What do you think about when you are alone? What do you watch when your phone is in your hand? What are the type of words that come out of your mouth when you are angry? How do you treat people who cannot benefit you? What happens in your heart when somebody else succeeds?

God sees it all.Numbers 32:23 warns us, *"Be sure your sin will find you out."*

There is no hiding place from God. Adam tried to hide after sinning, but God came looking for him. Jonah tried to flee from God's presence, but God knew where he was. David committed sin secretly, but God exposed it openly.

Psalm 139:7 says, *"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"*

Therefore, beloved, let us stop playing religious games. Let us stop pretending before men while our hearts are far from God. Let us return to genuine righteousness and holiness.

The good news is that God does not merely command holiness; He provides grace for holy living. You do not have to overcome sin by your own strength. Christ is able to transform your life.

Philippians 4:13 says, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*

If there is an area of your life that has enslaved you, bring it to Christ. If there is a secret sin, bring it to Christ. If there is an ungodly habit, bring it to Christ. If your heart has grown cold, bring it to Christ. He is still able to restore, cleanse, and transform.

First John 1:9 gives us this assurance: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

What a gracious God! He does not call us to holiness and abandon us. He calls us, cleanses us, strengthens us, and helps us walk in righteousness.

The world is passing away. Our opportunities are passing away. Our strength is passing away. One day, every one of us will stand before God.

Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."*

That day is coming.When you stand before God, your possessions will not save you. Your position will not save you. Your popularity will not save you. Your religious title will not save you. What will matter is whether you belong to Christ and whether your life has been surrendered to Him.Therefore, today, let your heart return to God.

If you have never surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, come to Him. If you have wandered away, return to Him. If sin has taken control, surrender it to Him. If your spiritual life has become cold, cry unto Him for restoration.

Let the prayer of your heart be: "Lord, create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me."

Testimony Of The Lord's Doing

'God Lifted Me Out Of Terrible Poverty'

MY name is Sister ChinazaNnadiogu. I reside in Togo and worship at the Togo headquarters. I thank God for making my family and l,members of The Lord's Chosen Charismatic Revival Ministries.

I have come to thank God for bringing my family and l out of shame, reproach and terrible poverty. The genesis of this terrible condition was the death of my father. When my father died, his family members chased my mother and her children away from the family.

We were six in number andhad nowhere to live.So, I went to live with one of my aunts. The other five were living with my mother in Lomeand were sleeping inan open stallsin a particular market there. What they do is that, after the owners must have closed and gone home, my mother and my siblings would go and occupy the shops.

Something happened when l was about nineteen to twenty years. That incident made me to leave my aunt's place and joined my mother with other siblings.We were living from one market to the other andI thank God, He preserved me and did not allow evil to befall me.

One day, l had a revelation where I saw people wearing apron.The man that was at their back called me and when l went to him, he said, "you are blessed," I said amen and suddenly, woke up from the dream. After about two weeks of this dream, I met a man who asked my hands in marriage and when l asked the man to take me to his church. The man took me to his church and it was The Lord's Chosen Church, and today, we are living as husband and wife. Praise the Lord!

As soon as l joined this great movement, l began to present the condition of my family to God. Formerly, we were objects of mockery in our village and family because we had no house, to lay our heads. But as I joined The Lord's Chosen, God of Chosen turned our captivity around and today, my mother and siblings have a comfortable house to stay.

In another development, when my husband was about to pay my dowry, he did the first things he was asked to do and after that my family members gave him list.As soon as he came to prepare himself for the main dowry, his business closed down. There was nothing coming in again. In the process, our branch pastor fixed a programme, titled: "That Pharaoh Must Die."

Truly, after we attended the programme, the Pharaoh hindering my husband's business, died and my husband went and did the needful on my head and today, we are happily married to the glory of God. ***Praise the Lord!***



Sister Ogechi Emeka with her twin girls testifying how God cancelled the problem of having one female child in her lineage at The Lord's Chosen Charismatic Revival Ministries in Ijesha, Lagos.

Springs Of Wisdom

By Pastor W. F. Kumuyi



Heaven And Its Holy Inhabitants (1)

HEAVEN is the dwelling place of God, saints and the holy angels. It is the "paradise" where Christ promised to take the repentant thief on the cross. Christ went to heaven after the completion of His earthly ministry. Angels confirmed to His disciples that He ascended "into heaven" (Acts 1:11). As Stephen was being stoned to death, he "looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God" (Acts 7:55). Apostle Paul was taken to the third heavens where he saw and heard things he could not utter. The book of Revelation was also revealed to Apostle John from heaven.

The subject of heaven and its holy, eternal inhabitants are essential to everyone on earth, especially the Christian. The Lord calls us into the Kingdom to journey on until we reach heaven, our glorious home. Our knowledge of heaven should make us prepare to inhabit it. The Lord Himself has promised, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

No one could ever know or tell what happens at the end of life or the destinations of saints and sinners without revelation. And God has given us the indisputable revelation of the glory of heaven through Jesus Christ.

The revelation of the glory of heaven is indisputable. Any dispute of its reality amounts to arguing with God. Saved, sanctified, righteous and prepared for glory, Stephen saw "the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Every believer has to be diligent in their preparation for heaven by having genuine pardon, purity and partnership with God;"that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

The revelation of the glory of heaven is indescribable. Whatever we know about heaven now may appear tremendous but when we get there, we will eventually know that a fraction of its glory was not told. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." All the knowledge we have about heaven is what God wants us to know at this time and that is what our nature and humanness can grasp.

The path that leads to heaven is the way of righteousness. To get there, purity of life is indispensable. You must have "clean hands, and a pure heart" and deliberately dissociate yourself from anything that will hinder you from standing in "[God's] holy place." There must be an increase in your love, commitment and passion for holiness, as well as devotion to and pursuit of God. This is "the righteousness of saints," which God demands and not the righteousness of the Pharisees.

Believers, who are on their way to heaven, will encounter persecution, trial, opposition and difficulty. However, they must not relent for the sake of heaven. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

• *Further Reading (KJV): Revelation 21:1-7; Revelation 21:1-3; Acts 7:55,56; 2 Peter 3:13,14; Revelation 21:1-5; 1 Corinthians 13:9,10,12; 2:9,10; Matthew 5:6-8,10; Psalm 24:3,4; Revelation 19:7,8.*

Stop Talking And Listen (5)

God speaks through the Holy Scriptures (cont)

Biblical Womanhood

By Emeritus Prof. Mercy Olumide



THE Word of God is not simply a collection of words from God, a vehicle for communicating ideas; it is living, life-changing and dynamic as it works in us. With the incisiveness of a surgeon's knife, God's Word reveals who we are and what we are not. It penetrates the core of our moral and spiritual life. It discerns what is within us, both good and evil. The demands of God's Word require decisions. We must not only listen to the Word; we must also let it shape our lives.

• God has spoken to us by His Son

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds" (Heb 1:1-2)

"spoken to us by His Son." These verses establish a major theme of this epistle: in the pastGod's revelation and prophetic Word came literally "in various ways" (v.1), the sum total ofwhich is our Old Testament (O.T). Yet all this "did not add up to thefullness of what God had to say." Butnow God has spoken or revealed Himself to us byHis Son Jesus Christ in a full and complete way.Because Christ is supreme over all things, God'sWord through Him is full, final, complete andtranscends all previous words by God. Absolutely nothing, neither prophets (v.1), angels (v.4) nor Moses (3:2-6) has equal authority with God's Son.He is the only source of eternal salvation and theonly mediator between God and humankind. Theauthor confirms Christ's supremacy by listing seven great revelations about Him as God the Son(vv.2-3).

God used many approaches to send his messages to people in Old Testament times. He spoke to Isaiah in visions (Isaiah 6), to Jacob in a dream (Genesis 28:10-22), and to Abraham and Moses personally (Genesis 18: Exodus 31:18). For Jewish people familiar with these stories it was astonishing for them to think that God had revealed himself by speaking through his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the fulfillment and culmination of God's revelation through the centuries. When we know him, we have all we need to be saved from our sin and to have a perfect relationship with God.

• The principal way God currently speaks to us is through the Holy Bible

One of the special ministries of the Holy Spirit is to make God's written Word 'living and active" and "sharper than any double-edged sword."

In an amazing way God is able to 'quicken' a verse or passage of Scripture to us so that though the Scripture is a written text it also becomes a living message.

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RESTORATION HOUR

Text: 2 Corinthians 6: 1-2

Maximising God's Grace (9)

By Abel Ukachi Amadi

Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 6:1, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." (KJV)

IF you look around the landscape of modern, 21st century Christianity, you will see a fascinating paradox. We have more access to the gospel than any generation in human history. We can stream sermons on demand, download dozens of Bible translations on our phones, and listen to worship music twenty-four hours a day. Grace is the central buzzword of our modern theology. We sing about it, print it on t-shirts, and caption our photos with it. Yet, despite this unprecedented access to divine grace, the modern church often struggles with an agonising lack of spiritual power, moral clarity, and authentic discipleship. We see fractured relationships, rampant compromise, and a culture that looks at the church and sees no difference between the local assembly and the secular world.

Why is there such a massive gap between the grace we proclaim and the lives we live? The Apostle Paul diagnoses this exact spiritual disease in his second letter to the Corinthians. Writing to a church that was highly gifted, culturally relevant, yet deeply compromised, he delivers a staggering warning in 2 Corinthians 6:1: "As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain." To receive something "in vain" (eiskenon) means to receive it so that it yields no profit, produces no effect, and results in nothing. Paul is presenting us with a terrifying possibility: It is possible to accept the grace of God, but live in such a way that it becomes entirely fruitless in your life.

In today's Christian culture, we have a bad habit of treating grace like a cosmic insurance policy rather than a transforming power. We want a Saviour who forgives our past, secures our future in heaven, but leaves our present completely undisturbed. The famous theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer called this "cheap grace." He defined it as the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, and communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Paul reminds us that grace is not a license to stay the same; but the divine enablement to change. If your grace hasn't changed your lifestyle, it isn't God's grace you received, but a counterfeit.



Notice how Paul positions himself and the believers: "As God's co-workers..." This blows apart the modern idea of passive Christianity. Yes, salvation is entirely by grace through faith; you cannot earn your way to heaven, while we are not saved by works. We are saved for good works. Sanctification and growing to look like Jesus Christ is a cooperative effort. God provides the supernatural power (grace), but we must provide the cooperation (faith and obedience). God provides the grace to forgive, but you must choose to release the bitterness. God provides the grace to overcome addiction, but you must take the radical steps to cut off the temptation. God provides the grace for unity, but you must humble yourself to reconcile with your brother or sister.

• Today's Nugget: Grace is not a cheap commodity.Prayer: I am empowered by grace to live a victorious Christian life. Prayer lines: 08033299824. Email: amadiabelukachi@gmail.com. Rev. Abel UkachiAmadi, General Superintendent, Assemblies of God Nigeria.

Religious Leaders Call For National Repentance, Moral Rebirth, Divine Intervention

By Adelowo Adebumiti

WORRIED by the unresolved Nigeria's economic challenges,the religious leaders have called for national repentance, moral rebirth, and divine intervention, lamenting that successive governments had consistently failed to resolve the country's socio-economic challenges.

Rising from a national prayer meeting held recently in Lagos, and organised by the Ministers of God Prayer Network International, the clerics attributed Nigeria's persistent struggles to what they described as a fundamentally "faulty foundation."

Speaking on the theme: "God's Hands Are Healing the Nation," the convener, Bishop Bola Oyegbami, identified ways of overcoming the challenges.

According to her, Nigeria's obstacles would require a twin-track approach of combining spiritual reflection with direct personal accountability from every citizen.

Oyegbami said: "The foundation is afflicting the land, the people, and those governing it." She emphasised that political leaders alone cannot turn the nation around and urged every Nigerian to come together and do his or her part.

Shenoted a widespread ethical decay across everyday society, ranging from extortion in public offices to artificial price inflation by market traders, as evidence that corruption is not confined to government officials.

Citing 2 Chronicles 7:14, Oyegbamiurged Nigerians to humble themselves and seek spiritual renewal to heal the nation.

She further noted that fixing the structural and moral defects could improve living conditions at home, while creating an environment capable of attracting skilled Nigerians in the Diaspora to contribute to national growth.

On his own part, Ikeja Coordinator, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Evangelist RotimiAjayi, said that political solutions over the decades proved insufficient because they failed to tackle the root cause of the nation's crisis, which specifically is the collapse in public and private morality.

Ajayi challenged faith institutions to take a harder look at their own practices, urging churches and religious bodies to stop celebrating unexplained wealth,instead return to preaching integrity, righteousness, and transparency.

"We need the fear of God," Ajayi stated, noting that public office holders who divert shared resources for personal gain demonstrate a complete lack of moral foundation.

He called on the body of Christ to go back to the old path and ensure that they preach the gospel, fear of God, and God's mind.

According to him, that will build up the nation.

TheGuardian
Conscience, Nurtured by Truth

SPECIAL REPORT ON VISIONARY BUSINESS LEADER RESHAPING NIGERIA'S REAL ESTATE LANDSCAPE

FROM ONE BRAND TO A CONGLOMERATE: Inside GIDI Africa Group's Decade Of Growth Ajewole Tobi Akerele, Group Chief Executive Officer, Gidi Africa Group

For Ajewole Tobi Akerele, Group Chief Executive Officer of GIDI Africa Group, leadership is defined by service and impact. As head of the parent conglomerate housing Gidi Company Limited, formerly Gidi Real Estate Investment Limited, alongside Gidi Civil Construction, Airweys and Chase Real Estate, Akerele has spent more than a decade navigating Nigeria's real estate landscape.

What began as a single real estate brand has evolved into an integrated group with interests spanning property development, construction, travel and luxury advisory services.

Akerele says the philosophy behind the growth is rooted in family culture and impact. The company was built on the conviction that ordinary Nigerians deserve affordable, quality housing delivered with integrity, transparency, speed and sustainability. He describes his leadership style as that of a "chief servant", insisting that every client's home purchase should receive the same seriousness as a family member's.

This culture of accountability, extending from land acquisition and construction to sales and after-sales management, has helped GIDI scale from a single real estate brand into a four-company conglomerate while retaining the personal touch that built its reputation.

In this Special Report, Akerele discusses the milestones recorded by GIDI, the challenges confronting Nigeria's property market and the group's plans for the future.



AJEWOLE TOBI AKERELE, Group Chief Executive Officer, Gidi Africa Group

What key market gaps informed GIDI's strategy and positioning?

WHEN we started, the clearest gap in Nigeria's real estate market was trust. Many Nigerians had experienced fraud involving omo-onile disputes, unverified titles or developers who disappeared after collecting deposits.

The second gap was affordability. Many "luxury" developments in Lagos priced out the middle class that drives the economy. The third was fragmentation. Buyers often had to coordinate separately with land agents, builders, lawyers and facility managers, without a single party accountable for the entire process.

These gaps shaped both our strategy and structure. We positioned GIDI around verified titles, including Certificate of Occupancy-backed developments, flexible payment plans and a mix of affordable and premium products serving first-time buyers and investors.

Structurally, this led to the evolution from a single real estate company into GIDI Africa Group, bringing construction through Gidi Civil and other services under one umbrella. The objective is simple: a client should not have to manage multiple relationships to secure one home.

How has GIDI contributed to addressing Nigeria's 22-million-unit housing deficit?

Nigeria's housing deficit, estimated at about 22 million units, is a national emergency. We have addressed it through geography and price point, with developments across parts of the South-West, South-East and South-South.

Rather than concentrating only on expensive locations in Lagos, we have spread our portfolio across the Lekki-Ajah axis, including Abraham Adesanya and Ogombo Road; the emerging Epe corridor; and Mowe/Ogun State along the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, where land and construction costs allow more accessible pricing. We also have projects in Aba, Abia State, and Asaba, Delta State.

Our priority demographics include young professionals, first-time homeowners and investors in the 80-150 million bracket, diaspora Nigerians seeking secure investments back home, and growing families priced out of central Lagos.

By developing in growth corridors ahead of major infrastructure, we can provide more accessible entry points while maintaining credible, title-backed security.

Which projects best represent GIDI's commitment to innovation, affordability and quality?

I would highlight The Palms Residence franchise, Civic Residence and Mowe Golf Town, each representing a different stage in our evolution.

The Palms Residence proved that we could move from concept to delivery without compromising promised quality. Introduced in 2024, it was designed as a community combining contemporary living, sustainability, greenery, privacy and functionality rather than simply putting houses on land. We delivered it in 11 months, and that demonstrated that innovation must be matched by execution. The same philosophy drives The Palms Residence II.

Civic Residence represents another dimension by widening access to organised housing. It was conceived as a sustainable community providing realistic pathways from aspiring homeowners to actual homeowners. Its first phase was delivered in just over 12 months.

Mowe Golf Town demonstrates the scale of our community-development vision. Located along the Lagos-Ibadan growth corridor, it integrates housing with recreation, hospitality, tourism, commercial activity, green spaces and a golf-centred lifestyle ecosystem.

The projects differ in scale and positioning, but the principle remains consistent: quality is about delivery, affordability is about creating realistic pathways to ownership, and innovation is about designing around how people actually live and interact with their communities.

How is GIDI responding to inflation and rising construction costs?

Housing affordability cannot be separated from the wider economy. Land, building materials, infrastructure, logistics and finance all determine the cost of housing.

At GIDI, we have approached affordability in several ways. First is payment flexibility. Since mortgage access remains challenging, we structure payments around market realities for qualified buyers and explore mortgage partnerships where appropriate.

Second is where and how we develop. We deliberately operate in emerging corridors such as Ajah, Epe and Mowe, where people can enter the market earlier as infrastructure and commercial activity expand.

Third is vertical integration. Having Gidi Civil Construction within the group gives us greater control over planning, procurement, quality and execution, helping us manage wastage, timelines and avoidable cost escalation.

Affordability also begins at product development. Not every buyer needs the same house size or level of finishing. Developers must design around actual demand and purchasing capacity.

However, private developers cannot solve the housing challenge alone. Nigeria needs cheaper and longer-tenured development capital, a deeper mortgage market, improved land administration, infrastructure, more efficient approvals and stronger collaboration among government, developers and financial institutions.

What has GIDI contributed to jobs, GDP and urban development?

Real estate contributed approximately 22.14 trillion to Nigeria's GDP in 2024. Across our subsidiaries, GIDI Africa Group directly and indirectly supports a large workforce of construction workers, engineers, sales and marketing professionals, while also creating opportunities for independent realtors who earn commissions selling our developments in Nigeria and increasingly to the diaspora.

Our master-planned communities, particularly Mowe Golf Town and projects along the Epe corridor, are also designed to provide viable alternatives to increasingly congested parts of Lagos by creating organised communities along major growth and transport corridors.

We also contribute to industry development through the GIDI Intra-Africa Real Estate Conference (GIDI IARC). Now in its fourth edition and scheduled to hold in Cairo, the conference brings policymakers, financial institutions, proptech innovators, construction companies, realtors and developers together to share knowledge, standards and opportunities while expanding African-led real estate investment beyond Nigeria.

What is GIDI's five-year outlook?

The next five years are about scale and integration. Nigerians and investors should expect further phases of Mowe Golf Town, more innovative developments, social housing, and new commercial and retail projects, including Gidi Mall.

We are also expanding GIDI IARC into additional African markets, building on editions in The Gambia, South Africa and Kenya. This forms part of our strategy to extend the GIDI brand beyond Nigeria and position the group as a Pan-African real estate and construction force.

What is your message to investors, homebuyers and stakeholders?

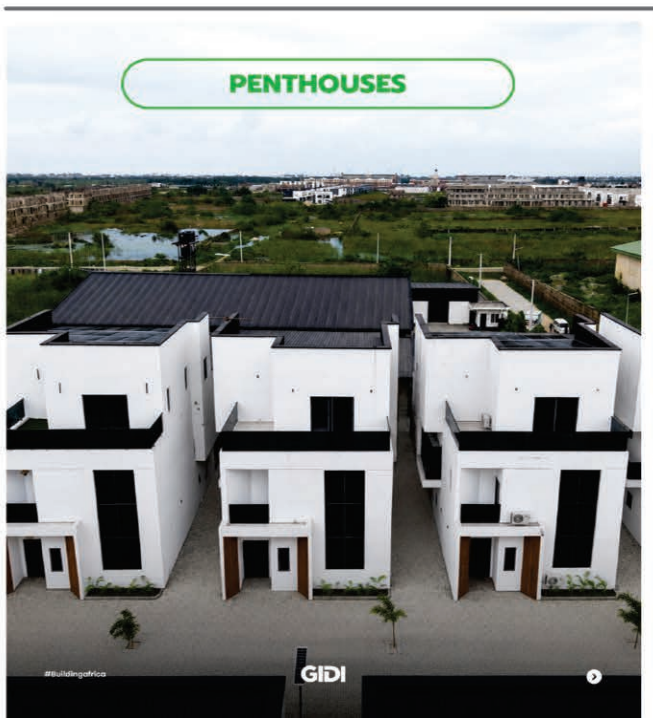
First, I want to say thank you. Real estate is fundamentally a business of trust. People commit years of savings and lifetime resources, not simply to buy land or buildings. I understand the weight of that responsibility.

We built GIDI around transparency, reliability, trust and quality service, and those principles remain central as we grow. But trust must continually be earned. To our homebuyers, we will keep improving the quality of what we build and the ownership experience. To investors, we will continue developing assets and communities around sound economic fundamentals rather than short-term hype. To our partners, realtors, employees, regulators and financial institutions, we will remain accountable to the relationships that made our growth possible.

We are evolving from a conventional real estate business into a broader development company. That brings greater responsibility to strengthen governance, deepen capacity and improve execution. I call myself the Chief Servant because leadership means accepting responsibility for those who have entrusted you.

Our promise for the next phase is not perfection, but accountability: to keep learning, improving and building. We want the GIDI name to be measured by the communities we create, the opportunities we enable, the trust we preserve and our contribution to a stronger Africa.

For us, this is still only the beginning.







Guardian Fashion
STYLE ELEGANCE LIFESTYLE

Indigenous Fabrics, Cutting Edge Across Fashion Scenes

By **Suliyat Tella**

ASO-OKE, Akwete, Adire and other indigenous fabrics have been familiar to Nigerians for generations as strictly traditional fabrics made for special occasions such as weddings, naming ceremonies, festivals and others. However, Nigerian designers are now showing that these fabrics can do more than dress people for core traditional ceremonies.

Across the fashion scene, designers are putting them into regular dresses for women, menswear, tailored pieces, and experimenting with colour, structure and silhouettes.

This creative innovation makes the fabrics remain recognisable, but the clothes look very different from the styles many Nigerians grew up seeing.

Fruche

Fruché brings together Akwete and Aso-Oke, using the handwoven textiles in contemporary pieces rather than keeping them within traditional silhouettes. The combination allows the different textures and patterns of the fabrics to become part of the design itself, creating looks that feel distinctly Nigerian without being conventional.

Hertunba

Hertunba takes handwoven Aso-Oke into more structured territory. In one look, the striped textile becomes a fitted, strapless column dress, allowing the weave and changing bands of colour to carry the design. In another, Aso-Oke is cut into graphic shapes and applied to a flowing dress, turning the fabric into part of the artwork.

Bhuvwoman

Bhuvwoman shows the versatility of indigenous textiles across different silhouettes. Her Adire look puts the fabric into a fitted blazer and wide-leg trousers, giving the traditionally dyed textile a tailored finish. In another look, Aso-Oke is shaped into a fitted top and fringed skirt, with the lilac colour and playful proportions giving the handwoven fabric a distinctly contemporary feel.

Haijaar

Haijaar brings the colour and intricate patterns of Akwete into contemporary dressing, combining different woven motifs across its pieces. The result is vibrant and distinctly textured while the modern cuts keep the handwoven fabric from feeling confined to traditional occasion wear.

Juoby & Co.

Juoby & Co. works with Adire in a lightweight, flowing silhouette. The patterned textile is shaped into a halter-neck dress, allowing its distinctive motifs to stand out without relying on a traditional cut. The result is a softer interpretation of Adire that fits easily into contemporary dressing.

Kenneth Ize

Kenneth Ize brings indigenous handwoven textiles into menswear, with tailoring that gives the fabric a sharper edge. This look pairs a colourful, striped woven waistcoat with crisp white trousers. The contrast keeps the outfit modern while allowing the texture and pattern of the textile to remain the focal point.

Emmy Kasbit

For Emmy Kasbit, Akwete takes centre stage in menswear. The handwoven textile is used for a relaxed sleeveless top and matching trouser with the rich teal colour giving the traditional fabric a fresh expression. The loose silhouette also moves the textile away from the more formal styles in which indigenous fabrics are often seen.

These interpretations show that the future of indigenous fabrics does not necessarily mean changing the fabrics themselves. Sometimes, it is simply about changing what we do with them.















Nigerian 'Jollof Rice' On Sunday Buffet Table

By **Moyosore Salami**

JOLLOF RICE is that one delicacy that does not need an introduction in Nigeria. No amount of seafood or continental cuisine is likely to remove jollof from its place on a Nigerian buffet table.

This is why on a Sunday afternoon in Nigeria where good food could be said to be the order of the day, Jollof rice takes the lead on the menu.

Traditionally, after religious activities which commences between the morning time and early noon, the next destination for many families is home, where lunch which is mostly jollof rice will be made available.

However, in recent years, some people are choosing to spend those hours differently, sitting around a restaurant table with plates of food in front of them while music plays in the background and there is no immediate need to hurry home.

The brunch buffet has become part of that experience. Instead of ordering one meal from a menu, diners pay a fixed amount and get access to a spread of dishes for a specified period. Depending on the restaurant, the package may come with drinks, music, a DJ or other entertainment, making the meal as much a social outing as it is an opportunity to eat. Unlike a regular restaurant visit, where the decision about what to eat is usually made before the food arrives, the buffet leaves that decision open. Diners can look at the spread, decide what catches their attention and return for something else later. Families with different tastes can also eat from the same table without having to agree on one meal.

This flexibility is part of the attraction. Families can spend a few more hours together after church, friends can catch up over several plates, while couples can turn Sunday lunch into a date, birthdays, casual meet-ups and small celebrations can also become occasions to sit around a table for longer than an ordinary restaurant meal would allow.

Uncontended Jollof Rice

In Nigeria, it is difficult to imagine a large food spread without jollof rice making a strong appearance, and there is nothing wrong with going back for them. The difference is that the rice does not have to become the entire meal.

Small chops can be just as deceptive. Samosa, spring rolls, puff-puff and other finger foods are easy to pick up while moving around the buffet. A few pieces can quickly become several, however, leaving less room for the main dishes and desserts waiting at the end.

The Dining Spread

A quick look around the entire buffet spread before picking up a plate can change the experience. There may be fruits, salads, soups, grilled meats, seafood, pasta, pastries and desserts sitting alongside the familiar Nigerian dishes. A buffet offers an unusual opportunity to taste something without having to commit to ordering an entire portion from a menu.

A buffet may move from jollof rice and fried rice to grilled meats, salads, pastries and other dishes that would rarely appear on the same dining table at home. Moving between them becomes part of the experience.

The length of the buffet is another part of what makes it different from an ordinary meal. A restaurant lunch usually follows a simple pattern: order, eat and leave. A buffet that runs for several hours gives diners room to pause, talk and return to the food. The meal does not have to be a race from the first plate to the last.

The setting can also determine how the experience feels. Music, outdoor seating, themed decorations, live performances or a DJ can turn a buffet from a meal into a fuller leisure experience. People may arrive because they have heard about the food, but the atmosphere can determine whether the afternoon becomes somewhere they would want to return to.

These restaurants and hotels promote Sunday buffets that start from 12pm to 5pm, with different delicacies giving diners options beyond the traditional lunch at home. Menus, prices and schedules can change, so anyone planning a visit needs to confirm the current package directly with the venue rather than relying on an old social media post or recommendation.

Valentine Ezeagu, who recently shared her experience of a Sunday buffet at a buffet restaurant in Ibadan said what stood out for her was the abundance of food and the fact that the spread kept being replenished.

According to her post, diners did not have to worry about arriving late to a particular dish or finding that their favourite food had run out, as the restaurant continued to refill the buffet while people ate.

Beyond the main buffet, Valentine also explored the hotel's sweet corner, where she tried gelato and boba tea. She described both positively and noted that the gelato spot operates daily except Mondays. The experience, for her, was not simply about having access to a large quantity of food, but also about being able to move beyond the main dishes and try other things available at the venue.

Buffet Takeaway Policy

Takeaway is another detail worth checking. A diner who has eaten enough but still sees food remaining may naturally wonder whether it can be packed for later. Buffet rules differ from one restaurant to another, and paying a fixed amount does not automatically mean food can be taken away.

Brunch Buffet

A brunch buffet gives people a reason to gather and stay. One person can choose Nigerian dishes, another can try seafood and grilled meat, while someone else can make a meal out of pastries and dessert. Nobody has to settle for a single menu choice.

That flexibility can be particularly useful for families. Children may want something different from their parents, while older members of the family may prefer familiar local dishes. Everyone can make those choices from the same spread, without turning the meal into a negotiation over what should be ordered.

Ibijoke Adegoke said the attraction of a buffet goes beyond the food itself. She enjoys going to buffets with her family because the experience gives them an opportunity to spend time together and bond outside the routine of eating at home. Sitting around the same table allows everyone to enjoy the outing while choosing what they want from the variety available.

She also enjoys the freedom that comes with having several dishes to choose from. Rather than paying for one meal and being limited to that choice, she can sample different foods because the buffet gives her access to the entire spread. Members of the same family can therefore have completely different meals while sharing the same experience.

That variety, she said, is part of what makes the buffet worthwhile. It takes away some of the restrictions of an ordinary restaurant meal and allows the family to explore food together. The meal becomes less about deciding what everyone should order and more about giving each person the freedom to choose, taste and return for what they enjoy.

Friends can also use the experience as an excuse to finally meet after busy weeks. The food becomes one part of the outing, while the conversation around the table can continue long after the first plates have been cleared. Couples can similarly turn the afternoon into a date, moving between dishes, taking photographs, listening to music and enjoying the slower pace of a Sunday.

This helps explain why brunch has become more than a meal for some young Nigerians. Eating out can now be about celebrating an occasion, meeting friends, taking photographs, discovering a restaurant or simply spending a Sunday somewhere different. The food remains important, but the experience around it has become part of what people are paying for.

Jollof Rice At The Centre Of It All

Even with all the buffet variety, the familiar Nigerian relationship with Jollof rice remains at the centre of it. The sight of jollof rice can still draw someone back after several rounds of other dishes.

Perhaps the better approach is simply to let the buffet be more than one plate of jollof rice.

The Sunday Dining Change

The change is subtle but noticeable for people accustomed to Sunday lunch at home. Instead of spending the afternoon around a dining table with one pot of food, a family can move through a variety of dishes, talk without rushing and allow someone else to handle the cooking and washing up.

In that sense, the brunch buffet is not only changing what people eat on Sundays; it is changing how the meal is experienced. Food remains at the centre, but around it are conversations, music, family time, friendship, dates and the pleasure of having several hours in which there is nowhere else to rush to.



St. Gregory's Old Boys Honours Oniru, Cardoso, Disu, Others With Lifetime Achievement Awards

By **Gbenga Salau**

THE St. Gregory's College Old Boys Association has honoured some of its alumni with Lifetime Achievement Awards in recognition of their outstanding contributions to leadership, excellence and service.

The awards were presented at a grand gathering in Lagos, celebrating the achievements and enduring legacy of distinguished old boys.

Among those honoured were His Royal Majesty, the Oniru of Iruland, Oba Abdulwasiu Omogbolahan Lawal, Abisogun II, a member of the 1982–1987 set. The Oniru, who has continued to distinguish himself, expressed appreciation to the St. Gregory's College family and the Old Boys Association for the recognition.

Also honoured were Dr. Olayemi Michael Cardoso, Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, and Inspector-General of Police, IGP Olatunji Rilwan Disu, whose recognition highlighted their respective contributions to public service and national development.

Disu, who completed his secondary education at St. Gregory's College in 1985, was recognised for a career spanning more than two decades in the Nigeria Police Force.



Other distinguished awardees included HRM Oba Mobadenle Obalade Oyekan, the Onilado of Ilado; HRM Oba Abdulsemiu Orimadegun Kasali, the Adegboruwa of Igbogbo; Chief Anthony Asuquo Ani, CON; Prince Francis Oluwole Ademola Awogboro (VQB); Dr Abimbola Ogunkelu; Sir Steve Omojafor; Dr Charles Hammond; Hon. Justice Olabode Rhodes-Vivour, CFR; Dr John Abebe, Emeritus President; Ms. Bennedikter China Molokai; Prof. Nelson Oyesiku; Adetunji Adetokunbo Oyebanji; Mr Philip Chukwuemeka Ikeazor; Tijani Babatunde Folawiyo; Mr Ayodele Hamzat Subair, Executive Chairman of the Lagos State Internal Revenue Service; Segun Julius Agbaje; Prince Abimbola Olashore; Mr Agoro Shuaheeb Olabode, Head of Service, Lagos State; Rev. Dr Sola Idowu; and Professor Wale Sulaiman.

The recognition underscored the enduring influence of St. Gregory's College in producing men who have gone on to make significant contributions across public service, traditional institutions, business, law, medicine, finance, security, academia and other spheres of national life.

For the Oniru, the honour carried particular significance as a recognition from an institution that played an important role in shaping his formative years. His appreciation of the values of discipline, responsibility, excellence and service instilled at St. Gregory's reflects the enduring bond between the College and its Old Boys.

The ceremony also provided an opportunity for members of the St. Gregory's College family to celebrate the achievements of its distinguished alumni while reaffirming the institution's long-standing tradition of nurturing men committed to excellence and service.

Nigerian Architect, Wusu Earns Doctorate From University Of Hertfordshire

By **Moyosore Salami**

NIGERIAN architect, researcher and built-environment professional, Dr Ebenezer Godoyon Wusu, has been awarded a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) by the Hertfordshire Business School, University of Hertfordshire, United Kingdom.

Wusu's doctoral research, titled "An Artificial Intelligence Approach to Establishing Critical Factors Influencing Offsite Construction Adoption in the United Kingdom," explored how artificial intelligence and machine-learning techniques can support decision-making and accelerate innovation in the construction industry.

A graduate of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology and holder of a Master of Environmental Design in Architecture from the University of Lagos, Wusu combines academic excellence with extensive professional experience.

In 2017, he emerged the Overall Best Candidate in the Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA) Professional Practice Examination, a prestigious recognition of his professional competence and leadership potential.

Over the course of his career, he has been directly involved in nearly 1,000 construction projects, including notable developments such as Greystone Tower, Victoria Island, Landmark Towers, Oniru, the former Access Bank Head Office, Lagos, and the Nigerian Army Home Ownership Scheme, Abuja.

Beyond practice, Wusu has established a growing international research profile with 20 academic publications, including journal articles, conference papers and his doctoral thesis. He has also contributed to the successful delivery of funded projects worth over £2 million and US$2.1 million, while receiving invitations to speak at conferences, seminars and workshops around the world.

Colleagues, families and well-wishers have described his achievement as a testament to dedication, resilience and innovation, noting his ability to bridge architecture, sustainability and emerging technologies for the advancement of the construction industry.

As he celebrates this significant milestone, Wusu's accomplishment stands as an inspiration to aspiring architects, researchers and professionals across Nigeria and beyond.

Zulum Bags Pan-African Leadership Award

From **Njadvara Musa, Maiduguri**

BORNO State Governor, Babagana Zulum, has been named the 2026 recipient of the Pan-African Leadership Award (PALA) in Canada.

Zulum, currently in New York for the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 81), is part of the Nigerian delegation that accompanied the Vice President, Senator Kashim Shettima, who led Nigeria's team to summit.

Before proceeding to the United States, the governor held a series of high-level strategic engagements in Canada, where he signed a Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of Borno State government with the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) on technical education, workforce development and skills transfer among other areas designed to strengthen the human capital base driving Borno's post-insurgency recovery.

The Special Adviser to the Governor on Media, Dauda Iliya, in a statement, said: "Zulum's nomination was conveyed in a letter from the Executive Director of the African Writers Endowment (AWE), the New Jersey-based nonprofit organisation, Dr Ugorji O. Ugorji, who said Zulum was selected in recognition of his "remarkable accomplishments as an scholar and administrator," alongside his distinguished tenure as Governor of Borno State, particularly for stemming the tide of insecurity and significantly reshaping the infrastructural landscape of the state."

He said the award was presented at the "Quintessence Ball: A Celebration of African People in World History," which brings together African people from Africa, North America, and the Caribbean.

EVA Professionals Appoints Olumide Akinpelumi Managing Partner

By **Suliyat Tella**

EVA Professionals has appointed Olumide Akinpelumi as its Managing Partner, a move aimed at strengthening the firm's leadership and expanding its capacity to support clients navigate increasingly complex tax, regulatory and global trade environments.

The firm said Akinpelumi brings more than a decade of experience spanning tax consultancy, regulatory compliance, global trade and professional advisory, with a career that has seen him provide technical and strategic advisory services to clients across the public and private sectors, including multinational companies.

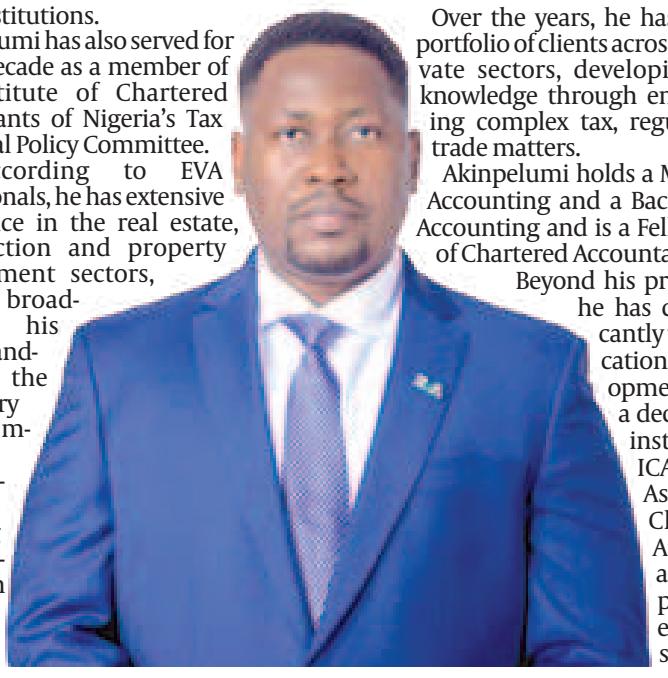
Before his appointment, Akinpelumi served as a Director in the Indirect Tax and Global Trade sub-service line of one of the Big Four accounting firms in Nigeria, where he provided indirect tax compliance, indirect tax advisory and global trade advisory services across multiple sectors.

The firm noted that his experience extends beyond private-sector advisory, having supported the Federal Government of Nigeria on various tax implementation initiatives, including matters relating to the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

It added that the experience has equipped him with a strong understanding of Nigeria's evolving tax, customs and trade policy landscape and the practical implications of regulatory reforms for businesses and government institutions.

Akinpelumi has also served for over a decade as a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria's Tax and Fiscal Policy Committee.

According to EVA Professionals, he has extensive experience in the real estate, construction and property development sectors, further broadening his understanding of the regulatory and commercial considerations affecting businesses in those industries.



Over the years, he has advised a diverse portfolio of clients across the public and private sectors, developing deep industry knowledge through engagements involving complex tax, regulatory and global trade matters.

Akinpelumi holds a Master of Science in Accounting and a Bachelor of Science in Accounting and is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria.

Beyond his professional practice, he has contributed significantly to professional education and capacity development, serving for over a decade as a lecturer at institutions including ICAN and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants. He is also a serial entrepreneur with interests across various sectors.

ActionAid, IYN Launch Youth Hub In Ifako-Ijaiye

By **Isaac Taiwo**

ACTIONAID, in partnership with Inspired Youth Network, has launched a youth hub in Ifako-Ijaiye Local Council of Lagos State, to provide young people with opportunities for skills development, mentorship, digital learning and civic engagement.

The facility, located behind the Ifako-Ijaiye Customary Court, was commissioned by the Chairman, Ifako-Ijaiye Local Council, Akanbi Usman Hamzat represented by the Vice Chairman, Oluwatoyin Akerele.

The youth hub is designed as a dedicated space where young people can connect, learn, collaborate and develop initiatives capable of contributing to positive changes in their communities.

Speaking at the commissioning, Hamzat said the local council provided the space for the project to encourage young people to take their future seriously.

He said the council has consistently supported initiatives capable of improving the livelihood and prospects of young people, urging beneficiaries to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the hub.

The Governance Specialist at ActionAid, Vivian Efem-Bassey, said the hub would enable young people to understand their constitutional rights, identify government institutions responsible for addressing their needs and engage relevant authorities on issues affecting them.

inDrive Wins EDGE Outstanding Mobility Company Of The Decade

By **Eno Bassey**

A GLOBAL mobility and delivery services platform, inDrive has been recognised as EDGE Outstanding Mobility Company of the Decade at the 2026 EDGE Awards recently.

The award recognises inDrive's contribution to Nigeria's mobility and ride-hailing sector, particularly its focus on people-centred transportation, fair pricing and expanding access to affordable, reliable and convenient urban mobility options.

Receiving the award, the Country Manager, inDrive Nigeria, Timothy Oladimeji, noted that "the recognition reflects the company's commitment to building a mobility platform around the needs of its users and driver-partners."

He explained that *inDrive's* growth in Nigeria has been driven by its focus on providing accessible and reliable mobility options while creating value for both drivers and passengers.

"We are honoured to receive the EDGE Outstanding Mobility Company of the Decade award. This recognition reflects the trust our users and driver-partners have placed in us and the collective effort of everyone who has contributed to inDrive's journey in Nigeria. Our focus has always been on putting people first and creating mobility solutions that are fair, accessible, and responsive to the needs of the communities we serve."

'We Need Fathers Raising Boys Who Understand Respect, Consent And Emotional Responsibility'

Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi is the Executive Secretary, the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA). In this interview with TOBI AWODIPE, she speaks about DSVA's five years journey, the highs and lows of working with different agencies to support survivors, the role of men and boys in preventing sexual and domestic violence, how Lagos State's stronger, coordinated ecosystem responds to domestic and sexual violence, among other issues.

It's been five years since the Lagos State DSVA initiative was set up; looking back to when you became Executive Secretary, what were challenges you met and what would you describe as the agency's most significant achievements so far?

WHEN I assumed office five years ago, we were dealing with a problem that was widespread, deeply underreported and, in many instances, hidden behind culture, stigma, fear and silence. Beyond responding to survivors, we also had the responsibility of building a new agency, strengthening public confidence and creating a coordinated system where survivors could access protection, psychosocial support, healthcare and justice. Five years later, one of our greatest achievements is that Lagos now has a much stronger and more coordinated ecosystem for responding to domestic and sexual violence. We have strengthened survivor support and referral pathways, deepened collaboration with stakeholders while increasingly taking prevention into communities and classrooms. But perhaps the achievement I am most proud of is the shift from simply asking, 'How well do we respond when violence happens?' to also asking, 'How do we stop it from happening in the first place?' That has driven our work with children and young people, schools, men and boys, religious and traditional leaders, communities and other institutions. We have made significant progress, but we are certainly not declaring victory. The next phase is about institutionalising prevention so deeply across Lagos that protecting people from violence becomes everybody's responsibility.

Domestic and sexual violence often thrives in silence, with survivors unwilling or unable to report abuse. In the last five years, have you seen a change in how residents understand and respond to these issues?

Yes, I believe there has been a significant change. Five years ago, one of our biggest challenges was silence. Many people did not recognise certain behaviours as abuse, and even when they did, fear of stigma, economic dependence, family pressure or simply not knowing where to seek help prevented them from speaking up.

Today, we are seeing greater awareness. People are more willing to have conversations about domestic and sexual violence, communities are more willing to intervene and importantly, survivors increasingly know that there are institutions and pathways available to support them. We have also deliberately taken the conversation closer to people through schools, communities, workplaces, religious and traditional institutions and through our engagement with men and boys – this is because awareness shouldn't happen only when a terrible incident makes the headlines. But we still have work to do. Silence is one of the greatest allies of abuse. We still encounter families that want to 'settle' serious cases privately, survivors who fear being judged and communities where harmful behaviour is excused in the name of culture, marriage or family reputation. So, for me, the real cultural shift we are working towards is one where the question changes from 'What will people say if I report?' to 'Why should anyone be allowed to do this without consequence?' This requires all of us. Violence thrives when survivors are ashamed and perpetrators are comfortable. We must reverse this: survivors must feel supported, and perpetrators must know that society will no longer shield them.

Behind every statistics is a person with a deeply traumatic experience; what are some of the cases or moments from your years leading the agency that have stayed with you personally?

There are many cases that stay with you, particularly those involving children. As professionals, we are trained to be objective but you never completely lose the human response to seeing a child whose sense of safety has been violated, or a survivor who has endured abuse for years before finally finding the courage to seek help. What has also stayed with me are the moments of recovery. Seeing someone who first came to us frightened and uncertain gradually regains their confidence, rebuild their life and realise that what happened to them does not have to define their future. Some of these women have gone on to be advocates, employers of labour and are thriving in their various endeavours. Those moments remind you why this work matters. And then there are the difficult cases where you inevitably ask yourself, 'Could this have been prevented? Were there warning signs? Did somebody know and remain silent?' Those questions have profoundly influenced my thinking about prevention. After five years, I have learnt that behind every file on our desk is a human being whose life may have changed forever. Our responsibility is not simply to process a case but to ensure that when someone entrusts us with perhaps the most painful chapter of their life, the system responds with dignity, compassion and action.

The agency has become increasingly visible in responding to cases of sexual and domestic violence. How have you worked to build a system that goes beyond receiving complaints to ensuring survivors get justice, medical care, psychosocial support and protection?

One of the most important lessons we have learnt is that a survivor does not need a collection of services. They need a system that works together. So, when someone reports to DSVA, our responsibility goes beyond receiving that complaint. Depending on the circumstances, that survivor may need immediate protection, medical attention, psychosocial support, legal assistance, Police intervention, shelter or support through the justice process. Our role is to help connect those pieces around the survivor. That is why we continue to strengthen our multi agency approach, working closely with our key partners. We are also very conscious of secondary trauma. A survivor should not have to repeatedly relive perhaps the worst experience of their life simply because different institutions are working in silos. Ultimately, the survivor should not have to navigate government, government must organise itself around the survivor. That is the system we are continuing to strengthen.

One of the biggest criticisms of efforts against sexual and gender-based violence is that awareness has increased, but conviction and justice remains slow. What are the biggest obstacles to securing justice for survivors and what needs to change?

Awareness without accountability is not enough. Justice in SGBV cases can be complex. Some of the challenges include delayed reporting, which can affect the collection and preservation of evidence; survivors withdrawing from the process because of family pressure, stigma, fear or economic dependence; difficulties securing witnesses; and the time it can take for cases to move through investigation and prosecution. This is why our focus has been on strengthening the entire justice pathway, not simply encouraging people to report. Whilst we strive to continue to ensure stronger investigations, timely medical and forensic intervention, proper documentation and evidence preservation, effective prosecution, survivor support throughout the process and continued collaboration between the Police, health sector, prosecutors, Judiciary and DSVA, there is however another dimension. Justice is not only about securing a conviction. A survivor must be safe, supported, treated with dignity and given the opportunity to rebuild their life. At the same time, perpetrators must know that violence has consequences. So, what needs to change? We need to continue reducing delays, strengthen coordination between institutions and make the process less traumatic for survivors, while preserving the fairness and integrity of the justice system. It takes enormous courage for a survivor to break the silence. Our responsibility is to ensure that the journey towards justice does not become another form of trauma.

You have spent almost a decade leading an agency that deals daily with some of society's most painful realities; has this affected you personally and how do you protect your emotional and mental wellbeing?

This work has affected me deeply. I don't think you can spend years listening to stories of violence, particularly cases involving children and remain completely untouched by them. You cannot listen to pain every day and pretend it leaves no imprint on you. There are cases you leave at the office physically, but emotionally, they sometimes follow you home. Over time, I have learnt that you cannot pour endlessly without also finding ways to replenish yourself. For me, that means being deliberate about boundaries, leaning on my faith and family, having a strong support system, and creating moments where I can disconnect and simply be a girl, wife, mother, friend and human being. I have also learnt not to carry every outcome personally. We give every survivor the best support we can, but there are aspects of their journey that we cannot control. That can be difficult to accept when one cares deeply about the work. At the same time, the work has given me a tremendous perspective. When you encounter people rebuilding their lives after extraordinary trauma, you develop a different appreciation for resilience, family, safety and even the ordinary things we sometimes take for granted. So yes, the work takes from you, but it also gives you a profound sense of purpose. And whenever the emotional weight becomes heavy, I remind myself that somewhere, someone is safer because this Agency exists. That makes the work worth doing.



Leadership here requires managing government institutions, law enforcement agencies, families, civil society organisations and survivors themselves. What has this taught you about getting different institutions to work together?

One of the biggest lessons leadership has taught me is that complex social problems do not respect institutional boundaries. A survivor's needs may cut across different institutions and no single institution. So a significant part of leadership for me has been learning how to build relationships around a shared outcome rather than individual mandates. We may wear different uniforms, report to different institutions and have different responsibilities, but the person seeking help should experience one coordinated system. It has also taught me that collaboration cannot simply exist on paper. You have to build trust, clarify responsibilities, create referral pathways, communicate constantly and sometimes, pick up the phone and personally remove a bottleneck. Leadership in this space requires both institutional authority and relationships. There will be disagreements because different institutions see issues through different lenses. The question I always return to is: What is in the best interest of the survivor? That has a remarkable way of bringing everyone back to the same table because at the end of the day, the survivor should be at the heart of our operations. Ultimately, leadership has taught me that you cannot build sustainable change by trying to own all the credit. The truth is survivors do not experience government in departments. They simply need help and our job is to make institutional boundaries invisible to the person who needs the system most.

There are still cultural beliefs that encourage silence, protect family reputations or even return to abusive situations. How difficult has it been to challenge these deeply rooted attitudes and where have you seen the greatest progress?

It has been one of the most difficult parts of the work because we are not simply trying to change laws or processes. We are trying to change beliefs that, in some cases, have been passed from one generation to another. We still encounter situations where a survivor is encouraged to endure abuse because of the children, where families are more concerned about protecting their reputation than protecting the survivor, or where violence is excused in the name of culture, religion or preserving a marriage. That is why our prevention work increasingly goes beyond telling people to report. We are engaging the people who shape social norms: traditional and religious leaders, parents, schools, community leaders, men and boys, and young people themselves. I have seen progress, conversations that were once considered private family matters are increasingly being recognised as issues of safety, dignity and rights. More people are willing to speak up and importantly, we are seeing community stakeholders as well as religious clerics become advocates themselves. But lasting cultural change takes time. We cannot simply tell communities that their thinking is wrong. We have to engage, educate and build new social norms together. For me, the greatest opportunity is with the next generation. If we can teach our children that violence is not discipline, control is not love, silence is not respect, and enduring abuse is not the price of keeping a family together, then we can change much more than today's statistics.

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Insight

Cervical Cancer: Building A System That Makes Prevention Possible For Nigerian Women

By **Maria Diamond** and **Suliyat Tella**

A woman can feel perfectly healthy while abnormal changes are taking place in her cervix and by the time symptoms appear, the disease may have progressed beyond the precancerous stage. Thus, early detection creates an opportunity to treat abnormal cells before they develop into invasive cancer.

Cervical cancer remains one of the most preventable cancers affecting women, yet it continues to claim thousands of lives in Nigeria.

According to UNICEF, in Nigeria, cervical cancer is the third most common cancer and the second most frequent cause of cancer deaths among women aged between 12-44 years.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer estimates show that in 2023, Nigeria recorded about 13,676 new cases of cervical cancer and 7,093 deaths.

The figures are striking because the country already has several of the tools needed to prevent many of these cases.

Public Health Leader, Cancer Advocate and Founder of the 'Call Off Cancer Initiative', Ummi Musa Umar said, the problem goes beyond individual choices but more about how cervical cancer prevention has been treated as a screening exercise without enough health-system continuum in Nigeria.

Umar said: "Nigeria has the essential tools for prevention, including HPV vaccination, high-performance HPV testing, treatment for precancerous lesions and treatment for invasive cancer. However, the challenge is ensuring that women can access these services and move through the system without falling out of care.

"Early cervical cancer and, particularly, cervical precancer may have no symptoms at all. That is precisely why screening matters because by the time symptoms appear, the disease may have progressed beyond the precancerous stage. Thus early detection creates an opportunity to treat abnormal cells before they develop into invasive cancer," Umar said.

HPV Vaccine

The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) according to UNICEF is a leading cause of cervical cancer. The vaccine is a safe and effective protection against HPV infection which is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the world.

UNICEF research report states that the HPV Vaccine is most effective when given to girls and boys before they become sexually active which is why it is recommended for girls aged 9-14.

The vaccine protects against infection with high-risk strains HPV, the main cause of cervical cancer, while screening can identify abnormal changes in the cervix before they become cancerous.

Nigeria introduced the HPV vaccine into its routine immunisation programme in 2023 targeting girls aged 9-14 with a single-dose schedule. The vaccine is given before exposure to HPV because it is most effective when administered before a person encounters the virus.

NIgeria also adopted national guidelines for cervical cancer screening in 2025, establishing a framework for prevention, early detection and management.

Cervical Cancer Ignorance syndrome

Although the tools are available, most women and parents are either not aware or just feign oblivion.

For middle age Iyabode Olaniyan, the knowledge of cervical cancer prevention has not translated into action. She said: "I actually know about Pap smear, and I have been hearing about the HPV vaccine campaign, but I have not gone for either of them."

Olaniyan's hesitation is not because she does not know about screening but more about how she imagines the experience. She said: "The reason I have not gone for the Pap smear is because I feel like it's invasive. I can't just sit there and allow them to insert something in me. The process seems uncomfortable from my point of view but at some point, perhaps I would give it a shot just to be safe."

On her part, Victoria Onome, has undergone a Pap smear before but said she does not intend to repeat it. "I have actually gone for the Pap smear, but I don't think I am going back. From what I heard, cervical cancer is caused by having several sexual partners. I am not about to start having different sexual partners, so I don't think there will be a need to go back."

The experiences of the two women point to a problem. Knowing that cervical cancer exists is not necessarily enough to make women seek screening. Fear, misconceptions, discomfort and concerns about the procedure can all influence whether a woman takes the next step.

This is why Umar, the Cancer advocate states that "a woman should not screen today and then disappear into the system. There must be a clear pathway from screening to results, from an abnormal result to treatment, and from treatment to follow-up."

Understanding What Screening Is Designed To Do

While the Pap smear has long been associated with cervical cancer screening, the approach is changing.

Umar explained that HPV-based screening is now the preferred high-performance approach in World Health Organisation (WHO) guidance, while Nigeria's national screening guidelines also establish HPV testing as the primary screening method.

For the general population, WHO recommends beginning regular cervical cancer screening at age 30, while women living with HIV should begin at 25 because of their increased risk. The appropriate screening interval depends on the test being used and the national programme.

The important message, Umar said, is that women should not wait for symptoms before considering screening. "Feeling healthy is not evidence that your cervix is healthy," she said.

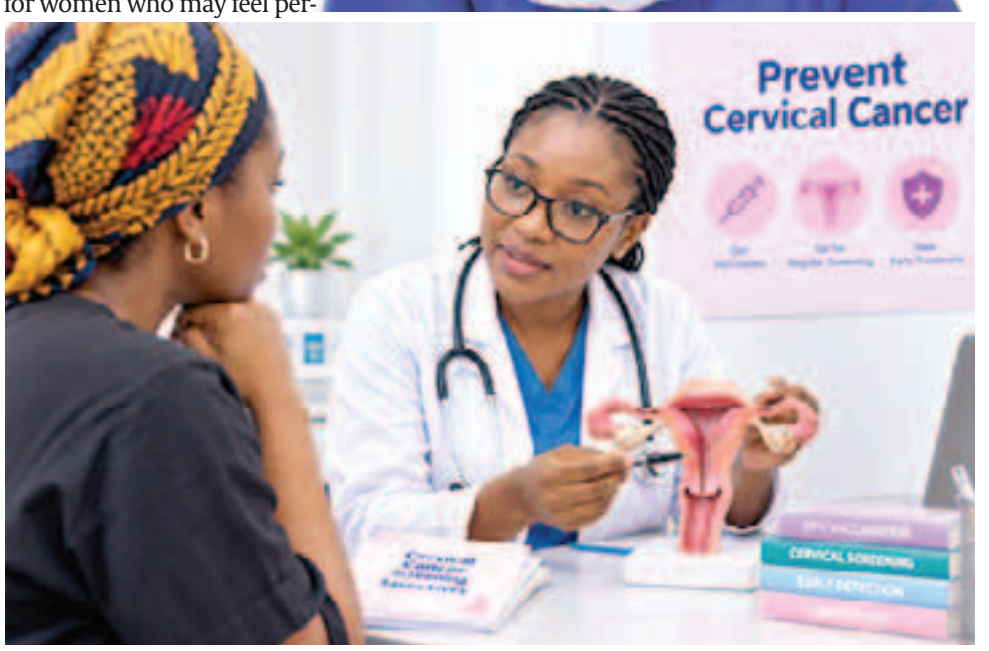
Symptoms can include unusual vaginal bleeding, particularly bleeding after sex, between periods or after menopause. Other warning signs include unusual or foul-smelling vaginal discharge, persistent pelvic, back or leg pain, discomfort during sex and, in more advanced disease, weight loss or swelling of the legs.

The Danger

The danger is that early cervical cancer and, particularly, cervical precancer may have no symptoms at all. "This is precisely why screening matters," Umar said.

For women who have avoided screening because of fear or embarrassment, Umar said the first step is to understand what the procedure is intended to achieve. "Cervical screening is not a test for women who are sick. It is a preventive service for women who may feel perfectly well," she said.





She also acknowledged the concerns that can make women reluctant to undergo the procedure. "Many women are worried about pain, embarrassment or what the result might say. But avoiding a test does not remove the possibility of disease; it only removes the opportunity to detect it early."

Umar advised that women should ask questions before screening, including the type of test and why it is recommended, how the sample will be collected and when the result will be available.

An abnormal screening result, she stressed, does not automatically mean cancer. Screening is intended to identify women who need further assessment or treatment before cancer develops. Prevention also begins before a woman reaches the age for routine screening.

Umar said parents should understand that the vaccine is about cancer prevention not a vaccine that encourages sexual activity. "It is about protecting a child before she is exposed to a virus that can cause cancer years later."

Vaccination, however, does not eliminate the need for screening later in life. "Vaccines prevent HPV infections, but vaccinated women will still need to follow the recommended screening programme when they reach the appropriate age," she said.

Responsible Health System Beyond National Policy

Beyond national policy, cervical cancer vaccination and screening require women to trust the services, find them accessible and be able to complete the process when a problem is detected.

This is where Umar believes the health system must take greater responsibility. "Sometimes we describe this as a problem of 'women not coming forward, when the real question should be: have we designed services that make it easy for women to come forward?"

Cost, distance, fear and misinformation can all become barriers. So can concerns about privacy, embarrassment, pain and what an abnormal result might mean.

But Umar said health-system problems are equally important.

The availability of services, trained healthcare workers, screening commodities, quality assurance, turnaround time for results, referral systems, and the cost of treatment after an abnormal result can determine whether a woman completes the prevention pathway.

"You cannot successfully scale screening without scaling follow-up and treatment alongside it," Umar said.

For a woman who receives an abnormal result, the process should not end there.

Depending on the result, she may require further testing, triage, colposcopy, biopsy or treatment for a precancerous lesion.

Nigeria's national screening guidelines provide pathways for women who test positive for HPV, including further assessment and treatment where required. The objective is to identify and treat precancer before it becomes invasive cancer.

"An abnormal result should never be treated as the end of screening; it should trigger the next step in the care pathway. The important message to women is: do not postpone follow-up," Umar said.

She described precancer as the window of opportunity in which intervention can prevent progression to cancer. "Precancer is exactly the window of opportunity we want. These lesions can often be treated before they progress to invasive cancer."

The concern about women being lost to follow-up also returns to the wider health-system problem. Screening a woman is only one part of prevention. She must receive her result, understand it and have somewhere to go if further care is needed.

At the same time, public concern has recently extended beyond screening and vaccination to the safety of menstrual products, following reports about chemicals detected in some sanitary products.

Umar said the concerns should be investigated but warned against making unsupported claims about cancer. "At present, there is no established causal link showing that the use of sanitary pads causes cervical cancer."

Can Sanitary Pads Cause Cancer?

Umar's response to this is that the established cause of cervical cancer is persistent infection with high-risk HPV. "Studies have detected chemicals, including phthalates, parabens and phenols, in some menstrual products, and research into possible health effects is continuing. However, the detection of a chemical in a product does not by itself demonstrate that using the product causes cancer. So women should not be frightened into believing that their sanitary pad is giving them cervical cancer.

"However, manufacturers and regulators have a responsibility to ensure that products used regularly by women meet appropriate safety and quality standards," Umar noted.

From Prevention To Treatment

In Nigeria, the challenge also goes beyond convincing women to screen, vaccinate or seek medical attention but creating a system in which prevention is accessible and the journey from prevention to treatment is clear.

Nigeria's national screening guidelines adopted in 2025 are intended to provide a standardised framework for cervical cancer screening, while efforts are also underway to expand high-performance screening and strengthen referral systems.

The country's efforts are aligned with the WHO's global cervical cancer elimination targets: vaccinating 90% of girls by age 15, screening 70% of women with a high-performance test by ages 35 and 45, and ensuring 90% of women identified with cervical disease receive appropriate treatment.

Umar said the real measure of progress should be what happens after a policy is announced. "The real test is whether a woman in a low-income community, a rural area or an underserved population can actually access vaccination, screening, receive her result, get treatment when needed and complete the pathway without catastrophic financial or logistical barriers."

Ayuba: *Arise* Is A Project To Promote Fuji, Make It A Crossover

Fuji legend, Dr. Adewale Ayuba, is done playing by the genre's old rules. With his new EP, Arise, the artist, famous for hits such as Bubble, Mr Johnson and Koroba Koroba, trims his signature long-play sound into radio-ready, streaming-friendly cuts, a deliberate bid to push Fuji beyond Nigeria's borders and onto global stages. In this interview with DANIEL ANAZIA, he explains why he believes short format is the only path to a Grammy, defends Fuji's relevance against Gen Z's Afrobeats wave, and doesn't hold back on royalties, government neglect, and what he calls the disarray within Nigeria's musicians' union.

Congratulations on your new album *ARISE*. Fans would like to know what inspired the album title at this time, after so many years in the industry. Why *Arise*?

ARISE is another level of my life; it is a project. I realised that I have been trying to digitise Fuji music several times. I want to take Fuji to the discotheque. I want it to be playing at hip-hop places. I don't want it to be restricted to certain people. So, that is why I did the collaboration with Jazzman Olofin, and it was an experiment. I did a collaboration with Ade Bantu, who is based in Germany, and that made me get the KORA Award, which is recognised as the African Grammy in South Africa. And recently, I did a collaboration with Adekunle Gold, before I did *Koroba Koroba*. All these I mentioned were experimental. And I realised that God showed me the way that I can do it; that is why I call it *Arise*. *Arise* feels like coming from another place and going to another. So that's what the album *Arise* is all about.

Why *Arise*?

Music doesn't die, you know. Let me tell you something: people are scared. For example, you know, we Fuji musicians, the way we do our album, it's like 25, 30 minutes straight. But that is not what is happening now. If you are doing such an album, you can never get a Grammy. A lot of radio stations will not play you abroad, and I want to take Fuji to the world. You have to follow the rules, because there's nothing that doesn't have a rule. Some radio stations will not take Ijo Fuji from you unless you cut that Fuji out and put it in three minutes.

Are you saying it's a deliberate decision from you?

That's what I'm saying; it is a deliberate decision. The long-play is part of the *Arise* project, to promote Fuji and make it a crossover.

Are you eyeing the Grammy?

By the grace of God, am I not a musician? When you see the likes of Angélique Kidjo from the Republic of Benin getting a Grammy, what stops me from getting one? Why would you say that because I'm from Nigeria and I'm doing Fuji music? See the likes of the late Baba Agba, Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, and the effort they have put into Fuji music. Now, we, their children, want to put our own too. Every parent usually prays that their children will be better than them. That's exactly what I'm trying to do with Fuji music now.

***Arise* project is a five-track; why did you limit it to five songs or tracks, as you have been known to play for a long time? People want to know if it's not going to dilute the Fuji concept generally.**

There's nothing like the Fuji concept. I will tell you something. Our late Apala maestro, Haruna Ishola, didn't start playing long versions of music before the independence of Nigeria. They were playing two minutes, three minutes only, even without the use of technology, before we now put our own. Permit me to use this analogy: if it's our food, say Eba that I want to eat today, there must be a portion that shows that I'm ready to eat *Eba*. Even though it's going to hurt you, you will eat the portion, even if the doctor tells you that this is too much for you. We always like our big things. Some people will tell you these records are too short or small; let it be long so that we can enjoy it, without thinking about where it's going to take the musician. The music that got I K Dairo, Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE), making him the first Nigerian musician to receive the award, wasn't long-version music, because that is what they can play abroad. If it is more than two minutes, three minutes, they can't play it on their radio station. If you continue to go the way of long play, how do you then want to globalise your product? Do you want to be local, stay local and then die local; as for me, I have gone global.

In making this decision, did you take into consideration your fans in Nigeria who have come a long way with you?

They didn't follow me because of the long version. Are they not dancing to Olamide, Davido? Do I have the crowd those people have? Is Davido doing the long version? Is Burna Boy doing a long version? You have to improve your children, improve your family, improve your business, even improve your listeners and make them know that this is the way or the trend now. I know where it has placed me today, and it's my fans that did it for me. Without good fans, you can't go anywhere. Aren't they the ones who are promoting and doing whatever thing now?

You mentioned some artistes — hip-hop artistes, Jahsman Olofin, Olamide, Asake, Adekunle Gold — who you did a collaboration with. When you tested the waters with those songs, and looking at it now, what has that decision taught you in 2026…infusing Fuji into Afropop or Afrobeats, as it is called?

You see, what I'm doing is Fuji music; I'm not inventing or infusing Fuji with Afropop. No, don't be wrong. Check Adekunle Gold; he does not do Afropop; it is Fuji music. Olamide is doing the same thing. So, it's Fuji that we are trying to sanitise; make it reasonable to foreigners. It doesn't change the name at all.

So, it will be right to say that you are trying to promote the Fuji culture and, by extension, the Yoruba culture?

Of course; did you see me singing in English in it? That's why you see me mix. I have always been singing from day one of my life in Yoruba and English. If you listen to *Bubble* that brought me to the limelight, it was a mixture of Yoruba and English. If you also listen to *Ijo Fuji*, and you hear my part of the song/record, you will see that it was delivered in both Yoruba and English

Where does this place your fans, especially from the South-East and South-South?

As I said, my music is delivered in both Yoruba and English, and that has made a lot of people love me, particularly from the South East. For instance, you say "Listen attentively…only Mr. Johnson," they understand it because it's a global language. So, that's why we do that.

Is it right to say that Fuji music culture is gradually dying, just like people say reggae music has died in Nigeria?

Who is telling you this? Well, you can't say Fuji music is dying, and it will not die. If it is dying, would Adekunle Gold come and call me to collaborate with him? If Fuji music is dying, would he have changed his style to Fuji 100 percent? It's Fuji that I'm doing. When something is dying, you won't see a Gen-Z to embrace it; instead, they are embracing it. When you consider my age now and the length of years that I have put into it you will know it's not dying. Even the children that I was the one that sang at their parents' wedding want me to perform at their wedding. So what this simply tells you is that Fuji is not dying; instead, it's getting better.

In the *Arise* EP, with songs like *Ileke, All Over The World, Yetunde, Kutukutu* et al. What message are you passing with these tracks?

Each track has its own unique message; they all have different messages. That is why we had the listening party. I encourage everybody to go and listen to them on Audiomack!

Today's hits are mostly vibe over substance — party, girls, money. Many use AI to generate their song(s). As a legend and elder in the industry, are you tempted to follow that trend?

I will say that I have been so lucky, because I started music when it was meant for message; when we had a board, because when I started, all my albums were censored. Today, I don't know if there is a music regulator in Nigeria. If there is, do they live up to expectations? Back then, when you finished your musical work (album or single), you would send it to the board, and they would listen to it; look at the advantage it has for people who are going to listen to it. The message that comes with it: is it abnormal? What is there for the government? How is it going to preach all these things? All these things matter. So that's why you can't just sit down in your house, take a pen, write and sing songs that have no message. Our brand of music is current affairs; tell people to go to school, tell the wives to listen to their husbands, and the husbands to take care of the children and wife. This is what music is for; it's not just for fun. That's why today, the largest book with chapters in the Bible is the Book of Psalms, and it is music embedded. Now, what that tells or shows you is that God ordained music from heaven. Use it to tell people how to behave. Music is spiritual; it's not something you think.

When you don't have a government, because it is the duty of the government to make and enforce law. So, if they (government) enact a law, for instance, that mandates us as musicians to ensure our music, lyrics-wise, must have something important; it must carry a message. So, it's either that or you forget about music. Of course, the government can do it because it's for the betterment of all of us.

Is this why they often come hard on some artistes who release some music that tends to abuse the image of the country?

Yes, and I will like them to continue to carry out that responsibility. So, once you decide to be a musician, it puts you on a check that you can't say anything negative or rubbish about your nation; you can't speak badly about anybody. Music is and should be about teaching people good things to do. So, that is why I said earlier that I was lucky I started my music at that time, and that is what is still working till today.

Let's talk about royalties. What's your honest take on the issue?

Do we get royalties from Nigeria? 99.9 musicians in Nigeria do not get royalties from Nigeria. The royalties we get are from foreign countries where our works or music is sampled. It sounds funny, right?

Beyond *Arise*, what else is Dr. Adewale Ayuba working on? Are we expecting more singles, a tour or a mentorship programme for the younger artistes?

Yes, I'm looking and thinking about that. I know a tree can never make a forest. We need people; we need the government to think. We are not really making money from the entertainment industry in Nigeria at all.

QUOTE

Today, I don't know if there is a music regulator in Nigeria. If there is, do they live up to expectations? Back then, when you finished your musical work (album or single), you would send it to the board, and they would listen to it; look at the advantage it has for people who are going to listen to it. The message that comes with it: is it abnormal? What is there for the government? How is it going to preach all these things? All these things matter. So that's why you can't just sit down in your house, take a pen, write and sing songs that have no message. Our brand of music is current affairs; tell people to go to school, tell the wives to listen to their husbands, and the husbands to take care of the children and wife. This is what music is for; it's not just for fun.



Rema, Davido, Fally Ipupa To Headline Afro Nation 2027

By **Daniel Anazia**

NIGERIA has maintained a prominent position on the Afro Nation Portugal line-up since the festival debuted in 2019. Hence, following the organisers unveiling of its first wave of performers for the seventh edition, scheduled to hold from June 9 to 11, 2027, at Praia da Rocha beach in Portimão, Algarve, Portugal, it announced Nigerian music stars Davido and Rema, alongside Congolese music star Fally Ipupa as headliners.

The three artistes were announced on Wednesday, September 23, describing them as "three giants of African music." The trio had previously performed at the festival. Davido appeared in 2019, 2022, 2023 and 2025 editions, while Rema headlined in 2024 and Fally Ipupa made main-stage appearances that same year.

Also included in the performers list are Nigerian acts such as Omah Lay, Victony, both billed for the main stage, and Odeal. Others are Jamaican dancehall stars Shenseea and Valiant; Guyanese dancehall star Bamby, Tanzania musician Rayvanny; and Guadeloupean bouyon artiste Miimii KDS, who is known for her tracks *Sé Miimii* and *In Di Corner*, with South Gidi (the live project from DJ Tunez and DJ Maphorisa featuring Wizkid and Mavo) closing out the final night.

The festival's amapiano-focused Piano People stage will be led by Kabza De Small, with support from TxC, Dlala Thukzin, Young Stunna, Zee Nxumalo and others. The Afrotronic Takeover, the festival's African electronic music showcase, also returns, featuring Caiiro, Djeff, Jamiie, Aniko and JNR SA.

Afro Nation Portugal has hosted a string of major Nigerian acts, including Burna Boy, Olamide, Tiwa Savage, Ayra Starr, Fireboy DML, Adekunle Gold, Wande Coal, Young Jonn, Victony and P-Square.

The festival has grown considerably since its debut. Its fifth edition in 2025 drew more than 40,000 attendees from 180 countries, with a lineup that included Burna Boy, Tems, Mary J. Blige, Davido and Booba.

Beyond Portugal, Afro Nation has since expanded to Ghana, Puerto Rico, Miami and Detroit, but the Portugal edition remains its flagship gathering. This year's edition, the sixth, wrapped in July with Wizkid and Asake leading the lineup, alongside Burna Boy, who launched his album, *No Sign of Weakness,* from the festival's beach stage in 2025. Uncle Waffles headlined the Piano People stage, with Gunna and Kehlani appearing as special guests.

The 2027 edition marks a scheduling shift for the festival, which typically runs in July. This time, the event moves roughly a month earlier, to early June. The main programme will be bookended by an opening party on June 8 and a closing event on June 12.

For Rema, the 2027 booking continues a strong run internationally, arriving on the back of his Grammy-nominated album *HEIS* and recent singles *Ozeba* and *Baby* (Is It A Crime). For Davido, it follows the release of his new album *Oriadé* and comes after his three-night homecoming residency at the remodel National Theatre in December.

Fally Ipupa's return after main-stage appearances in recent years, including 2024, arrives as the Congolese rumba star marks 20 years in music, bringing his blend of rumba and contemporary African pop back to the festival's biggest stage.



Again, Lagos Hosts AFRIMA, As Organisers Unveil Calendar In Los Angeles

By **Daniel Anazia**

• Entries Open October 11

THE African Union (AU) and the International Executive Committee of the All Africa Music Awards (AFRIMA) have unveiled the global calendar for the landmark 10th edition, with the main events scheduled for May 18 to 23, 2027, in Lagos, culminating in the grand awards ceremony on May 23.

The calendar was unveiled at the 10th AFRIMA Creative Industry Roundtable and Global Calendar Unveiling held at Sofitel in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, California, United States. AFRIMA President/Executive Producer, Mike Dada, announced that the Call for Entries will open worldwide on October 11, 2026, and close on January 10, 2027.

According to Dada, collation and prescreening of entries will take place from January 11–14, followed by adjudication from January 15–22, and the global announcement of nominees on January 29. Public voting will run from February 21 to May 21, 2027.

He stated that eligible creative works must have been produced and released within the official eligibility period, from August 10, 2025 to January 10, 2027. Dada also unveiled the international build-up programme, tagged #Road2AFRIMA10Xperience, covering London, Windhoek, Cotonou, Nairobi, Accra, Paris, Warri and Port Harcourt.

In Lagos, the AFRIMA 10X Conference, media parley and industry night will be held on April 14, alongside university activations and concerts between February and April, ahead of the main events in May, 2027, starting with the AFRIMA Diamond Showcase.

"The journey will culminate in Lagos with the 10th AFRIMA Main Events from May 18 to 23, 2027, and the grand awards ceremony on May 23," Dada said.

Speaking on the significance of the milestone, the AFRIMA President/Executive Producer said the 10th edition would celebrate a decade of African musical excellence while strengthening AFRIMA's contribution to Africa's creative economy.

"African artistes are filling arenas around the world; African sounds are influencing global culture, but visibility alone is not enough. We must turn visibility into opportunity, opportunity into investment, and investment into sustainable creative industries. Africa must not only export culture; Africa must capture the capital and build wealth from its culture," he said.

Describing the global calendar as more than a list of dates, Dada said it represents "a roadmap for engagement, collaboration, investment and cultural exchange," bringing together artistes, creatives, investors, policymakers, media and industry leaders. He added that every stop on the #Road2AFRIMA10Xperience is designed to create new conversations, partnerships, opportunities and pathways for African creativity.

The Los Angeles unveiling marks the latest stage in the build-up to the 10th AFRIMA, following earlier #Road2AFRIMA10Xperience engagements in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; and Rabat and Casablanca, Morocco.

The Los Angeles event attracted personalities from Africa and the United States, including comedian Darryl Vega; actors Razz Adeoti, Bayo Akinfemi and Ozie Nzeribe; digital creator Laurence Brahm; artiste Seyi Brown; producer Septimum; The Africa Channel COO Narendra Reddy; DJ Sly King from Ghana among others; and renowned Guinness world record holder choreographer, dance instructor and fitness coach Kaffy, who also hosted at the event.

Delivering the welcome remarks, award-winning American artiste and producer Septimius The Great said, "the connection between African artistes and American artistes is more important than ever. We have the talent, the creativity and the stories, but when we build the bridge between Africa and America, we create opportunities that can take our music and our culture to an even bigger global audience."



AFRIMA President and Executive Producer, Mike Dada, and Narendra Reddy, Chief Operating Officer, The Africa Channel at the AFRIMA Global Calendar Unveiling & Stakeholders Conference in Los Angeles, California. (Photo by Arnold Turner/Getty Images for AFRIMA

Shamzydane Entreats Fans With New Single, *Alone*

By **Daniel Anazia**

FAST-RISING afrobeats act, songwriter, and performer Shalom Terem, known by the stage name Shamzydane, has hit the airwaves with a new single titled, *Alone*, a record that puts the listener in a solemn type of vibe.

The new release, which dropped in August 20 across various streaming platforms including Spotify, YouTube Music, Apple Music, Audiomack, Boomplay and iTunes, is hinged on the artiste's lifestyle, experiences and general feelings.

"Alone puts someone in a solemn type of vibe. A listener goes into meditation because of the deep lyrics. It is all about my lifestyle, my experiences and my general feelings," Shamzydane said.

"It is basically talking about my phase of life, the pressure coming as a result of what is happening to me in my current state. It is all about my being. It is trying to figure out myself as I move forward and explaining that I am trying to do m best and move ahead," he added.

Shamzydane started his music career professionally in 2019 with a feature by Tomi Tribe, a US-based artiste on the track *Loba Tan*, a vibrant afrobeat and party song. With hit singles like *For Free*, *Link Me Up* and the newly released *Alone*, he continues to evolve his craft, taking his music to the next level while gaining ground as one of the emerging superstars in the Nigerian music industry.

His electrifying and energetic approach to his music has been so intentional, leaving his fans and lovers of good music so captivated. "I started music in church and school as well. Both shaped me so well, inspiring me to embark on this musical journey I am on right now," the budding act enthused.

According to the 22-year-old, he grew up listening to a lot of artiste and their sounds. "It taught me so many things I need to know and how I could have my own sound and pattern, which my audience can feel and understand," he said.

Inspired by global music heavyweights including Wizkid, Burna Boy, Davido and Drake, the young artiste says he envisages a society that is united, progressive and ready to grow and be there for its people.

Shamzydane has a scholarly background, having studied at the stone-famed Immaculate Conception Minor Seminary, Mfamosing, Cross River State, and the ...ity of Calabar, where he bagged a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management in 2025.



Travel&Tourism www.guardian.ng

Global Travel Stages In Crisis, A Recount From World Tourism Day 2026

By **Maria Diamond**



A shift away from the thematic preoccupation of the 2026 World Tourism Day to the entire entity that makes up international travels at a time like this where countries around the globe struggle from economic downturns and inflations to the pain and inhumanity of war.

The following question is how does tourism thrive in the face of global stages set on fire from all ends? Who celebrates World Tourism Day at a time when you may have to do a scale of safe countries preference before attempting a trip?

Thus the theme "Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to Redesign Tourism" is not out of place but this is only one aspect of it for required development and seamless connectivity across the globe, but the broader part is the need for peace, sanity and cooperation in the world to allow the concept of travel and tourism truly accessible in every nook and cranny of the world.

To this end, when the chairman of the World Tourism Network and publisher of eTurboNews, Juergen Steinmetz, said World Tourism Day 2026 arrives at a particularly consequential moment, he was not mincing words.

Steinmetz in his remark on WTD 2026, the message of tourism and peace cannot remain just a slogan. "It is a responsibility. Travel and tourism is one of the world's most powerful economic and human forces. We have to use this enormous influence to give sanity, peace, dialogue and human rights a stronger voice."

One Tourism Entity with Enormous Branches

Steinmetz said: "Tourism is one industry. It includes governments and tourism ministries, but also airlines, hotels, cruise lines, tour operators, travel advisors, technology companies, destinations, restaurants, guides, SMEs, investors, workers, media and, most importantly, the communities and people who make tourism possible."

The chairman of World Tourism Network believes that the purpose of World Tourism Day should be to bring this entire industry together. He said: "The ingredients are here in 2026, and WTTC has a particularly important opportunity to help build that bridge between the public and private sectors.

"This is why there has perhaps never been a more important World Tourism Day than this year's. Although established by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), and UN Tourism has an important leadership role in it. But World Tourism Day does not belong only to UN Tourism, and it certainly should not be an observance only for the public sector; it should never be viewed as an observance belonging only to one organisation, tourism ministries or the public sector as tourism belongs to everyone. It is a day for the entire global Travel and Tourism industry."

'There is a need for peace, sanity and cooperation in the world to allow the concept of travel and tourism to be truly accessible in every nook and cranny of the world.'

Tourism Is an Industry of Peace

Steinmetz noted that if tourism is truly an industry of peace, "then everyone has to be at the table. The public sector cannot do it alone, and the private sector cannot do it alone."

EWA To Unify, Develop African Tourism, Aviation, Trade, Commerce, Business

By **Maria Diamond**

THE regional body which seeks the unification of East and West Africa, extending far into north and central as well as the Caribbean has inaugurated East-West Africa (EWA), a new vista for African tourism, aviation, trade, commerce and business set to quicken the pace of development, following the $10bn investment funds commitment from the National Black Chamber of Commerce (NBCC).

EWA is committed to ensuring that Africa witnesses fast-paced development through the co-locations of businesses spread across tourism, aviation, industries, agro-allied, ecotourism, transportation, security, commerce and trade, to charge the paradigm of development.

This historic milestone was recorded at the recent formal public presentation of the regional body in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The two days gathering was attended by different personalities and organisations from across tourism and other networks in the globe.

The birth of this new regional body is said to signal a new era of conversation as it concerns Africa's development pursuit. This new ethos was clearly underscored by the conveners of the regional body and other speakers that graced the podium during the event that was both in-person and online gathering.

It was clearly demonstrated that the body is pushing the conversation away from mere promises and high-sounding words without action. It was noted that it is now time for action, time for measurable and sustainable progress to be made on all fronts.

The President and Founder of La Campagne Tropicana Beach Resort brand, Otunba Wanle Akinboboye, who is also the convener of the newly created regional body clarified issues surrounding the new body and donations received by it for investment.

He said the fund will strictly be devoted to funding attractive and bankable projects, stressing that it is neither grant nor free money to be doled out to people or businesses at will.

This new drive, according to Akinboboye and other promoters and supporters, is to propel Africa's economic development to a greater and sustainable height. He also disclosed that "it is no more talk, it is time for immediate action."

Thus, Akinboboye called on businesses, organisations and individuals with creative, novel, attractive and bankable business ideas and projects to immediately begin pitching for the investment funds.

He also noted that there is no limit to the level or amount of funds to be disbursed in funding a particular project, however, he stressed that the basic principle driving funding is that the projects must be viable and attractive to investors and bankers, as every project pitched will be subjected to strict scrutiny to ensure that it meets with the vision of the body.

Akinboboye urged businesses, organisations and individuals to take advantage of the new regional body's commitment to unlock Africa's tourism, aviation, trade, commerce, investment, and other potentials.

EWA is a philosophy that propelled the practical commitment towards bringing to life both the short and long-term objectives of the body in quick and real time. It was in the pursuit of this new spirit of thinking and fast-paced action plan that the National Black Chamber of Commerce and others made the bold and huge donations to kick-start the effective and practical co-locations of different tourism, agro-allied, commerce, and business projects across the continent.

This new move was further concretised by the President of NBCC, Charles Debow when he disclosed that beside the $10bn investment funds donated, investors and businesses will be attached to over 200 Chambers of Commerce networks spread across the United States of America and Canada.

The regional body is an initiative that is in furtherance of the objectives of Akinboboye's Motherland Beckons and IPADA Initiatives, which currently promotes IPADA Celebrations, an annual cultural tourism and business gathering held in La Campagne Tropicana beach Resort. The multi-awards African-themed resort is based in the Lekki axis of Lagos State.



Akinboboye

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SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS



FATIMA ADANAN
General Manager, Finance, NLNG



DR. SOPHIA HORSFALL
GM, External Relations & Sustainable Development, NLNG



LAURETHA IRUNOKHAI
Group Managing Director, Prodigy Group



TEMILOLUWA OJUAWO
Senior Legal Counsel, Shoreline Natural Resources.



CHIOMA IWUJI
General Manager, Finance, Geoplex Drillteq



ABIMBOLA FALOPE
Commercial Director, Pan African Towers



CHIEF OSASU IGBINEDION OGWUCHE, Founder, TOS Group.



CHINAENYENWA NWOKEDI
Group CMO, CashToken Rewards Africa



FARIDA SULEIMAN
Head, Corporate Affairs & External Communication, Kam Holding.



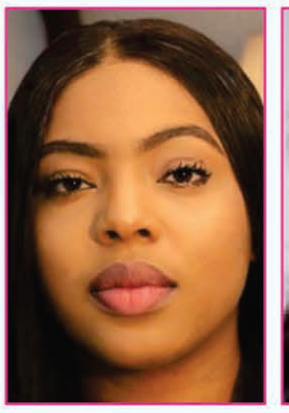
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Chief Growth Officer, CashToken Rewards Africa



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Manager, Corporate Transformation Advisory, NLNG



NGOZI EFOBI
General Counsel, Greenville LNG.



SIMI ADEOYE
Ag MD, CashToken Rewards International UK



FRANCA OCHE
Recruitment Manager, Geoplex Drillteq.

I Am Deeply Committed To The Continued Growth Of Greenville LNG – Ngozi Efobi, General Counsel, Greenville LNG.



AS a child, she and everyone around her knew she was destined to be a lawyer. Back then, she used to be deeply troubled by arbitrary exercise of power and by the way outcomes of disputes so often depended not on what was right but on who was louder, or richer, or who had the right connections. This, she thought was wrong and believed there should be a better mechanism for resolving disputes. It was years later when she encountered law as a discipline that she knew it was what she had been looking for.

"Law is the institutionalisation of civilized argument", says Ngozi Efobi, now the General Counsel of Greenville LNG. "It says we will not resolve disputes through force or favour, we will reason our way to conclusion, with defined procedures, evidence standards, and rights of appeal. The orderliness of it appealed deeply to my temperament".

After her call to Bar, she entered private legal practice, excelled at it and eventually became a Partner at Aelex before finding herself increasingly drawn to corporate and transactional work. This was what led her to Greenville LNG, Nigeria's pioneer LNG producer where she serves as the General Counsel today. "I was fascinated not just by disputes, but by the systems that when well-designed, prevents disputes from arising in the first place", she said concerning why she left Aelex.

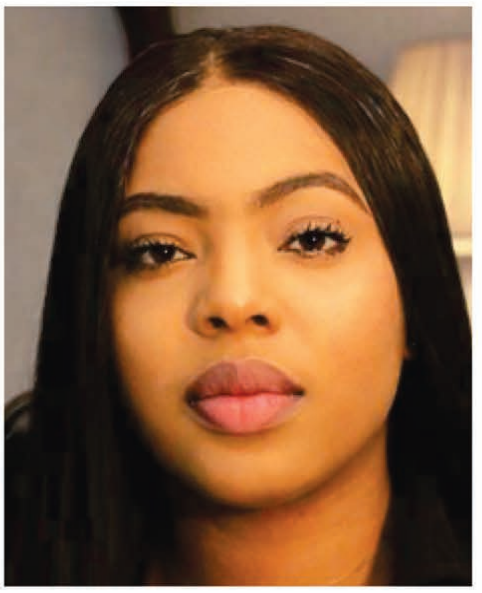
At Greenville today, she is responsible for law, regulation, governance, risk management and legal advisory across every sphere of the company's operations. This touches everything from complex commercial contracts and dispute management to employment matters, including the management of legal risk.

On those that have influenced her life most positively, she mentioned her parents first saying they gave her a childhood in which high expectation was accompanied by deep encouragement. After them comes professional mentors, both male and female who she said saw the potential in her back then as a junior lawyer and invested in developing her potential. Aside these, is the leadership of Greenville LNG, whom she describes as a purpose-driven leadership that has sharpened her commitment to doing work. Added to these is her family - her husband and children.

She remembers the first truly complex transaction she handled as one that has continued to stay with her. Recollecting, she said: "The hours were extraordinary, the pressure was immense, and the stakes were real as careers and significant capital were on the line. When we closed it successfully, the satisfaction was unlike anything I had previously experienced. Not because of the outcome alone, but because of what the process revealed: that I was capable of performing at the highest level when it truly mattered. That self-knowledge is irreplaceable".

Ngozi makes it clear that she is deeply committed to the continued growth of Greenville LNG, but beyond it, aspires to contribute even more to the design of the legal and regulatory frameworks that will shape Nigeria's energy future. On a personal note however, she intends to continue to grow as a writer, to contribute to public discourse, to invest in the next generation, and most importantly, remain a person of dignity and integrity.

Leading Our UK Operations Is The Assignment I Am Most Proud Of - Simi Adeoye, Ag MD, CashToken Rewards International UK



SIMI Daphne Adeoye, Acting Managing Director of CashToken Rewards International UK, is a business development expert, market entry specialist and expansion architect. She started her career in the oil and gas sector before moving into the reward technology industry. Over more than 10 years she has signed deals and finalised partnerships with banks, payment providers and corporations, with particular expertise in complex payment system integrations and qualifications in oil and gas sector soft skills and in project management.

More recently she has driven the expansion of CashToken Rewards into the United Kingdom, Liberia and South Africa, setting up operations, leading regulatory engagement and negotiating partnerships across telecommunications, energy and consumer goods, while concluding agreements directly with state governments in Nigeria. She has also led partner acquisition across Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda and Tanzania on behalf of a multinational client.

From Ondo State and raised in Lagos, she credits her parents with laying the foundation. "They raised me to believe that competence, not noise, is what earns you a seat. They taught me to be bold and courageous, to stand firmly regardless of the room I find myself in."

Her progression through the group has been methodical. She joined CashToken Rewards Africa as Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive, progressed into Business Development, was appointed Head of Business Development and Expansion, then Chief Expansion Officer, her mandate widening from individual deals to whole countries. She now leads the group's first operation outside the African continent. "The UK is a mature, heavily regulated and highly competitive rewards market where we have had to earn attention rather than assume it," she said. "It is the assignment I am most proud of."

She credits Aare Prof Lai Labode, Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of CashToken Rewards Africa and, in her description, a visionary in the truest sense, with more than the opportunity. "What he gave me was trust ahead of title. He handed me countries before I had the seniority to match them. I have been deeply impacted by him and taught very well." She is equally insistent on crediting her team. "Very little of what is attributed to me was mine alone. It was collective work, and I appreciate my team members deeply for it."

On unforgettable moments, she offered: "The most memorable thing about my career is not a single event. It is the nature of what CashToken built: a product that allows businesses to create genuine emotional equity with their consumers, and through which millionaires are made every week. In a testimonial it is a trader or a driver whose circumstances changed overnight." The work has also brought exposure, "being in the presence of presidents of countries, state governors and traditional rulers. It broadened me, and built the social capital I drawon today."

Her goal is simply stated: "think reward, think CashToken, globally." In the United Kingdom the ambition is for CashToken to become the universal reward for all patronages in the UK. "We have built a global infrastructure for rewards, a single platform any business can connect to and begin rewarding customers immediately, without building anything itself. Consumers can also accumulate all their rewards in one wallet across various businesses."

To upcoming female professionals, she advised them not to let the room they started in define the room they end in. She began as an executive assistant and today leads her company's international business.

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SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

For Any Female Professional, Competence Is A Strong Way To Overcome Barriers – Fatima Adanan, GM Finance, NLNG



A member of the Association of National Accountants of Nigeria, ANAN, and a SAP Certified Finance and Controlling Consultant, Fatima Adanan, the General Manager, Finance of the NLNG studied accounting at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and later obtained M.Sc in Financial Management from Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, UK. A fellow of the Institute of Public Administration of Nigeria, she has garnered around 29 years experience in the oil and gas industry in a professional journey that has been largely shaped by education, continuous learning, discipline, and working on projects that are significantly beneficial to Nigeria.

She commenced her career in 1997 with the Treasury group of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, now NNPC Limited. While there, Fatima's professional experience was buoyed by diverse areas of operations including LNG/Midstream Finance, Project Financing and Financial Management. In 2022, she got a secondment to NLNG as General Manager, Finance.

Recalling her early career days, she noted, "My career started in 1997 at NNPC where I worked in banking and cash management within the treasury group. I subsequently worked in documentary credit and the cash office and took on supervisory responsibilities in taxes, invoicing and inventory. Those early years were important because they exposed me to different aspects of finance rather than limiting me to one area. They helped me understand how different financial functions connect to the broader business."

By 2017, she was moved to LNG/Loan Origination, Monitoring and Accounting as Deputy Manager and subsequently became Manager LNG/Midstream Finance in 2021. She recalls with relish her years in NNPC saying, "One of the highlights of that period was my involvement in significant financing initiatives for the Nigerian energy sector. I participated in facilitating the NLNG Framework Agreement, which secured financing of up to $2.5billion for NNPC capital expenditure requirements relating to upstream gas projects supplying feed gas to NLNG."

She also revealed that she was part of the financing team that secured a $3billion loan for NLNG's Train 7 project, a particularly significant occurrence to her because of the importance of Train 7 not only to NLNG but to Nigeria's gas industry and the economy in general. Beside this, she noted that she was an active participant in the financing work relating to the Ajaokuta Abuja-Kaduna-Kano pipeline, pipeline and depot projects as well as upstream gas projects, all with a combined value of $15.2 billion.

As General Manager, Finance of NLNG, Fatima has been responsible for ensuring that the company's financial resources are managed properly to meet the organisation's objectives. This involves financial planning, budgeting, reporting, controls, treasury management, financial risk management, investment decisions and ensuring compliance with relevant statutory requirements. At the leadership level, Fatima says her role goes beyond finance and its chain. She works with colleagues across the company to understand the financial implications of strategic decisions even as she ensures that resources are allocated in a way that supports the sustainability of the company.

In her professional journey, Fatima confessed that she has been fortunate to have people who influenced her through direct mentorship or simply through the example set by visible practice of professionalism, discipline, leadership and examplary problem solving skills. According to her, "My early stage in the profession was particularly formative because I worked with people who taught me the importance of getting the fundamentals right. In finance, details matter but you must also understand the bigger picture. That balance has stayed with me."

"I have also learnt from colleagues and leaders with whom I have worked on major projects. When you work on complex transactions involving several institutions and stakeholders, you learn not only about finance but also about negotiation, patience, team work, and the importance of building trust. I would therefore say that my career has been influenced by a combination of mentors, leaders, colleagues, family and professional experiences."

Fatima's career progression has not been without its challenges being a woman. She admitted that there were moments when she had to work harder to make her competence and contribution visible. However, to counter any gender discrimination, she focused on her preparation, knowledge, professionalism and the quality of work. "I have found that competence is one of the strongest ways to overcome barriers," she hinted. "When you understand your subject, prepare thoroughly, and are willing to take responsibility for your decisions, you earn the confidence of your colleagues and stakeholders."

Her approach has been to remain focused on excellence, continuous learning and allowing her work to speak for her. "I have also learned not to be intimidated by the size or complexity of an assignment. Some of the projects I have worked on involved very large financial transactions and multiple stakeholders. Women should not feel that they have to choose between being collaborative and being decisive. You can listen, seek different perspectives, and still be clear about the decisions that need to be taken."

Fatima's immediate goal is to see that the finance function of NLNG remains a strong strategic partner that does not just report what has happened but helps the organisation understand what is coming so that it can prepare for it. She is also interested in building a finance function that is digital, analytical, agile, and future-ready.

I Measure Impact By The Number Of People I Develop – Temiloluwa Ojuawo, Senior Legal Counsel, Shoreline Natural Resources.



TEMILOLUWA Ojuawo, Senior Legal Counsel at Shoreline Natural Resources Ltd is an energy and finance lawyer with experience spanning upstream oil and gas, structured finance and commercial transactions, joint venture governance, petroleum regulation, community relations, sustainability and ESG. She studied Law at the University of Sheffield, and obtained a Master's in International Relations and Law from the University of Warwick. Her professional experience has also been complemented with executive education at Harvard Law School, Cambridge Judge Business School and Stanford Graduate School of Business.

Interestingly, Temiloluwa did not set out to be a lawyer. Throughout her secondary school days, she was a science student and had her sight on becoming a medical doctor, specifically a neurosurgeon, as she has always been fascinated by the brain and how it works. But because her mother is a lawyer, somewhere along the line she started reading John Grisham novels and then moved to her mother's law reports. Before she knew it, she had caught the bug, what started as curiosity gradually became a genuine love for the law profession.

After completing her studies in the UK, and upon her return to Nigeria for her Bar exams, and subsequent call to Bar, she did youth service at Citibank and afterwards joined Olaniwun Ajayi LP. Here, she worked across different practice groups before developing particular expertise in oil and gas and finance. In fact, her experience there helped in sharpening her technical judgement, commercial awareness and ability to execute complex transactions with precision.

After leaving Olaniwun Ajayi LP, in 2018, she headed to Shoreline Natural Resources, an upstream oil company holding 45% participating interest in OML 30 alongside its joint venture partner, NNPC Exploration and Production Ltd. Said she: "My present remit integrates legal advisory, transaction execution, joint venture governance, regulatory matters, community relations, sustainability and ESG. My career has been marked by progressive leadership responsibility, complex transaction execution, and increasingly strategic contribution to the business".

Apart from her parents, Pastor Adedoyin and Mrs Bolajoko Adebayo, who have profoundly influenced her life by their teachings on discipline, faith and resilience, the importance of developing the mind and courageous reinvention, another person she credits as having had significant influence on her life is her husband, Kehinde Ojuawo, a Partner at Banwo & Igbodalo. "I often describe him as the best lawyer I know" she says, adding, "not merely because of his technical abilities, but because of how completely he enters a client's problem. He listens beyond the immediate brief to understand what the client is truly seeking to achieve, and then brings legal rigour, commercial judgement and creativity to finding the right solution. From him, I have learnt that excellent lawyering is not about displaying how much law one knows. It is about applying that knowledge in a way that helps the client make meaningful progress. His example and support have shaped my professional judgement and reinforced my belief that a lawyer's greatest value lies in combining expertise with empathy, clarity and practical solutions".

One of her proudest memories was having worked as part of the Olaniwun Ajayi legal team on the Dangote Refinery transaction. So seeing or hearing the refinery's contribution to the economy today always evokes a sense of pride in her. Another defining experience was leading Shoreline's internal legal work on its $500 million Master Murabaha financing with Qatar Islamic Bank. This transaction, she reminisced, required sustained effort, complex negotiations, cross border coordination, and considerable personal commitment from her. It was thus deeply fulfilling when the transaction was recognized as the IFN Nigeria Deal of the Year 2025 and the IFN Cross Border Deal of the Year 2025. Standing in Dubai with her colleagues to receive the recognition, she recalled, was a humbling moment.

Asked how she has been adding value to the company, Temiloluwa replied that a professional should not be measured merely by how busy she appears, but whether her work directs the organization towards the right results. It is from this angle that she measures her contribution to the company. According to her: "The legal thread runs from the gate to the boardroom. To advise effectively, I must understand how a legal decision affects operations, finance, communities, regulators, lenders and shareholders".

She continued "OML 30 is not simply an asset on paper. It depends on the people who operate it, finance it, regulate it and live within its host communities. Ultimately, business is about people, and sustainable value is created when legal rigour, commercial judgement and an understanding of those people are brought together".

While revealing that the next phase of her career is focused on deepening her leadership impact, she reiterated that she is not one to measure her impact in the organization simply by the transactions completed but the people developed by her and the institutional capacity created. Explaining further, she said her long term goal is to have people remember how she helped them grow because one of life's greatest investments is the investment made in people.

And to aspiring female professionals, she urged them to be thoroughly prepared and to remain teachable just as they should let their voices be heard when they have something valuable to contribute. She also enjoined them to seek mentors and sponsors saying that mentors will advise, while sponsors will mention their names when opportunities arise. Additionally, she charged them to pursue excellence, wholeness, purpose, and a life that adds value to other people.

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SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

I Want Prodigy Group To Be A Safe Harbour For High Net-Worth Individuals – Lauretha Irunokhai, GMD, Prodigy Group



LAURETHA Irunokhai studied Microbiology in the University of Ibadan, but what will surprise anyone today is that instead of her being in the laboratory, she is in the financial sector of the economy. As a microbiologist, the core of her training is analyzing complex data, hypothesizing outcomes, and managing risk in unpredictable environments, these she is now doing on a macroeconomic scale in the finance field. However, to solidify her foothold on the field, she proceeded to obtain an MBA in Financial Management whilst equally securing certification as a Fund Manager from Securities and Exchange Commission, SEC.

Noteworthy is the fact that she is today the Group Managing Director of Prodigy Group, a group structured into three specialized subsidiaries, each acting as a dedicated guardian of clients' financial ascent. Speaking about the subsidiaries, Lauretha disclosed that the first is PP Advisers Ltd, their SEC-licensed portfolio and advisory arm. "Think of this as the navigation system for our clients' wealth," she says. "Whether an investor wants the safety of our Prodigy Liquidity Note, the global diversification of our FX notes, or the social impact of our ethical Prodigy Aura agro-commodity fund, this subsidiary provides precision-engineered portfolios designed for steady, secure returns."

Second is Prodigy Finance which she hinted is their lending division. Through products like Flexi-Loans it provides capital that allows businesses to scale and individuals to bridge financial gaps. The third subsidiary, according to her, is the Prodigy Dotcom which is their real estate and commodity trading arm. Through the Prodigy Genesis real estate fund, clients are able to participate in forward-looking property developments, turning bricks and mortar into reliable high-yield assets.

On what makes the group to stand out, Lauretha remarks: "What makes Prodigy Group truly exceptional is how these subsidiaries work together. We don't just offer isolated products; we offer a collaborative family culture that rewards excellence. From the moment a client on-boards to the long-term growth of their portfolio, we ensure that sophisticated strategy always meets the serenity our clients deserve."

Lauretha whose career has been a journey of continuous and intentional evolution started out in portfolio management initially as an analyst, then dealer, and then portfolio manager whose days were driven by market research, trade execution, and the relentless pursuit of fund return targets. She recalled the days back then and said it was a rewarding period which enabled her learn the pulse of the market to the extent that she helped to grow pension portfolio in her company from N35billion to over N60billion whilst equally achieving their fixed-income return targets.

Recognizing the need to also understand the modus operandi of successful asset management, she left for FSDH Asset Management as Head of Investment Operations where she oversaw operational integrity, reconciliations and the launch of innovative products like Dollar Mutual Funds. From here, she moved to Sky Capital, first as Head of Portfolio Management before her elevation to Managing Director. "Leading the company's strategic direction and startup phase was a defining chapter of my career", she recounted, adding, "it allowed me to step back and look at the bigger picture – aligning our investment strategies with Sustainable Development Goals, ESG principles, and building a legacy of sustainable, inclusive wealth creation in Nigeria."

About the person that has had the greatest impact on her life, she immediately mentioned her father, Chief Theodore Oledibe of blessed memory who though is a self-made man, fiercely championed the girl child and instilled in all his children the mindset of resilience and independence, the trait she exhibits till today. Career-wise however, Lauretha disclosed that her late boss and mentor, Mrs Ngozi Chuks-Okeke was her guiding light. According to her, she was the woman who saw potential in her, and took the time to cultivate and nurture it. Apart from this, she was the one that taught her the sacred value of precision and detail in the industry. To the two of them, Lauretha is forever grateful as she confessed that their mentorship formed the dual compass that guides her leadership today, even as she strives to pass this on to the next generation of professionals.

The journey has however not been totally smooth-sailing in her career. Lauretha acknowledged the issue of gender bias in her early days but revealed that she tackled this by refusing to let any preconceived notions dictate her ceiling. Instead, she channeled her energy into acquiring more knowledge and to out-prepare the room, letting her results speak for her.

Asked to relate her indelible memories, the Prodigy Group chief helmsman informed that it is difficult to isolate any particular experience as her career has been a beautiful evolution of scale and perspective. She however noted: "But if I am truly honest, what makes the entire journey unforgettable is not the transactions or the titles. It is the people, the exceptional clients who trusted us with their wealth, the regulators who guided us with integrity, and the industry operators who challenged us to be better. It is this tapestry of human relationships that has made my career truly memorable and deeply rewarding."

Her ambition is to build a best-in-class, profoundly reliable Prodigy Group. Since wealth management and lending are businesses of trust, she intends to build an institution where clients never have to question the safety of their capital or the integrity of their advice. "I want Prodigy Group to be the ultimate safe harbour for high net-worth individuals and institutional investors alike", she stressed.

Prodigy Group started operations just last year. One of the things Lauretha says makes her proud is the bespoke financial instruments they have been able to bring into the market. According to her, they didn't just launch generic funds, they engineered solutions for modern economic realities like the Prodigy Vantage FX Note to help investors hedge against currency fluctuations.

Institutionalizing a culture of radical transparency in the group is also touted as her proudest operational achievement. Being able to embed values like trust, excellence, openness and security into the DNA of the firm is considered a big accomplishment to her. Boastfully, she said: "We have built a collaborative family culture that attracts top-tier talent, including industry veterans with decades of experience all united by the mission to provide impenetrable security and relentless excellence to our clients."

"I am Passionate About People Development" — Dr. Sophia Horsfall, GM, External Relations and Sustainable Development, NLNG



THOUGH her career appears remarkably diverse, a common thread runs through it all: service, continuous learning, and a deep-seated commitment to developing people and creating lasting value. As a medical doctor, chartered accountant, human resources expert, and top-tier public relations practitioner, Dr. Sophia Horsfall's professional trajectory is a story of continuous reinvention and bold leadership.

Dr. Horsfall serves as the General Manager for External Relations and Sustainable Development at NLNG Limited. The daughter of a career diplomat, Chief Donald Fubara Briggs, she grew up in an environment that fostered curiosity, discipline, and a drive to make a meaningful impact in any field she chose.

Although she initially trained in medicine, Horsfall has built an extraordinary multidisciplinary career. She is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), a member of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), and a member of the Institute of Directors (IoD).

Reflecting on her professional journey, Horsfall notes: "My academic journey started with medicine. I earned my Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBBS) from the College of Medicine, University of Lagos, and qualified as a medical doctor. Interestingly, my career eventually took me beyond clinical practice into the oil and gas industry, where I developed expertise in finance, people management, organizational development, communications, and corporate relations.

Along the way, I pursued further education, including an MBA from Imperial College London, a Postgraduate Diploma in Strategy and Innovation, and an M.Sc. in Major Programme Management from the University of Oxford. Looking back, my background has given me a broad perspective: medicine taught me to understand people; finance taught me discipline and accountability; human resources taught me the importance of growing talent; and corporate relations taught me how to build trust and navigate complex stakeholder environments."

Horsfall has seamlessly integrated these diverse capabilities to excel across key executive functions in the energy sector. She began her career as a medical officer at the Military Hospital before joining the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC). After several years of clinical practice at NNPC, she transitioned into finance and corporate leadership.

Upon moving to NLNG, she progressively took on higher-responsibility roles in systems administration, corporate accounting, management accounting, and budgeting, where she managed substantial operational budgets. She subsequently transitioned to human resources—taking on roles in manpower planning, resourcing, and leadership development—eventually serving as HR Manager, Business Partnering.

Her career then shifted toward public affairs. Between 2022 and 2024, Horsfall was seconded to Shell as Corporate Relations Manager on a strategic leadership assignment. In 2024, she returned to NLNG as Manager of Corporate Communications and Public Affairs before her elevation to General Manager, External Relations and Sustainable Development.

Recalling defining moments in her career, Horsfall points to her tenure as Chief of Staff to NLNG's COVID-19 Crisis Management Team: "We were dealing with unprecedented uncertainty—protecting our workforce, sustaining business operations, and responding to a rapidly evolving environment. It taught me invaluable lessons about leadership under pressure, teamwork, and the critical importance of calm, decisive action."

Her time in Human Resources was equally impactful. She oversaw massive talent acquisition drives, including one campaign that processed over 23,000 applications and assessed roughly 17,000 candidates across the UK and Nigeria. Transitioning into corporate communications brought new opportunities to apply her strategic business insights toward reputation management and multi-stakeholder engagement.

Today, leading NLNG's External Relations and Sustainable Development division allows her to drive meaningful outcomes well beyond the company's core operations. A primary example is NLNG's flagship sponsorship program—The Nigeria Prizes—which celebrates excellence in science, literature, and the creative arts. Public engagement in these initiatives continues to hit record highs; this year, the Nigeria Prize for Science received 237 entries, while the inaugural Nigeria Prize for Creative Arts attracted 98 entries.

On the sustainability front, Horsfall oversees high-impact social interventions designed to deliver long-term value to host communities. Key initiatives include: The NLNG–BOI 1 Billion Micro-Credit Scheme for MSMEs and the VIBES Vocational and Entrepreneurship Programme which targeted human capacity development and strategic community engagement surrounding major capital projects.

As a firm believer in human capital development, Dr. Horsfall advocates for empowering the next generation: "I am deeply committed to creating environments where young professionals—especially women—can discover their strengths, build their capabilities, and step confidently into leadership roles.

My ongoing goal is to contribute meaningfully to NLNG's growth, reputation, and sustainability, ensuring we remain a vital engine for Nigeria's broader development. I also believe leadership is never a finished product; even at senior levels, you must remain curious. I recently completed the Harvard Business School Advanced Management Program, and my biggest takeaway was the profound responsibility of leadership: to think clearly, act courageously, and shape the future deliberately."

The Guardian
Conscience, Nurtured by Truth

SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

Ideating Around The Future Of African Fashion Is The Most Exciting Phase Of My Career – Chinaenyenwa Nwokedi, Group CMO, CashToken Rewards Africa



A brand and marketing communications professional with over 13 years of experience across Africa and UK, Chinaenyenwa Nwokedi is the Group Chief Marketing Officer of CashToken Rewards Africa, and Director of Operations of the Lai Labode Heritage Foundation. She holds a B.A Combined Honours in French and German from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, an Executive MBA from CEIBS, and a Master's in Research and Public Policy from the University of Lagos.

On how she came into marketing, she answered: "Honestly, I stumbled into it. I was hired for a telemarketing role and quickly discovered there was no system in place to attract and retain the customers I was meant to bring in. There were no electronic catalogues or social media presence, so I built those from the scratch."

She added: "That experience helped me discover that branding and marketing communications came naturally to me, and I genuinely enjoy working on those projects. That led me to deliberately equip myself for the field, taking additional courses and earning Diplomas in Viral Marketing and Digital Marketing from Shaw Academy, now known as Upskillist. What started as a necessity became something I genuinely enjoy doing, and it has grown into a career in branding and marketing communications that continue to evolve."

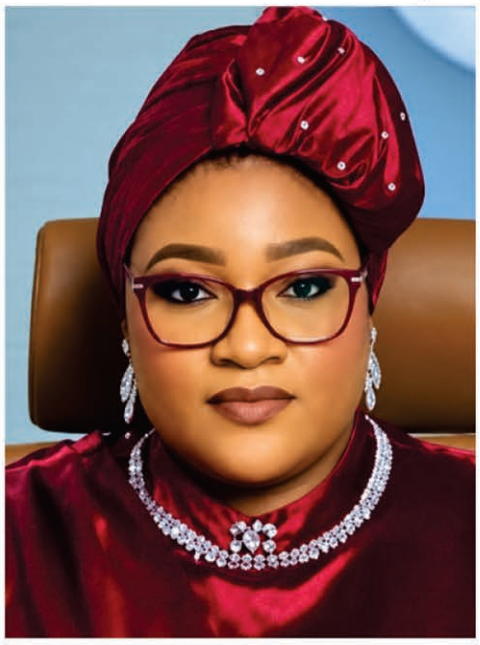
At NextGen Media where she equally worked before moving over to CashToken, she recalled working with over 50 SMEs and pre-seed startups, some of which have since scaled internationally. According to her, working with businesses at that early stage was particularly helpful because she got to see ideas grow into businesses and expand into other countries. Besides, she noted that the experience was really exciting and tops the list of her memorable experiences in her career even as it strengthened her belief that branding can influence how a business is understood from the very beginning.

She is thankful to her boss, Aare Prof Lai Labode for creating an environment where women like her thrive and occupy key decision-making positions in the organisation. In particular, she is thrilled that she could be entrusted with the role of Director of Operations for the Lai Labode Heritage Foundation as well as the encouragements she gets from him to step into rooms and onto global stages, to ideate and drive conversations on culture, and its role in connecting African people whilst also strengthening diplomatic relations. This, she declared, has been the most exciting phase of her career.

"I have had the priviledge of working alongside the Chairman, Aare Prof Lai Labode on the Afroliganza and Egbaliganza brands. It has been exciting to see the results as we continue to break new limits", she says. "At Egbaliganza 2025, we reached over 20 million people online. Egbaliganza 2026 brought 50 countries to Abeokuta for a Parade of Nations and a showcase of culture, heritage and fashion. Having 50 countries in Abeokuta demonstrated in a very practical way how culture and fashion can serve as tools of diplomacy, connecting people, creating opportunities for engagement and furthering the Confederation of African Fashion, CAFA, agenda."

She stated further: "Recently, during CAFA Ignite 2026 in Rwanda, we took the conversation a step further bringing together heads of industry and government to explore the role of African fashion as a driver of Rwanda's Made In Rwanda Campaign and its potential to strengthen Africa's fashion industry in line with CAFA's goal of building a $500billion African Fashion economy. Our work at CAFA is focused towards Rwanda's formal adoption of the African Fashion Growth Charter. Seeing how far the work has come has been surreal."

FARIDA SULEIMAN: Delivering Exceptional Results At Kam Holding



WHEN we talk about the steel industry in Nigeria, one company that can not be ignored is Kam Holding as it towers enormously above any other in the country. A fully indigenous conglomerate, it is into metal production, steel recycling, rolling mills and construction materials production, with major subsidiaries including Kam Steel Integrated Company, which operates manufacturing plants in Jimba Oja, Kwara State and Sagamu, Ogun State. Other subsidiaries are Kam Industries Nigeria Ltd which focuses on wire and allied production and Kam Wire and Steel Industries which does local rebar and iron processing.

Founded in 1997 by Dr Kamoru Yusuf, a serial industrialist whose perseverance and passion for excellence is the bedrock of success in the company, its products cut across the whole gamut of construction as it produces not just steel and iron products but allied products like roofing sheets, stone-coated roofing tiles, nails, binding wire and wire mesh, granite and stone dust, as well as packaging materials such as woven sacks and cartons just as it is into haulage services too.

Poised to become the most preferred steel manufacturer in Africa, the company prides itself on the quality of its products which is one of the best anyone can get anywhere in the world. It is for this reason that almost all road construction works going on in the country today has its products being used. Corporate customers and even the federal government through the Federal Ministry of Works are its major patronisers just as are several builders and estate developers both big and small. With direct employees of over 5,000 and indirect ones of over 10,000, and foreign presence in China and India, the company is certainly contributing in no small measure to Nigeria's economic progress.

Even though participation of women in the steel sector is minimal in the country, nonetheless, the company can boast of several distinguished women in its employ. One of these is Hajia Farida Suleiman, the Head of Corporate Affairs and External Communication. A good team player and professional par excellence who pursued academic excellence at the Federal University of Technology, Minna, Farida is responsible for developing and implementing communication strategies to enhance the organisation's reputation and foster positive relationships with external stakeholders.

A seasoned communicator with over 18 years of working experience in public relations, including government liaison and consultancy, she has been impacting the company in a very significant way. Known for her strategic focus, regulatory insight, innovative trait and commitment to excellence, her role involves strategic communication, media relations, crisis communication, stakeholder engagement, public affairs, and corporate social responsibility in the organisation and it is no exaggeration that she has always been delivering desirable results. Besides, she is equally charged with ensuring consistency in messaging across channels, a function she equally performs with great skill and dynamism.

All said, Farida has been a square peg in a square hole at Kam Holding, adding value in a manner that has become an obsession. In fact, she has not failed to display commitment, proactiveness, and efficiency in her work, sterling qualities which is facilitating improved performance and success for the organisation.

My Career Has Been One of Progressive Responsibility And Continuous Learning – Stella Oshorinde, Chief Growth Officer, CashToken Rewards Africa



SHE read Estate Management at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, so naturally, she started her professional career in real estate, gaining valuable experience in valuation, brokerage, project management and client engagement in 2018. However, a year after, Stella Oshorinde transitioned into the technology and customer loyalty sector when she joined CeLD Innovations as Client Relationship Manager. It is Instructive that she has remained in the sector since then, and today, serves as Chief Growth Officer for CashToken Rewards Africa.

Asked to elucidate on the business the company does, she replied: "Cash Token Rewards Africa is a rewardtech company with global infrastructure for universal rewards spanning cash rewards, products and advisory services. We develop solutions that enable businesses to engage and reward customers while driving acquisition, retention, transaction growth and commercial performance."

Stella who describes her career as one of progressive responsibility and continuous learning continued: "My relationship with CashToken Rewards goes back several years, so my contribution has evolved alongside the business. I started from the client relationship side, moved into business strategy and sales, then commercial leadership, and today, I lead the broader growth agenda. My current role covers growth strategy, sales and business development, revenue optimisation, market expansion, customer growth and strategic partnerships".

According to her, in the course of her career, she has been fortunate to work on several projects that have been memorable because of their scale, complexity and impact. One of the most significant has been MTN CashToken Rewards, which she has worked on since 2020. Her involvement has spanned customer loyalty and several digital engagement initiatives, including MyMTNNG App, Zigi, CRBT, Mundo, Callerfeet and Ayoba. She has also worked on MTN Sales and Distribution CashToken Rewards for retailers and MoMo agents, Airtel Recharge and Blow, Glo CashToken Rewards, T2, formerly 9Mobile CashToken Rewards, and the GB Foods Africa Ginomax campaign for retailers and distributors.

Beyond telecoms and fast moving consumer goods, she has also worked on the NNPC – Oleum product penetration campaign since 2024 as well as the MasterCard mydeal zone project spanning six Sub-Saharan African countries where she was lead activator for the Nigerian and Kenyan markets. Additionally, she has worked on projects involving several financial institutions including First Bank and Parallex Bank.

What makes the experiences particularly unforgettable and meaningful to her, she says, is that her role went beyond campaign execution as she was involved in ideation, product development, project management, implementation, stakeholder management, performance tracking and optimisation. According to her, seeing an idea move from a concept into a live product and then seeing the impact it creates, has always been very rewarding to her.

Stella's goal for her department is to build it into a high-performing function that consistently identifies new markets, partnerships and revenue opportunities while deepening the value they create for customers.

My Goal Is To Build A Recruitment Function That Is Efficient, Proactive – Franca Oche, Recruitment Manager, Geoplex Drillteq



SHE is the Recruitment Manager for Geoplex Drillteq Ltd, a role which makes her responsible for managing recruitment activities across the firm, working with hiring managers to understand manpower requirements, coordinating candidate assessment and ensuring that the organization has access to the talent required to support its operations. She possesses an MBA and has undertaken professional training in strategic planning and implementation which have helped her develop a broader understanding of how people and businesses must work together. Added to these, she has several years of experience spanning recruitment, human resources, administration, workforce planning as well as strategy and operations. She is no other than Franca Oche.

On how she got into the human resources profession, Franca stated: "My interest in human resources developed from my early experience working with people and supporting business operations. I came to understand that people are one of the most important resources in any organization. Having the right person in the right role can significantly influence productivity, team performance, and the achievement of business objectives. Recruitment particularly became an area of interest for me because it gives the opportunity to influence an organization from the point where a person joins the organization"

Franca contends that her career has been a journey of continuous learning, increased responsibility and professional growth. Speaking on the challenges she had encountered because of her gender, she said: "One of the challenges I have experienced is having to establish credibility and demonstrate competence, particularly when working in environments where many of the senior decision-makers and technical professionals are men".

On how she countered this, she offered: "I have addressed this through continuous learning, preparation and professionalism. I believe that when you understand your work, understand the business, and are able to support your recommendations with facts, your competence becomes evident. I have also learnt to be confident in my abilities while remaining open to learning from others. Being a woman should not be viewed as a limitation".

Memorable moments in her career come from seeing people she recruited or supported progress in their careers. Another memorable aspect of her career, she says, has been her progression from administration into HR and eventually into broader management and strategic responsibilities. "It has shown me that career growth is possible when you remain willing to learn, accept responsibility, and continuously develop yourself", she maintained.

Her goal is to build a recruitment function that is efficient, proactive and closely aligned with the firm's business needs. She also wishes to strengthen their use of technology and data in the recruitment process. And to budding female professionals, she advised them to invest continuously in themselves and develop confidence alongside competence in whatever career they choose.

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SPECIAL REPORT ON VISIONARY BUSINESS LEADER RESHAPING NIGERIA'S REAL ESTATE LANDSCAPE

I Want To Build Institutions That Can Outlive Me

– Chief Osasu Igbinedion Ogwuche, Founder, TOS Group



Can we have an insight into your background?

I am a Nigerian entrepreneur, social-impact investor, media executive and institution builder. But beneath those titles, I have always been interested in one fundamental question: why do some societies succeed in turning their human and natural resources into broad-based opportunity, while others struggle despite having enormous potential? Much of my life and career has been an attempt to understand that question and, in my own way, contribute to the answer. I studied at Stonehill College in the United States and later earned a Master's degree from Northeastern University also in Massachusetts, U.S. I have also undertaken executive education at Oxford Saïd Business School and Harvard Kennedy School, among other professional programmes. My work today spans entrepreneurship, media, philanthropy, governance, women's leadership and development through the TOS Group and TOS Foundation Africa. I see these not as disconnected interests, but as different parts of the same journey: understanding people, building institutions and creating systems that allow people and communities to thrive.

Can you take us through your career trajectory?

Looking back, the different chapters of my career may appear quite different—media, business, philanthropy, governance and leadership—but to me, they have always been connected by the same objective: understanding how to move ideas from conversation to implementation. I began in communications and media, The Osasu Show to be specific, where I learned the power of storytelling, public engagement and the ability to shape narratives. Over time, I became increasingly interested in what happens after the conversation—how ideas translate into businesses, institutions, policies and tangible outcomes. In 2016, at the age of 24, I founded TOS Group. Entrepreneurship gave me an opportunity to build, experiment and understand markets, capital, people and institutions from the ground up. As the Group evolved, so did my interests. I became increasingly involved in development and governance issues, which led to the growth of TOS Foundation Africa and our work across education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, civic engagement, youth development and women's leadership. My work around women's participation in governance has been particularly important to me. Through initiatives including Reserved Seats for Women and HerCademy, I have worked to move the conversation beyond simply saying women should participate to creating practical pathways for women to develop the confidence, networks, skills and opportunities to lead. I have also increasingly embraced a Pan-African perspective. Being selected as a 2026 Archbishop Desmond Tutu Leadership Fellow has strengthened that commitment and challenged me to think beyond individual interventions towards the institutions and systems that can shape Africa's future. So, if I had to summarise my trajectory, I would say it has been a journey from communications, to entrepreneurship, to social impact and increasingly towards systems-building.

Who and who would you say have been most influential on your life and career?

My parents have undoubtedly been among the greatest influences on my life. They taught me responsibility, hard work, resilience, integrity and service. I grew up understanding that whatever opportunities you have should ultimately create opportunities for others. My faith has also been a profound influence. I see leadership as stewardship. Achievement matters, but so does what you do with the opportunities and influence you have been given. My family has also shaped the way I think about leadership. My husband and my children constantly remind me that success is not simply about what you accomplish publicly, but also about the kind of person you are privately and the legacy you leave for the next generation. Professionally, I have been fortunate to learn from many leaders across business, government, philanthropy and development. But Africa itself has been one of my greatest teachers. I have learned from extraordinary leaders, but also from ordinary Nigerians who navigate imperfect systems every day and still find ways to build, provide and hope. Those experiences have reinforced my belief that Africa does not lack talent or potential. We need stronger systems and institutions capable of converting that potential into opportunity.

As a female professional, have you ever experienced any gender bias? If yes, can you relate the experience to the readers? How did you tackle the issue?

Yes. I have experienced gender bias, particularly earlier in my career, when being a young woman sometimes meant that my ideas or capacity were viewed through a different lens. Sometimes the bias is overt; more often, it is subtle. It can show up in who is given the benefit of the doubt, who is assumed to have authority in a room, whose expertise is questioned, or who is expected to prove themselves repeatedly. Earlier in my career, I sometimes felt that I had to work twice as hard to establish credibility. But over time, I realised that the more important question was not simply how I could overcome bias personally. It was how we build institutions in which a woman's opportunity is not determined by her gender, her connections or her willingness to fight twice as hard to be heard. My response has therefore been twofold: build my own competence and credibility, while also working to make the path easier for those coming behind me. That shift in thinking influenced much of my later work around women's leadership and representation. I don't want the next generation of women to spend all their energy fighting for permission to lead. I want them equipped to lead effectively.

Can you relate some memorable experiences in your career?

Some of my most memorable experiences have been moments when an idea moved from paper into real life—or when someone else's life changed because we created an opportunity for them. One example is HerCademy, where women from across Nigeria were brought together for mentorship, leadership development and practical exposure to the National Assembly. Watching women who may never previously have imagined themselves in those spaces begin to see themselves differently was deeply rewarding. Another was our work around the Reserved Seats for Women campaign. Taking an issue that many considered difficult and building a coalition around it—bringing together legislators, civil society, development partners, media and citizens—taught me a great deal about the power of sustained advocacy and collaboration. Being selected as a 2026 Archbishop Desmond Tutu Leadership Fellow was also particularly meaningful. It was a reminder that work that begins locally can resonate within a much broader African leadership community. But some of my most memorable moments are quieter ones: seeing a young person gain an opportunity, watching a woman find her voice, seeing a business we built create jobs, or watching someone on our team grow into a leader. Those moments have taught me that leadership is ultimately measured not by how many people know your name, but by how many people's lives are different because you showed up.

You started the TOS Group in 2016 at just 24, what inspired entrepreneurship in you at such a young age?

At 24, I did not know that I was beginning a ten-year experiment in institution-building. I simply knew that I wanted to create rather than wait for permission to create. I have always been uncomfortable with identifying problems without trying to solve them. I saw opportunities around me and wanted to build something of my own rather than wait for someone else to create the opportunity. There was also a deeper motivation. I wanted to build an institution that could evolve with me and create value in multiple ways—not only financially, but socially. Entrepreneurship gave me the freedom to experiment, but it also taught me something much bigger: building anything of lasting value requires discipline, people, institutions and systems—not just vision. Starting young also taught me that you don't need to have everything figured out before you begin. You need a clear sense of purpose, the courage to start, the humility to learn and the resilience to keep adapting. Ten years later, I am still learning.

What are the various subsidiaries in the group and what does each do?

TOS Group has evolved into a diversified platform with businesses and institutions serving different but complementary purposes. TOS Foundation Africa is our social-impact and systems-change platform. Its work spans women's leadership, entrepreneurship, education, healthcare, and civic engagement. TOS TV Network is our digital-first Pan-African media platform, using media, storytelling and strategic communications to shape conversations and amplify African perspectives. NatSu Global operates across investment, real estate and related ventures, with a focus on creating commercially sustainable opportunities across markets. LEZEANOO Services Limited operates in the stevedoring and downstream oil and gas space. Nola Restaurant & Lounge is our hospitality business, bringing together premium dining, entertainment and lifestyle experiences in Abuja. Although these entities operate in different sectors, they are connected by a common philosophy: build well, create value and think beyond the immediate transaction.

What are your goals for the group?

My ambition is much bigger than building a collection of successful businesses. I want TOS Group to become a globally respected, financially resilient and mission-driven African institution—one that creates economic value while contributing meaningfully to Africa's development. Over the next decade, I see TOS becoming increasingly Pan-African, with stronger investments, partnerships and operations across the continent. I also want to deepen the connection between our commercial and social-impact work. We need more African institutions that can generate wealth, deploy capital responsibly, build businesses, strengthen communities and contribute to stronger systems at the same time. But perhaps most importantly, I don't want to build an empire that depends on me. I want to build institutions that can outlive me. That, for me, is the real measure of institution-building.

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The Wings Schools Wins NILDS Quiz, To Represent Osun At Zonal Stage

By **Suliyat Tella**



LEGISLATURE AND DEMOCRACY

29TH SEPTEMBER, 2026

SCHOOLS	ROUND 1						ROUND 2							ROUND 3							
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL SCORE	1	2	3	4	5	TOTA SCOR	TOTAL 1+2	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL SCORE	TOTAL 1+2+3	POSITION
THE WINGS SEC. SCHOOL	5	5	0	5	5	20	5	5	5	5	5	25	45	0	0	5	5	5	15	60	1ST
ALFAREED COLLEGE (T) (T3)	5	5	0	5	5	20	5	5	0	5	0	15	35	5	5	5	0	0	15	50	3RD
KIRIJI MEM. COLLEGE						0						0	0						0	0	
ZION BAPTIST H/S (T)	0	5	0	5	5	15						0	15						0	15	
VICKAYOR PRIVATE SCHOOL (T) (T3)	5	0	5	5	5	20	0	5	0	5	5	15	35	0	5	5	5	5	20	55	2ND
OGEDENGBE SCHOOL OF SCIENCE	5	0	5	5	5	20	0	0	0	5	0	5	25						0	25	

2024 | 2025 | 2026 | Sheet1

The Wings Secondary School, Iwo, has emerged winner of the Osun State edition of the 11th National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) Secondary Schools Quiz Competition. The school scored 60 points to finish ahead of four other participating schools at the competition held last Tuesday at Ara Hall, SUBEB Warehouse, behind Omoluabi Building, Abere, Osun State.

With the victory, The Wings Schools will represent Osun State at the Southwest Zonal edition of the competition later in the year. The competition, organised by NILDS, was centred on the theme, "Legislature and Democracy," with students tested on their knowledge of the legislature, democratic principles and Nigeria's legislative structure.

The competition brought together secondary schools drawn from different parts of Osun State, with the participating schools representing different zones across the state. Although six schools had been selected to participate, five eventually took part in the competition after Kiriji Memorial College, representing Ikirun Zone, failed to turn up.

The schools that participated were The Wings Secondary School, Iwo; Alfareed College, Ede; Zion Baptist High School, Osogbo; Vickayor Private School, Ife; and Ogedengbe School of Science, Ilesa. The quiz was conducted in three rounds, with each correct answer attracting five points. The Wings Secondary School got off to a strong start in the first round, recording 20 points alongside Alfareed College, Vickayor Private School and Ogedengbe School of Science. Zion Baptist High School recorded 15 points.

The competition became more decisive in the second round when The Wings Schools produced a perfect score of 25 points, taking its cumulative score to 45 points. That performance gave the Iwo-based school a clear advantage over its competitors going into the final round. The school subsequently scored another 15 points in the third round to finish with 60 points and secure first position. Vickayor Private School finished second with 55 points, while Alfareed College came third with 50 points. Ogedengbe School of Science recorded 25 points to finish fourth, while Zion Baptist High School placed fifth with 15 points.

The result means The Wings Schools will now move beyond the state level to compete against representatives from other states in the Southwest at the zonal stage. For the students who represented the school, NurudeenRoheemah and Samuel Oladotun, the victory also provides an opportunity to compete on a wider platform and demonstrate their knowledge of legislative and democratic affairs.

The competition is part of efforts to expose young Nigerians to the workings of legislative institutions and the principles that underpin democratic governance. For secondary school students, questions on the legislature can extend beyond the names of political office holders to areas such as the functions of legislative houses, lawmaking, representation, separation of powers and the relationship between different arms of government.

An understanding of such issues is important in a democratic society, where citizens are expected to have some knowledge of how public institutions operate and how decisions affecting them are made. The competition therefore provided students with an opportunity to engage with subjects that are sometimes treated as largely theoretical within the classroom.

The performance of The Wings Schools also highlights the role of academic competitions in providing students with opportunities to test their knowledge outside conventional classroom assessments. Unlike regular examinations, quiz competitions require participants to recall information quickly, work under pressure and respond confidently before an audience. The three-round format of the NILDS competition also meant that an early lead did not automatically guarantee victory. The Wings Schools' 20 points in the opening round placed it among the leading schools, but its perfect score in the second round proved decisive. The 25 points recorded in that round moved the school to 45 points, giving it a 10-point advantage over Vickayor Private School, which had 35 points at that stage. The final round then saw The Wings Schools maintain its position and finish with five points more than the second-placed school. The outcome also showed how closely contested the top positions were. Only 10 points separated the first and second-placed schools, while the difference between the second and third positions was five points. The competition brought together students from Iwo, Ede, Osogbo, Ife and Ilesa, providing a platform for schools from different parts of the state to compete against one another.

The participating students were also reported to have maintained a peaceful and collegial atmosphere throughout the event. The organisers' focus on legislature and democracy gave the competition a civic education dimension, with students engaging with issues connected to Nigeria's political and institutional structure.

CHIOMA IWUJI – Building A World Class Finance Function At Geoplex Drillteq



CHIOMA Iwuji read Economics at the Ebonyi State University and came out with a Second Class Upper, but being someone that values continuous learning and is progressive in thinking, has since qualified as a chartered accountant and chartered tax professional. What is more! She is currently pursuing an MSc in International Business Management at the University of East London. She joined Geoplex Drillteq in 2016 as Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable Officer, qualified as a chartered accountant in 2018, and by dint of hard work and consistent delivery of results, rose through the ranks to General Manager, Finance, her present position in the company.

Asked what motivated her desire to go into the accountancy profession after her first degree, she replied: "My background in Economics gave me an appreciation of how resources are allocated and how financial decisions affect business. I wanted to build on that foundation by developing the practical expertise to ensure accurate financial reporting, promote accountability, and support responsible resource management. This motivated me to pursue the ICAN qualification, and I qualified as a chartered accountant in 2018"

Professionally, she noted that her growth has been shaped by her Chairman at Geoplex Drillteq, Engr. Kolawole Ogunsanya, saying that his confidence in her gave her the platform to take on increasingly important responsibilities. Noteworthy is the fact that she progressed from her entry point in 2016 to Senior Accountant; Finance Coordinator; Manager, Financial Planning and Services; Assistant General Manager, Finance; before her elevation to General Manager, Finance. Each role from transaction processing and receivables to planning, reporting, treasury, controls, financing, tax, audit and strategic support expanded her responsibility and gave her a practical understanding of the wide business, making her a better finance professional.

One of her defining memories in the company is the recovery of a substantial receivable from one of their international oil company, IOC, clients without the compromise of her integrity. Also, in 2022, she led discussions on their acquisition of five drilling rigs with a bank.

As GM Finance, Chioma has ensured the improvement of processes in the company. Said she: "I have strengthened management reporting and developed dashboards that give leadership clearer information on revenue, cost, margins, cash flow and working capital. I participated in the implementation of SAP Business ByDesign and now serves as finance sponsor for SAP S|4HANA, with emphasis on data quality, process discipline and reliable reporting. I also proposed the Employee of the Month initiative adopted by the company to recognize and encourage good work".

Acknowledging the grace of God in her life, she is equally grateful to her husband who supported her through demanding stages of work, study and family life. She is also appreciative of her elder brother and Chidimma Anyanwu who encouraged her to pursue accountancy.

Her goal now is to build a world-class finance function that management trusts for both accurate numbers and sound judgement. This, she hinted, means timely reporting, strong controls, disciplined cash and working capital management, full use of SAP S|4HANA, automation and data analytics. Besides, she wants to build a capable team that does not depend on any one individual through documented processes, continuous training, cross-functional collaboration and succession planning.

The Unifying Thread Throughout My Career Has Been Transformation – Edidiong Ekwere, Manager, Corporate Transformation Advisory, NLNG



EDIDIONG Amama Ekwere trained as a geologist and began her career at Shell, initially working across community development, environmental management and HSE before moving into exploration geoscience. She is the current Manager, Corporate Transformation Advisory at NLNG, a role which puts her at the centrestage of translating NLNG's strategic ambition into an integrated and executable enterprise transformation agenda.

"A central part of my work is supporting our large-scale transformation portfolio, the organisation's key transformation initiative by maintaining alignment across the operational, organisational, cultural, people, process, technology, data, and other business dimensions that collectively enable transformation", she says while explaining her function in the company.

She added: "I add value by helping the organisation connect strategy, people, processes, technology, and data; by making progress and outcomes more visible; and by creating the conditions for timely decisions, sustained behavioural change, and stronger enterprise performance."

Edidiong who holds a Doctorate in Business Administration specialising in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning has not had an entirely linear career trajectory. After over 13 years in Shell, she went into entrepreneurship, starting Amama Design Atelier, but later joined Ardova Plc where she led enterprise strategy, portfolio management, process automation, advanced analytics, data governance, customer experience, culture and delivery across functions. Apart from this, she led the rebrand from Forte Oil to Ardova, introduced OKR and Agile approaches and helped embed stronger reporting and execution disciplines while also contributing to revenue growth from N150billion to more than N200billion in 18 months. From Ardova, she ported to Dorman Long Engineering as General Manager, Strategy & Digital Business Transformation, before eventually berthing at NLNG.

"The unifying thread throughout my journey has been transformation, understanding what exists, seeing what could be better, and helping to build the structures, capabilities, and momentum required to move from one to the other. I bring the discipline of a scientist, the perspective of a strategist, the pragmatism of an entrepreneur, and the imagination of an artist to the work I do", she maintained.

According to her, there have been defining moments across the different chapters of her career. As an exploration geoscientist at Shell, she recalled contributing approximately 50 million barrels of oil equivalent to the portfolio through prospectivity reviews, and supporting earlier work that resulted in an increase of approximately 500 million barrels of oil equivalent.

Also, leading the rebranding of Forte Oil to Ardova Plc is another important milestone to her. This is because the rebranding involved aligning stakeholders around a renewed organisational direction and translating that ambition into a coherent brand. Seeing the work receive international recognition, including Gold at the 2021 Transform Awards Middle East and Africa was particularly rewarding to her.

Edidiong's overarching goal is to position the Corporate Transformation Advisory as the trusted compass and catalyst for change at NLNG, helping to make the company more resilient, and innovative and ready for the future.

And to aspiring female professionals, she encourages them to become builders and learn to take an idea from nothing to something useful, valuable and enduring. Also, she charged them not to allow the world to reduce them to one role, as career is not a cage.

TAFTA Empowers Female Digital Creators

By **Gregory Austin Nwakunor**

FOR participants in Creator HQ 2026, the message remained clear: Create. Protect. Scale. This message rang through the three-day programme reinforceing the importance of creating targeted platforms that respond to the changing realities of the digital creative economy, while giving young women the confidence, knowledge and resources required to participate fully in its growth.

The three-day immersive programme designed to equip female digital creators with the knowledge, skills, tools and industry connections required to build more structured, protected and commercially sustainable creative careers was facilitated by Terra Academy for the Arts (TAFTA).

Held from September 28 to 30, 2026, at Landmark Centre, Creator HQ brought together approximately 150 female digital creators for three days of intensive learning, practical workshops, industry conversations, networking and hands-on creator experiences.

Developed around the three core pillars of Create, Protect and Scale, the programme addressed some of the most important areas shaping the careers of today's digital creators, including content creation and storytelling, personal branding, intellectual property and digital protection, monetisation, global income opportunities, brand partnerships, audience development and the business of being a creator.

Creator HQ forms part of TAFTA's broader commitment to strengthening Africa's creative economy by ensuring that emerging creatives are equipped not only with artistic and technical skills, but also with the business knowledge and structures required to turn their talents into sustainable livelihoods.

The programme was delivered with the support of the Mastercard Foundation and other supporting partners, whose contributions helped expand the learning experience and provide participants with practical opportunities and resources throughout the three-day programme.

Beyond classroom-style learning, Creator HQ was intentionally designed as a practical and interactive experience. Participants engaged in workshops, group exercises, creator challenges, question-and-answer sessions and networking opportunities with experienced professionals from across the creative, legal, business and digital industries.

A key highlight of the programme was the opportunity for participants to put their learning into practice through creator challenges and hands-on activities. Outstanding participants were also rewarded with content creation tools and creator kits, providing them with practical resources to support the next stage of their creative journeys.

The distribution of these tools reflected one of the core objectives of Creator HQ, ensuring that participants left the programme not only with knowledge and inspiration, but also with tangible resources that could support them in applying what they had learned.

Extending that commitment beyond the three-day programme, the 150 creators who participated in Creator HQ will also receive press passes to the Lagos International Theatre Festival (LITF), giving them an opportunity to experience, document and engage with one of Lagos' major cultural gatherings.

The Lagos International Theatre Festival will hold from November 14 and 15, 2026, at MUSON Centre, Lagos, bringing together theatre, culture and creative expression while providing another platform for emerging creators to engage with the wider creative ecosystem.

Speaking on the significance of the programme, Bolanle Austen-Peters, Founder of Terra Academy for the Arts (TAFTA), said: "Creators today have extraordinary opportunities to build audiences, businesses and careers through digital platforms, but talent and visibility alone are not enough. They also need to understand how to protect their work, create sustainable income and build structures around what they do. Creator HQ was designed to bring those elements together and give these young women practical knowledge, access and tools that can help them take greater ownership of their creative careers."

She added that supporting women within the creative economy remains an important part of ensuring that more young Africans are able to participate meaningfully in the opportunities emerging across the sector.

"There is tremendous talent across Africa, particularly among young women who are already creating, influencing culture and building communities online. Our responsibility is to help ensure that they also have the knowledge, confidence and opportunities required to turn that creativity into something sustainable."

Academy Lead at TAFTA, Joseph Umoibom, described the programme as an important step towards closing the gap between creativity and the business knowledge required to build lasting careers.

"One of the things we wanted participants to understand through Creator HQ is that being a creator goes far beyond posting content. There is a business behind creativity. There are questions around intellectual property, monetisation, audience development, partnerships, contracts and long-term sustainability that every serious creator needs to understand."

He continued: "Over the three days, we saw participants ask questions, test ideas, collaborate and begin to think differently about their work. Giving some of them practical creator tools was also important because we wanted the impact of the programme to continue beyond the venue. The goal is for them to leave Creator HQ better prepared to create, protect the value of what they produce and scale their careers."







The Unpredictability In The Telecommunications Industry Is What Excites Me – Abimbola Falope, Commercial Director, Pan African Towers.



SHE is the Commercial Director for Pan African Towers Ltd, a role which places her as the primary bridge between the company's technical operations teams and its clients. While the engineering teams work round the clock to guarantee uninterrupted uptime, Abimbola Falope's department focuses on driving client satisfaction, securing long-term renewals and capturing new market share.

"My team functions with a project-management mindset to secure reliable, repeated execution", remarked Abimbola Falope, the Commercial Director. "Ultimately commercial success isn't just about securing customers, it's about nurturing long-term partnerships. On this approach, we have strengthened our commercial frameworks and achieved over 200% financial growth for the company."

For those who may not know, Pan African Towers Ltd is Nigeria's leading indigenous telecommunications infrastructure provider. They supply shared tower infrastructure to mobile network operators and other telecommunication firms, allowing them to expand connectivity across urban and rural areas without the heavy capital burden of building separate towers. Needless saying, having multiple operators on a single structure has the advantage of minimizing environmental impact and infrastructure duplication.

Abimbola who has a B.Sc in Mass Communication from the University of Lagos and a Master's in Psychology from the University of Wales, UK had the priviledge of witnessing the birth of Nigeria's telecommunications revolution firsthand while working in 2002 with Motophone and Communications Investment Company Ltd, which rebranded to Globacom. This marked the formal launch of her career in the telecommunications industry. She later moved to Helios Towers Nigeria, one of the Nigeria's pioneer infrastructure co-location firms as Key Account Manager.

From here, it was to IHS Nigeria that she moved on to in similar capacity even as she transitioned into HR as the Employee Engagement Manager in the same company. In that role, she helped build the foundation for the company's employee engagement and women's empowerment initiatives. However, it was in 2022 that she crossed over to Pan African Towers as GM, Key Account Management, and got elevated to Commercial Director as time went on.

She named Patrick Nwakogo, Country Director of Dale Carnegie Nigeria as a man that has been a pivotal influence on her path saying that through his mentorship, she was made to realize that it is never too late for anyone to redefine one's career path or elevate one's performance in a current role. Said she: "His core message remains my guiding principle: keep pushing against the ceiling-eventually, it will either move or break."

She believes the telecommunications industry is highly unpredictable as it operates in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous waters. For her however, this unpredictability is what makes her work exciting. "I enjoy the challenge, the constant learning, and the opportunity to keep growing in an industry that never stands still", she quipped.

For the Commercial Department, her goal is to cement it as the central growth engine of the company. And to the young female professionals out there, she charged them to believe in themselves.

Afeni Takes Charge At Customs FOU 'A', As Aliyu Retires

By **Sulaimon Salau**

THE Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Federal Operations Unit (FOU) Zone 'A', Ikeja, Lagos, has welcomed Deputy Comptroller,OladapoOlukay odeAfeni as the unit's 30th Acting Comptroller, as Comptroller GamboAliyu retired from the Service after a meritorious tenure.

Afeni, in his inaugural address, pledged "purposeful, professional and accountable leadership" in furtherance of the mandate of the Nigeria Customs Service.

He expressed appreciation for the confidence reposed in him by the Comptroller-General of Customs, Bashir AdewaleAdeniyi and the Service's management team.

The acting Comptroller said his administration would pursue "intelligence-led enforcement", block revenue leakages, and protect Nigeria's economic and security interests.

He emphasised that enforcement activities would be "firm, lawful and respectful of human dignity", while legitimate trade would be facilitated through constructive engagement with traders, manufacturers, importers, exporters, customs brokers and other stakeholders.

Seplat Seeks More Investments To Position Nigeria As Africa's Gas Powerhouse

By **Sulaimon Salau**

SEPLAT Energy Plc has called for increased investment across Nigeria's gas value chain to unlock the country's vast natural gas resources, strengthen energy security, drive industrialisation, and position Nigeria as Africa's leading gas powerhouse.

Speaking at the Gas Investment Forum in Lagos, Seplat Energy's Chief Executive Officer, Engr. EffiongOkon, represented by Mr. OkechukwuMba, Director of Gas & New Energy at Seplat Energy, said that while Nigeria possesses more than 215 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves, the true value of those resources can only be realised through sustained investments in production, processing, transportation and utilisation infrastructure.

Addressing the conference, Okon noted that energy poverty remains a major challenge across Africa, with an estimated 600 million people in sub-Saharan Africa still lacking access to electricity.

"Gas reserves in the ground do not power homes or factories. Gas creates value only when it is produced and reliably delivered to consumers. The task before us is to convert Nigeria's vast gas endowment into tangible economic growth."

Transporters Decry Illegal Checkpoints At Lagos Ports Corridor

By **Sulaimon Salau**

THE National Executive Council of the Council of Maritime Transport Unions and Associations (COMTUA) has condemned what it described as the continued lawlessness, impunity, and mounting of illegal checkpoints by the Lagos State Trucks and Cargo Operations Committee (LASTCOC) along the Lagos port access corridor.

The transport union made the condemnation following LASTCOC's alleged disobedience to the resolutions reached at a peace meeting convened by the Commissioner of Police, Western Ports Command, Nigeria Police Force.

In a statement by the National President of COMTUA, Prince Adeyinka Aroyewun, the union disclosed that the meeting was convened in line with the directives of the Inspector General of Police on zero tolerance for extortion and illegal roadblocks along port transit routes.

According to the statement, stakeholders, including representatives of COMTUA and LASTCOC, met at the Western Ports Command Headquarters to resolve operational bottlenecks impacting port logistics.

Detailing the directives agreed upon during the security meeting, COMTUA stated: "At that meeting, it was clearly and unequivocally agreed and directed that: No Union, Association or Committee is permitted to conduct any Union or Committee business, mount checkpoints, or collect any form of levy, toll or ticket on the port corridor – from Coconut, TinCan, Apapa to Mile 2 and From Ijora to Apapa port."

The association, however, expressed concern that despite all parties pledging commitment to the directive to guarantee free traffic flow, LASTCOC operatives returned to the routes hours later.

"Sadly, less than 24 hours after that agreement, LASTCOC operatives returned to the road this morning, mounted illegal roadblocks, and resumed illegal toll collection, extortion and harassment of truckers with greater impunity. This is a direct affront to the authority of the Commissioner of Police, Western Ports Command, a contempt of the Nigeria Police Force, and a deliberate act capable of causing a breach of public peace," Aroyewun stated.

Reiterating its position on the developments along the maritime corridor, COMTUA outlined key declarations that: "LASTCOC has disobeyed a lawful agreement reached before the Commissioner of Police, Western Ports Command. This is unacceptable and provocative.

"The Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC), Nigerian Shippers' Council, Nigerian Ports Authority, and other Federal Government Agencies have condemned toll collection on the port access roads."



Registrar and Secretary to Council, Chartered Insurance Institute of Nigeria (CIIN), AbimbolaTiamiyu (left); President/Chairman of Council, CIIN, Akinjide Orimolade; Chief Executive Officer, Creato Urban and Convener, Insurance Meets Tech (IMT), Odion Aleobua, and Chief Operating Officer, Creato Urban, Oluwafemi Victor-Afolabi, during the signing of an institutional partnership agreement between Insurance Meets Tech (IMT) and the Chartered Insurance Institute of Nigeria (CIIN), ahead of IMT 5.0, in Lagos.

Verve Renews Collaboration WithGooglePlay To Enhance Digital, Lifestyle Experiences

By **Sulaimon Salau**

VERVE, a payment card and token brand, has renewed its collaboration with Google Play for Africa's Biggest Fitness Party, VerveLife 9.0, themed 'Ignite', extending a collaboration that brings together digital experiences, fitness, entertainment and lifestyle across Nigeria.

Now in its ninth season, VerveLife is taking its fitness and lifestyle experience to communities across the country, with stops in Ikorodu, Ibadan, Enugu, Surulere and Uyo, ahead of the grand finale at the Eko Convention Centre, Victoria Island, Lagos, on Saturday, November 21, 2026.

Commenting on the renewed partnership, Executive Vice President, Group Marketing and Communications, Interswitch Group, Cherry Eromosele, said the collaboration reflects Verve's approach to building experiences that connect with consumers beyond the traditional payment environment.

"VerveLife has continued to evolve, bringing together fitness, entertainment, lifestyle and community in ways that resonate with our growing audience. Renewing our partnership with Google Play allows us to further extend that experience into the digital space, giving participants more opportunities to engage, discover and enjoy the VerveLife journey. As the energy and excitement continues to spread across Nigeria, we look forward to creating experiences that reflect the energy and diversity of the Verve community," she said.

For Google Play, the collaboration provides an opportunity to extend its engagement with Nigerian consumers through one of the country's established fitness and lifestyle platforms.

Why Long-term Investment Commitment To Nigeria Matters – Analysts

By **Sulaimon Salau**

FINANCIAL planner KaluAja has described MTN Nigeria's continued presence and investment in the country as one of the most important signals of corporate confidence in the Nigerian economy, noting that the company has remained committed even as others have exited.

"The key word is that they are staying. MTN, Dangote, GTCO - they are staying. People have left Nigeria. These guys are staying. That's a key thing," Aja said during an X Space he hosted on Sunday with financial analyst and Money Africa co-founder TosinOlaseinde.

The remarks came during a discussion on what corporate Nigeria has contributed to the country's economy, with MTN, Dangote Cement, and GTCO used as representative examples across telecommunications, manufacturing, and financial services.

Olaseinde drew a distinction between two types of foreign capital flowing into Nigeria, arguing that the kind of long-term investment represented by companies like MTN is far more valuable than short-term portfolio flows.

"FPI is like a one-night stand. FDI is like a marriage," she said, contrasting foreign portfolio investment with foreign direct investment. You cannot cut off a marriage immediately. There might be children involved. It creates jobs, it has a long-term approach. And that's what we want."

She said Nigeria has experienced a surge in portfolio investment in recent periods, but cautioned that such flows are inherently unstable. "FPI is hot money. The way it came is the same way it can go. But we want something that will stay, something long-term. And that's where you see companies like MTN. They're bringing in FDI, and we want more of that."

Xiaomi Moves To Deepen Market Share With New Offering

By **Sulaimon Salau**

GLOBAL technology leader, Xiaomi has unveiled its highly anticipated REDMI Note 17 Series in Nigeria, during a launch event that brought together brand representatives, major channel partners, nationwide dealers, distributors, and top tech influencers.

Designed under the philosophy of "Built for Years," the launch celebrated a major milestone for the brand as the global REDMI Note Series officially surpassed 500 million shipments worldwide.

The newly introduced lineup highlights four smartphones crafted to bring flagship-grade endurance, structural durability, and performance to diverse consumer needs: the flagship REDMI Note 17 Pro Max 5G, REDMI Note 17 Pro 5G, REDMI Note 17 Pro, and the REDMI Note 17.

At the centre of the new lineup is Xiaomi's revolutionary REDMI Titan Quality, engineered to ensure long-term dependability through years of daily use. Leading the series, the REDMI Note 17 Pro Max 5G debuts Xiaomi's largest-ever 10,000mAh smartphone battery equipped with 100W HyperCharge, delivering up to three days of power on a single charge.

Grid Crux, Dolphin Telecoms Sign 10-year Solar Deal For Lagos Cable Station

By **Opeyemi Babalola**

GRID Crux Energy Solutions, a Lagos-based clean energy developer and operator of critical power infrastructure, has signed a 10-year Energy-as-a-Service (EaaS) agreement with Dolphin Telecoms, a global communications carrier and landing party on the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) submarine cable.

Under the agreement, Grid Crux will design, finance, install and operate a solar power system at Dolphin's Lagos Cable Landing Station, the facility where international submarine capacity comes ashore and is handed over to Nigeria's telecom operators, internet service providers, enterprises and government agencies.

The firm, in a statement, said the agreement, signed at a Power Agreement Ceremony themed 'Powering Connectivity, Enabling Growth,' represents first renewable Energy-as-a-Service deployment at an ACE cable landing station in Anglophone Africa, adding that it forms part of Dolphin Telecoms' long-term strategy to diversify its energy mix and build greater sustainability.

COURT ORDER

Substituted Service

IN THE HIGH COURT OF RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA
IN THE PORT HARCOURT JUDICIAL DIVISION
HOLDEN AT PORT HARCOURT.

SUIT NO: PHC/2649/CS/2026

BETWEEN:

MONIER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY (NIGERIA) LTD . . . . CLAIMANT/ APPLICANT

AND

1. MR. JOHN AZUTA-MBATA
2. FINANCIAL FLEX LIMITED
3. MR. VICTOR MBATA — DEFENDANTS

ORDER FOR SUBSTITUTED SERVICE.

UPON THIS MOTION EXPARTE dated and filed the 28th day of September, 2026 coming up for hearing and determination before His Lordship, Hon. Justice D.G. Kio, Ph.D – Judge sitting in Port Harcourt. **AND UPON** reading the affidavit in support of the Motion Exparte deposed to by Mercy Bariesia Igboh, Litigation Secretary in the Law Firm of **A.N. ODEBE & CO.**, female, adult, Christian. citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of No. 1c Isaac Boro Street (Asarama Road), old G.R.A, Port Harcourt. **AND AFTER HEARING** the oral submissions of A.N. Odebe, Esq., for the Claimant/Applicant, with him E.O. Goodwill, Esq., P.C. Alali, Esq., and J.K. Stephen, Esq. No appearance for the Defendants.

AND UPON this Court finding merit in the application of the Claimant/Applicant for an Order for Substituted Service on the Defendants.

D.G. KIO, Ph.D
JUDGE

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED AS FOLLOWS:

1. That the leave of this Honourable Court is granted to the Claimant/Applicant to serve the originating Writ of Summons dated the 10th day of July, 2026 but filed on the 16th day of July, 2026 and all other accompanying processes on the Defendants by substituted means.
2. That the leave of this Court is granted to the Claimant/Applicant to serve the originating Writ of Summons dated the 10th day of July, 2026 but filed on the 16th day of July, 2026 and all other accompanying processes by substituted means, to wit: by publishing in the local daily newspaper circulating within Rivers State, namely, **THISDAY, THE GUARDIAN, THE SUN and NIGERIAN TIDE** newspaper circulating within the jurisdiction of this Honourable Court.
3. That relief 2 seeking an Order of this Honourable Court to serve the said Writ of Summons on the Defendants by electronic means via internet platform and other social media having been withdrawn by the Claimant's learned counsel, same is hereby struck out.
4. That this case stands adjourned to the 21st day of October, 2026 for Report of Service.

GIVEN AT PORT HARCOURT under the seal of the Court and the hand of The Presiding Judge, this 29th day of September, 2026.

IGWE, JOHN PROMISE (ACA)
Asst. Chief Registrar (Lit.)

IN THE HIGH COURT OF RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA
IN THE PORT HARCOURT JUDICIAL DIVISION
HOLDEN AT PORT HARCOURT

SUIT NO: PHC/_____/CS/2026

BETWEEN

MONIER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY (NIGERIA) LTD ===== **CLAIMANT**

AND

1. **MR. JOHN AZUTA-MBATA**
2. **FINANCIAL FLEX LIMITED**
3. **MR. VICTOR MBATA** — **DEFENDANTS**

TO: THE 1ST, 2ND AND 3RD DEFENDANTS

OF: No. 17 Liberty Close, Off Ada George Road, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

You are hereby commanded that within Thirty (30) days after the service of this Writ on you, inclusive of the day of such service, you do cause an appearance to be entered for you in an action at the suit of the Claimant above and take notice that in default of your doing so, the Claimant may proceed therein and judgment may be given in your absence.

DATED THIS THE JUDICIARY HIGH COURT REGISTRY PORT HARCOURT CASH OFFICE Date 17th July 2026 **OF _____2026.**

BY ORDER

Ndu, Lillian O. (PhD)
REGISTRAR

N/B: This Writ is to be served within six (6) calendar months from the date thereof, or if renewed within six (6) Calendar Months from the date of the last renewal, including the day of such date and afterwards.

The Defendants may enter appearance personally or by Legal practitioner either by handing in the appropriate forms duly completed at the Registry of the High Court or by Registered post.

ENDORSEMENT TO BE MADE ON THE WRIT BEFORE ISSUE THEREOF:

THE CLAIMANT CLAIMS AGAINST THE DEFENDANTS JOINTLY AND SEVERALLY AS FOLLOWS:

1. **A DECLARATION** that the various sums totaling **₦3,727,368,069.21 (Three Billion, Seven Hundred and Twenty-Seven Million, Three Hundred and Sixty-Eight Thousand, Sixty-Nine Naira, Twenty-One Kobo only)** paid out by the 1st Defendant from the corporate accounts of the Claimant to the 2nd and 3rd Defendants between October 2023 and November 2025 were deceptive, ultra vires, unearned, and constituted a wrongful fraudulent siphoning of corporate funds for services never rendered.
2. **AN ORDER OF COURT** directing the Defendants to jointly and severally make an immediate and full refund of the sum of **₦3,727,368,069.21 (Three Billion, Seven Hundred and Twenty-Seven Million, Three Hundred and Sixty-Eight Thousand, Sixty-Nine Naira, Twenty-One Kobo only)** to the bank accounts of the Claimant.
3. **AN ORDER** of directing the Defendants to jointly and severally pay to the Claimant the sum of **₦100 Billion (One Hundred Billion Naira)** as punitive and exemplary damages for their deceptive, wrongful and fraudulent conducts.
4. **PRE-JUDGMENT INTEREST** on the said sum of **₦3,727,368,069.21** at the rate of **36%** per annum calculated from the date of the last fraudulent transaction, being **November 25, 2025,** until the date of judgment.
5. **POST-JUDGMENT INTEREST** on the total judgment sum at the rate of **36%** per annum from the date of final judgment until the entire sum is totally liquidated.
6. **Costs** of this action assessed at **N250,000,000.00 (Two Hundred and Fifty Million Naira).**

DATED THIS ___10TH DAY ____DAY OF _____JULY_____2026.

THE JUDICIARY HIGH COURT REGISTRY PORT HARCOURT CASH OFFICE Date

A.N. ODEBE, ESQ. (SIGNED)
MILLS C. ORLU-ORLU, ESQ.
A. N. ODEBE & CO.
(CLAIMANT'S SOLICITORS)
2ND FLOOR, NO. 1C, ISAAC BORO STREET,(ASARAMA ROAD),
OLD GRA, PORT HARCOURT,
RIVERS STATE.
08033121742
anodebe_co@yahoo.com
anthonyodebe@nigerianbar.ng

FOR SERVICE ON:

THE 1ST 2ND AND 3RD DEFENDANTS
No. 17 Liberty Close, Off Ada George Road,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

This Writ is issued at the instance of the Claimant by **A. N. ODEBE, ESQ.** of **A.N. ODEBE & CO.,** whose Address for Service is No. 1c Isaac Boro Street (Asarama Road) Old GRA, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Legal Practitioners for the said Claimants who reside in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

This Writ was served by me at _____

On the Defendants (here insert mode of service) _____

On the _____ day of _____ 2026

Endorsed the _____ day of _____, 2026

SIGNED_____

ADRESSED_____

ENDORSEMENT TO BE MADE ON COPY OF WRIT FORTHWITH AFTER SERVICE.

A sufficient affidavit in verification of the endorsement on this Writ to authorize the signing and stamping thereof has been produced to me this_____ day of_____2026.

Ndu, Lillian O. (PhD)

(Signature of Registrar)

IN THE HIGH COURT OF RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA
IN THE PORT HARCOURT JUDICIAL DIVISION
HOLDEN AT PORT HARCOURT

SUIT NO: PHC/_____/CS/2026

BETWEEN

MONIER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY (NIGERIA) LTD ===== **CLAIMANT**

AND

1. **MR. JOHN AZUTA-MBATA**
2. **FINANCIAL FLEX LIMITED**
3. **MR. VICTOR MBATA** — **DEFENDANTS**

STATEMENT OF CLAIM

1. The Claimant is a Limited Liability Company duly incorporated under the Companies and Allied Matters Act, Cap. C20, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2020. It is a leading building and civil engineering contractor with its registered office situated at Mile 7 Ikwerre Road, Rumuigbo, Port Harcourt. The status report of the Claimant is hereby pleaded as **ANNEXURE A.**
2. The 1st Defendant was at all material times up to the 5th day of December, 2025, the Chief Executive Officer, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Claimant Company. In these capacities, he owed the Claimant the highest fiduciary duties of good faith, absolute disclosure, diligence, trust, confidence, and loyalty. He resigned from these executive positions on the said 9th day of December, 2025. The Claimant's Notice of Reconstitution of Board of Directors dated 9th October, 2024 is hereby pleaded as **ANNEXURE A1.**
3. The 2nd Defendant is a company limited by shares, incorporated in Nigeria. At all material times, it was used as an alter ego, conduit, and sham corporate vehicle by the 1st and 3rd Defendants to perpetrate a massive corporate fraud against the Claimant.
4. The 3rd Defendant is a shareholder and director of the 2nd Defendant and is a blood relative of the 1st Defendant. The 3rd Defendant at all material times acted at the direction and for the personal enrichment of himself and the 1st Defendant through the use of sham corporate entities. A copy of the status report of the 2nd Defendant issued by the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) is hereby pleaded as **ANNEXURE B1.**
5. The Claimant avers that on or about the 15th day of January, 2015, the 1st Defendant, while in absolute control of the Claimant's management, caused the Claimant to issue a letter of appointment (Ref: MCC/GMO.015/15) titled *"APPOINTMENT AS CONTRACTOR SOURCING AGENT FOR MONIER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY (NIGERIA) LTD (MCC)"* to the 2nd Defendant. A copy of an internal approval memo dated 30th July, 2014, signed by the 1st Defendant as Chairman/CEO, and a copy of the final letter of appointment are hereby pleaded as **ANNEXURES C and C1** respectively.
6. The said letter of appointment purported to appoint the 2nd Defendant as a "Contract Sourcing Agent" for the Claimant, with a promise of a finder's fee of 4% of the total contract value of any project secured or ₦50,000,000.00 (Fifty Million Naira) per annum, whichever is higher. The 2nd Defendant was further designated Finance Consultant/Business Development Manager on an honorary basis for a consideration of a monthly impress of ₦400,000.00 (Four Hundred Thousand Naira) for logistics, entertainment, transport, and public relations.
7. The Claimant avers that this appointment was not an arm's-length commercial agreement but was conceived and executed as part of a fraudulent scheme orchestrated by the 1st & 3rd Defendants for their personal enrichment. The 2nd Defendant had no independent capacity, expertise, or track record as a contract sourcing agent in the construction industry, and existed solely as a corporate vehicle secretly controlled by the 1st Defendant through his relative, the 3rd Defendant, to intercept and extract corporate funds that rightfully belonged to the Claimant.
8. Shockingly and against standard corporate accounting practice, all funds meant for the 2nd Defendant under the sham agency arrangement were instructed to be paid, and were indeed paid, directly into the 3rd Defendant's personal bank account with Guaranty Trust Bank (**Account Number: 0001448523 in the name of Victor Mbata**), entirely bypassing standard corporate oversight. Copies of the written payment instructions issued to Levite Microfinance Bank Ltd for the benefit of the Defendants are pleaded as **ANNEXURE D.**
9. In further execution of this fraudulent scheme, between **October 2023 and November 2025,** the Defendants utilized this deceptive structure to extract a total cumulative sum of **₦3,727,368,069.21** from the Claimant's corporate accounts for services never actually rendered by the 2nd and 3rd Defendants.
10. The Claimant states that the 2nd Defendant received a net sum of **₦3,720,568,069.21** under the guise of unearned "Payments on Account", heavily utilizing Titan Trust Bank, as itemized below:

S/N	Transaction Date	Description / Bank Reference	Amount (₦)
i.	26/10/2023	Payment on Account (Titan Trust Bank)	350,000,000.00
ii.	12/11/2023	Payment on Account	160,000,000.00
iii.	16/11/2023	Payment on Account (Titan Trust Bank)	100,000,000.00
iv.	10/02/2024	Payment on Account	1,161,436,289.35
v.	20/09/2024	Payment on Account (Titan Trust Bank)	747,977,045.19
vi.	28/10/2024	Reversal on Akpabu-Itu	(159,112,461.89)
vii.	31/10/2024	Reversal on Residential Dev.	(42,042,272.78)
viii.	13/11/2024	Payment on Account (Titan Trust Bank)	250,000,000.00
ix.	13/11/2024	Payment on Account (Titan Trust Bank)	300,000,000.00
x.	14/11/2024	Payment on Account (Titan Trust Bank)	250,000,000.00
xi.	14/11/2024	Payment on Account (Titan Trust Bank)	200,000,000.00

COURT ORDER

Substituted Service

S/N	Transaction Date	Description / Bank Reference	Amount (₦)
Total		Net Financial Flex Payments	₦3,720,568,069.21

11. The Claimant states that the 3rd Defendant systematically drew personal payouts from the Claimant's corporate holdings into his Guaranty Trust Bank Account via monthly Levite Microfinance Bank transfer instructions, as itemized below:

S/N	Date of Instruction	Reference / Document No.	Amount (₦)
i.	16 December 2024	MCC/CFA/AS/1249/2024	400,000.00
ii.	27 January 2025	MCC/CFA/AS/072/2025	400,000.00
iii.	25 February 2025	MCC/CFA/AS/205/2025	400,000.00
iv.	25 March 2025	MCC/CFA/AS/337/2025	400,000.00
v.	15 April 2025	MCC/CFA/AS/404/2025	400,000.00
vi.	20 May 2025	MCC/CFA/AS/559/2025	400,000.00
vii.	30 June 2025	MCC/CFA/AS/624/2025	400,000.00
viii.	23 July 2025	MCC/CFA/AS/706/2025	400,000.00
ix.	22 August 2025	MCC/CFA/AS/774/2025	400,000.00
x.	25 September 2025	MCC/CFA/AS/842/2025	400,000.00
xi.	29 October 2025	MCC/CFA/AS/922/2025	2,200,000.00
xii.	25 November 2025	MCC/CFA/AS/1006/2025	600,000.00
Total		Total Victor Mbata Payments	₦6,800,000.00

12. The Claimant avers that the 2nd Defendant lacks any independent management, separate infrastructure, technical staff, or equipment to execute any construction or consultancy agreements. The 3rd Defendant allowed his name to be used as a shareholder and director with full knowledge that he was acting as a nominee to conceal the 1st Defendant's beneficial interests and extract capital under a fraudulent scheme.

13. Following the resignation of the 1st Defendant on the 9th day of December, 2025, the Claimant's new management conducted extensive investigations which revealed the precise layout of the administrative fraud and siphoning mechanism utilized by the Defendants.

PARTICULARS OF FRAUD

a. The 1st Defendant, while occupying the position of Chairman/CEO of the Claimant, abused his corporate position on or about 15th January 2015 to issue a sham letter of appointment (Ref: MCC/GMO.015/15) to the 2nd Defendant as a "Contract Sourcing Agent," knowing fully well that the 2nd Defendant possessed no independent capacity, technical staff, or industry track record to render such services.

b. The 1st Defendant willfully concealed from the Board of Directors that the 2nd Defendant (Financial Flex Limited) was a private shell corporate vehicle secretly controlled by himself and his relative, the 3rd Defendant, for their personal enrichment at the expense of the Claimant.

c. To actively evade standard accounting audits and corporate oversight, the Defendants structured the fraudulent scheme such that all funds approved under the fake agency arrangement were deliberately instructed to be paid, and were paid, directly into the 3rd Defendant's personal bank account (**Guaranty Trust Bank Account No: 0001448523 in the name of Victor Mbata**).

d. Between October 2023 and November 2025, the Defendants used the administrative machinery of the Claimant to process and siphon out a cumulative total of **₦3,727,368,069.21** from the Claimant's bank accounts under the fraudulent guise of unearned "Payments on Account" and "Monthly Logistics/Impress" transactions for which absolutely no commercial value, service, or contract consideration was ever delivered to the Claimant.

e. The Defendants extracted the bulk of the corporate funds through a series of irregular, massive banking tranches totaling a net sum of **₦3,720,568,069.21** via Titan Trust Bank into the accounts of the 2nd Defendant between October 26, 2023, and November 14, 2024, without any legitimate invoice or project certification to support the outflows. The Claimant's Statement of Account with the said Titan Trust Bank shall be relied upon at the trial of this Action, and same is hereby pleaded.

f. The 1st and 3rd Defendants engineered a continuous drain of the Claimant's funds by issuing fraudulent monthly instructions to Levite Microfinance Bank Limited between December 2024 and November 2025, siphoning fixed sums (mostly ₦400,000.00 monthly, escalating to ₦2,200,000.00 in October 2025) directly into Mr. Victor Mbata's personal bank account under the false label of honorary consultant logistics and entertainment.

g. Upon the uncovering of the fraudulent pipeline by the new management of the Claimant, the Defendants actively suppressed information, failed, and completely refused to provide an account of or refund the stolen sum of **₦3,727,368,069.21**, thereby demonstrating an intention to permanently deprive the Claimant of its corporate funds.

14. The Claimant has been denied the liquidity, commercial use, and value of the cumulative sum of **₦3,727,368,069.21** since the funds were siphoned out, with the final transaction occurring on **November 25, 2025**.

15. The Claimant contends that the 1st Defendant was appointed a Director of the Claimant as a nominee of ADAMAC INDUSTRIES LIMITED which is the majority shareholder of the Claimant.

16. The Claimant further contends that upon the discovery of conflict of interest and wrong conducts of the 1st Defendant, the said ADAMAC INDUSTRIES LIMITED withdrew its appointment and nomination of the 1st Defendant as its representative in the Claimant's company as a Director. The Resolution of the Board of Directors of the said ADAMAC INDUSTRIES LIMITED dated the 5th of November, 2025 along with the Letters of notification of the said withdrawal of the 1st Defendant as a nominated Director and Chairman/CEO of the Claimant dated 5th November, 2025 and 8th November, 2025 respectively are hereby pleaded as **ANNEXURE E.**

17. It is also the contention of the Claimant that the 1st Defendant upon the withdrawal of his said nomination was given a period of 45 days to tidy up his desk and that some of the fraudulent transactions being complained of by the Claimant in this Suit were committed after the said withdrawal of the nomination of the 1st Defendant and within the 45 days period allowed him to tidy up his desk.

18. The Claimant upon discovery of the conflict of interest of the 2nd & 3rd Defendants in representing the business interest of the Claimant did repudiate and terminate its purported subcontract or agency relationship with the 2nd & 3rd Defendants and made a demand from the said Defendants of the Claimant's legitimate claims. The Claimant's letter dated December 15, 2025 to the said 2nd & 3rd Defendants on the immediate termination of all contractual relationships between both parties is hereby pleaded and copy thereof is herein attached as **ANNEXTURE F.**

19. The Claimant has made formal demands, both oral and written, for a refund of all the moneys fraudulently siphoned by the Defendants, but the Defendants have completely failed, refused, and neglected to account for or return the misappropriated funds. Letter of demand for refund dated 9th July, 2026 and posted to the Defendants via DHL Post services together with the DHL receipt is pleaded as **ANNEXURE F1.**

20. Consequently, the Claimant engaged the services of A. N. Odebe, Esq. for a fee of ₦250,000,000.00 (Two Hundred and Fifty Million Naira) to prosecute this suit. The invoice dated 10th July, 2026 issued by the office of the Claimant's counsel is pleaded as **ANNEXURE G.**

WHEREOF THE CLAIMANT CLAIMS AGAINST THE DEFENDANTS JOINTLY AND SEVERALLY AS FOLLOWS:

1. **A DECLARATION** that the various sums totaling **₦3,727,368,069.21 (Three Billion, Seven Hundred and Twenty-Seven Million, Three Hundred and Sixty-Eight Thousand, Sixty-Nine Naira, Twenty-One Kobo only)** paid out by the 1st Defendant from the corporate accounts of the Claimant to the 2nd and 3rd Defendants between October 2023 and November 2025 were deceptive, ultra vires, unearned, and constituted a fraudulent siphoning of corporate funds for services never rendered.

2. **AN ORDER OF COURT** directing the Defendants to jointly and severally make an immediate and full refund of the sum of **₦3,727,368,069.21 (Three Billion, Seven Hundred and Twenty-Seven Million, Three Hundred and Sixty-Eight Thousand, Sixty-Nine Naira, Twenty-One Kobo only)** to the bank accounts of the Claimant.

3. **AN ORDER** of directing the Defendants to jointly and severally pay to the Claimant the sum of **₦100 Billion (One Hundred Billion Naira)** as punitive and exemplary damages for their deceptive, wrongful and fraudulent conducts.

4. **PRE-JUDGMENT INTEREST** on the said sum of **₦3,727,368,069.21** at the rate of **36% per annum** calculated from the date of the last fraudulent transaction, being **November 25, 2025,** until the date of judgment.

5. **POST-JUDGMENT INTEREST** on the total judgment sum at the rate of **36% per annum** from the date of final judgment until the entire sum is totally liquidated.

6. **Costs of this action** assessed at **₦250,000,000.00 (Two Hundred and Fifty Million Naira).**

DATED THIS __10TH ___DAY OF _____JULY_____2026.

THE JUDICIARY HIGH COURT REGISTRY PORT HARCOURT CASH OFFICE Date .....

NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION NBA

A. N. ODEBE, ESQ. (SIGNED)
MILLS C. ORLU-ORLU, ESQ.
A. N. ODEBE & CO.
(CLAIMANT'S SOLICITORS)
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FOR SERVICE ON:

THE 1ST 2ND AND 3RD DEFENDANTS
No. 17 Liberty Close, Off Ada George Road,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

IN THE HIGH COURT OF RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA
IN THE PORT HARCOURT JUDICIAL DIVISION
HOLDEN AT PORT HARCOURT

SUIT NO: PHC/ /CS/2026

BETWEEN

MONIER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY ===== CLAIMANT/APPLICANT (NIGERIA) LTD

AND

1. MR. JOHN AZUTA-MBATA
2. FINANCIAL FLEX LIMITED } **DEFENDANTS/RESPONDENTS**
3. MR. VICTOR MBATA

MOTION ON NOTICE

BROUGHT PURSUANT TO ORDER 13 RULES 1 & 2 OF THE HIGH COURT OF RIVERS STATE (CIVIL PROCEDURE) RULES 2023 AND UNDER THE INHERENT JURISDICTION OF THIS HONOURABLE COURT

TAKE NOTICE that this Honourable Court will be moved on the..... day of ..... 2026 at the hour of 9 o'clock in the forenoon or so soon thereafter as Counsel on behalf of the Claimant/Applicant may be heard praying this Honourable Court for the following reliefs:

1. **AN ORDER** entering **SUMMARY JUDGMENT** in favor of the Claimant/Applicant against the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Defendants jointly and severally for the immediate and full refund of the sum of **₦3,727,368,069.21 (Three Billion, Seven Hundred and Twenty-Seven Million, Three Hundred and Sixty-Eight Thousand, Sixty-Nine Naira, Twenty-One Kobo only)**, being corporate funds of the Claimant deceptively and fraudulently siphoned by the Defendants between October 2023 and November 2025 for services never rendered.
2. **AN ORDER** directing the Defendants to pay **PRE-JUDGMENT INTEREST** on the said sum of **₦3,727,368,069.21** at the rate of **36% per annum** calculated from the date of the last fraudulent transaction, being **November 25, 2025**, until the date of judgment.
3. **AN ORDER** of directing the Defendants to jointly and severally pay to the Claimant the sum of **₦100 Billion (One Hundred Billion Naira)** as punitive and exemplary damages for their deceptive, wrongful and fraudulent conducts.
4. **AN ORDER** directing the Defendants to pay **POST-JUDGMENT INTEREST** on the total judgment sum at the rate of **36% per annum** from the date of final judgment until the entire sum is totally liquidated.
5. **THE COSTS** of this action assessed at **₦250,000,000.00 (Two Hundred and Fifty Million Naira).**
6. **AND FOR SUCH FURTHER OR OTHER ORDERS** as this Honourable Court may deem fit to make in the circumstances of this case.

GROUNDS FOR THE APPLICATION

1. The 1st Defendant, as the former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Claimant, owed the highest fiduciary duties of good faith and loyalty to the Claimant up until his resignation on the 9th of December, 2025.
2. The 1st Defendant fundamentally breached his fiduciary duties by orchestrating a deceptive and unearned corporate agency pathway (Ref: MCC/GMO.015/15) with the 2nd Defendant, a sham shell company controlled by himself and his relative, the 3rd Defendant.
3. Under the cover of this fraudulent pipeline, a cumulative net sum of **₦3,727,368,069.21** was extracted from the Claimant's bank accounts via Titan Trust Bank and Levite Microfinance Bank Limited between October 2023 and November 2025.
4. Funds intended for the 2nd Defendant were bypass-routed and paid directly into the 3rd Defendant's personal bank account (**Guaranty Trust Bank Account No: 0001448523 in the name of Victor Mbata**).
5. The 2nd and 3rd Defendants provided absolutely no contractual consideration, project execution, or commercial value to the Claimant to justify retaining the siphoned Billions of Naira.
6. The entire financial outflow is unvouched, fraudulent, and *ultra vires* the corporate powers of the Claimant company.
7. The Claimant's action is built entirely upon unassailable documentary evidence, including bank instructions and corporate status records, to which the Defendants **have no good defense whatsoever.**

DATED THIS ____10TH_____DAY OF ___JULY_____2026

THE JUDICIARY HIGH COURT REGISTRY PORT HARCOURT CASH OFFICE Date .....

NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION NBA

A. N. ODEBE, ESQ. (SIGNED)
MILLS C. ORLU-ORLU, ESQ.
A. N. ODEBE & CO.
(CLAIMANT'S SOLICITORS)
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FOR SERVICE ON:

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BizAgro

At 66, Harnessing Nigeria's Agricultural Resources Remains In Limbo

By **Gbenga Akinfenwa**

DESPITE its enviable position as one of the leading agriculture countries in Africa and beyond, Nigeria has failed to translate this to any meaningful result over the years.

Past efforts by successive administrations to put the sector in its pride of place and make the country food-sufficient appears to be in limbo as most of the government policies are not yielding desired results. Allegedly, the lean harvest is attributed to insincerity of the handlers or the will-power to drive such policies to transform the sector.

Of great concern is the fact that 66 years after independence, the country is still food dependent, relying on food and agro produce import from other countries to fill the huge food deficit.

Aside being the top contributor of cassava, yams and other tuber crops all over the world, Nigeria is a major producer of fruits such as mangoes, oranges, pineapples, and other cash crops like cocoa, cashew and many more, indicating that the country's agricultural strength is apparent, yet the country's import bill keeps increasing by the day.



The last administration of the late Mohammadu Buhari was determined to change the narratives, especially with the introduction of the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP), but the initiative yielded little or no result as what many considered as a laudable scheme was jeopardised due to mismanagement of the funds.

Again, the current administration took a drastic move to 'rescue' the sector but for the third year running, despite the promises, hypes and policies to transform the sector, to attain its food sufficiency dream, stakeholders say the sector has seen little or no impact.

For instance, in his second month in office, President Bola Tinubu declared a state of emergency to tackle rising food prices and shortages. Some of the initiatives include using money saved from the fuel subsidy removal to provide fertiliser and grain to farmers. Several other policies were also introduced but they were more in paper than being actualised.

Rather than abating, the situation hasn't improved, as the policies haven't achieved much impact. The last three years have seen more food shortage leading to further increase in the prices of food commodities. The country's inflation rate too have been fluctuating, compounding the woes of Nigerians as food prices and basic commodities have gone through the roof with more Nigerians struggling with high cost of living.

Currently, based on feelers from Abuja, there's absolutely nothing happening from the coffers of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, as majority of the policies rolled out by the current administration have remained in papers, with little or no actualisation of these policies.

Sadly, despite the efforts of those who were struggling to farm at all cost and reduced food prices, these also failed to translate into better access to food, as low incomes and high unemployment continue to drive hunger, as many lack the purchasing power to afford available food.

Experts explained that structural and economic challenges, such as high production and processing costs, poor logistics, expensive transportation and exchange rate depreciation, have contributed to high food prices, creating the disconnect between increased food imports and access.

This unfortunate experience seems a confirmation to the prediction of the Food and Agriculture Organisation reports that projected that about 34.7 million Nigerians may face hunger between June and August this year, if timely interventions were not implemented to address the rising food security challenges.

The organisation, in its October 2025 Cadre Harmonisé analysis, stated that the worsening hunger and food insecurity situation in the country was driven by persistent conflicts and violence in some of the states known for food production, economic shocks, armed violence, organised crimes, particularly in the North-West and North-East, and climate-related shocks like prolonged dry spells and floods in some communities.

Sadly, true to its projection, the country is currently struggling to address this lingering food insecurity.

The Founder of Menitos Farm Depot, Lagos, Toluwalope Daramola, who frowns on the state of the sector, attributed most of the challenges to the problem of food production and supply.

"At 66, the bigger question is: are we building an agricultural economy owned and driven by Nigerians, or are we gradually surrendering control of our food system to those with the capital to control production and supply? Food security is not only about having food available. It is also about who produces it, who controls the land, inputs and infrastructure required for production, and who ultimately controls what Nigerians put on their tables.

"The solution is not to discourage private investment or large-scale agriculture. Rather, our policies should ensure that investment strengthens local capacity instead of replacing it. Large agricultural companies should be encouraged to build partnerships with smallholder farmers, support local sourcing, create processing opportunities and transfer knowledge and technology into the communities where they operate.

"Government also needs to make it easier for Nigerians to become producers. This means improving access to land, affordable credit, quality seeds and other inputs, irrigation, machinery and reliable energy. We also need to invest heavily in storage, transportation and processing so that farmers are not forced to sell cheaply immediately after harvest simply because they lack the capacity to preserve or process their produce," she said.

Daramola stressed the need to move from an agricultural economy that largely rewards the movement of raw products to one that rewards production, processing and value addition within Nigeria. She added that a farmer should be able to produce, a processor should be able to transform that produce, and a Nigerian business should be able to take the finished product to local and international markets.

"Our goal should therefore be an agricultural economy where Nigerian farmers, processors, entrepreneurs and communities are not merely participants in the value chain, but owners of a meaningful share of it. If we get this right, agriculture can do more than feed Nigeria. It can create jobs, build industries, retain wealth within our communities and strengthen our economic independence.

Read the remaining story on www.guardian.ng

Government also needs to make it easier for Nigerians to become producers. This means improving access to land, affordable credit, quality seeds and other inputs, irrigation, machinery and reliable energy. We also need to invest heavily in storage, transportation and processing so that farmers are not forced to sell cheaply immediately after harvest simply because they lack the capacity to preserve or process their produce.

Oloro Assumes Office As New Executive Director Of NCAM

From **Odun Edward**, Ilorin

THE newly appointed Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer of the National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization (NCAM), Engr. Julius Oluwamuyiwa Oloro, has formally assumed office, ushering in a new phase of leadership at the agricultural mechanisation institution.

Oloro's appointment followed the death of the former Executive Director of the Centre, Dr. AbdulGafar Kamaldeen.

Speaking during his maiden address to the management and staff of NCAM, the new Executive Director expressed gratitude to Almighty God and appreciated President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, for the confidence reposed in him through the appointment.

Oloro pledged to reposition NCAM as a leading institution in agricultural mechanisation, research, innovation and technology development, while building on the achievements recorded by the Centre over the years.

He said his administration would prioritise excellence, transparency, accountability, teamwork and innovation in the discharge of NCAM's mandate.

The new NCAM boss also urged members of staff to remain committed, disciplined and professional, stressing the importance of collaboration and result-oriented service in advancing agricultural mechanisation and contributing to enhanced food production and national development.

He called for collective efforts towards strengthening the Centre's capacity to deliver on its mandate and contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's quest for food security.

The management and staff of NCAM welcomed Oloro and pledged their loyalty, dedication and support towards the successful implementation of his administration's vision.

The new leadership is expected to build on NCAM's role in promoting agricultural mechanisation and technological innovation as part of efforts to strengthen Nigeria's agricultural sector and achieve sustainable food security.

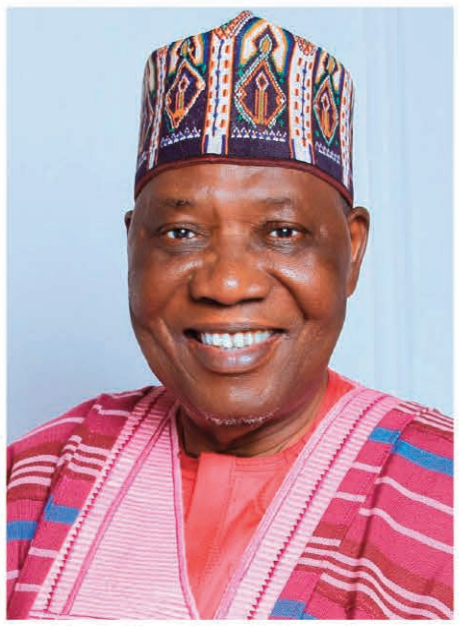


Oloro

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THE GUARDIAN'S SPECIAL FOCUS ON SIXTY (60) MOST INSPIRING, VISIONARY AND TRANSFORMATIVE BUSINESS LEADERS THAT SHAPED NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH IN 2026



Prof. Ahmed bin Salawudeen,
Founder/Chairman, Standard Group Holdings



Chief (Amb.) Valentine Anele Okolie,
Chairman/CEO, Nellyval Group



Lola Udu,
Managing Director/CEO, Lavita Group



Benjamin Akhamere,
Founder/CEO, DreamCity Group



Dr. Abel Agbo Onyeke,
Chairman/Managing Partner, Nexia Nigeria



Chief Akosin Habeeb Okunola,
President/CEO, CINI Holdings



Babatunde Barakat, MD/CEO, Ridgewell Construction Company (Nig) Limited



Dr. Parimal Vipani,
Founder/Managing Director, AVN Global Ventures Limited



Ms. Omowale Olatunde-Agbeja,
MD, Boff & Company Insurance Brokers Limited

FUNDAMENTALLY, **Leadership** is the capacity of an individual or organization to influence, guide and inspire others toward a shared goal. It is about the development and growth of the people and society. However, in Nigeria, the gradual erosion of values has impacted the quality of leadership across business sector, over the years.

Interestingly, despite the plethora of challenges facing the nation, some citizens continue to exemplify passion, competence, hard work, dedication, patriotism, and integrity, distinguishing themselves as leaders in their respective fields. Thus, Nigeria's economic growth has been primarily shaped by visionary industrialists, financial pioneers, ICT disruptors, oil and gas moguls, hospitality giants, amongst others, who have revolutionalised local brands, thereby creating the foundational infrastructure that continues to impact the nation's GDP growth.

These inspiring business leaders are individuals who are driving innovation, redefining industries, fostering inclusive, forward-thinking corporate cultures, disrupting global markets, and their legacies provide timeless lessons in strategic vision and execution. As top business leaders, they offer valuable lessons in resilience, adaptability, and strategic growth, as they set the ultimate benchmarks for success and social impact.

Meanwhile, in recent years, the accomplishments of many of these exemplary individuals have not received as much attention as the wrongdoings of a few. Sadly, this has led to misconceptions both within the international community and among youths, often stereotyping Nigerian business leaders as lacking principle, grit and character.

With this in mind, and in its tradition of celebrating excellence, ***The Guardian*** is showcasing some of the reputable Nigerian business icons with influence, who have achieved remarkable feats in diverse sectors in this special report in commemoration of Nigeria's Sixty=sixth (60th) Independence Anniversary Celebrations.

The row call in this edition is not arranged in any particular order, but includes the following:

Prof. Ahmed bin Salawudeen, *FIIN, FCIB, FCALM, P.D, ACII (London),* **Founder & Chairman, Standard Group Holdings, Standard Insurance Consultants Limited (SICL), SICL Reinsurance Brokers Limited, Signature Global Real Estate LLC, Dubai, United Arab Emirates** (Sectors: Insurance, Hospitality, Real Estate, Healthcare, Aviation, Construction, Manufacturing, Marine, and Education).

Chief (Amb.) Valentine Anele Okolie, Chairman & CEO, Nellyval Group, Nellyval Oil and Gas Limited, Nellyval Luxury Homes Limited, Nellyval Global Logistics Services Limited, Anele Val Foundation (AVF) (Sectors: Maritime, Haulage & Logistics, Energy, Real Estate, International Trade).

Lola Udu, Managing Director & CEO, Lavita Group, Lavita Life Limited, Kachy Petroleum & Gas (KPG) Limited, Lola Udu Foundation (LUF) (Sectors: Retail, Healthcare & Wellness, Energy).

Benjamin Akhamere, Founder & CEO, DreamCity Group, DreamCity Property and Investment Limited, Gravy Global Holding, (Sectors: Real Estate, Hospitality, Fintech & e-Commerce).

Dr. Abel Agbo Onyeke, *FCA, FCTI,* **Chairman & Managing Partner, Nexia Nigeria** (Sectors: Public, Audit, Assurance, Financial & Tax Advisory, Strategic Consulting Services).

Chief Akosin Habeeb Olalekan Okunola, *OFR, MON, FICAb,* **President & CEO, CINI Holdings, Habitob Global Ventures, TILT Construction Company Limited** (Sectors: Infrastructure, Construction, Engineering, Energy, Technology, Supply Chain Management, Real Estate, Agriculture, Solid Mineral Development).

Babatunde Barakat, Managing Director & CEO, Ridgewell Construction Company (Nigeria) Limited (Sectors: Construction, Real Estate Development, Architecture, Facility Management).

Dr. Parimal Vipani, Founder & Managing Director, AVN Global Ventures Limited (Sectors: Building Materials Retail, Home Appliances, Bathroom & Sanitary Wares, Lighting, Paints, Tiles).

PROFESSOR AHMED bin SALAWUDEEN: Visionary, Dogged Insurance Industry Titan, Building Businesses That Create Value for Clients, Uplifting Humanity

The Man, The Vision Behind Standard Group Holdings' Transformation

For more than four and a half decades, the story of **Standard Group Holdings** has been closely connected to the vision, resilience and entrepreneurial leadership of its **Founder and Chairman, Professor Ahmed bin Salawudeen.**

Beginning in 1980 with the establishment of Standard Insurance Consultants Limited (SICL), Prof. Salawudeen embarked on a journey that would grow far beyond the traditional boundaries of insurance brokerage. What began as an insurance business has, over the years, developed into a diversified group with interests spanning insurance, reinsurance, real estate, hospitality and other emerging areas of opportunity.

His approach to business has been characterised by a willingness to recognise changing market opportunities and build businesses capable of responding to them. Rather than remaining within a single line of business, he has progressively expanded the Group's capabilities, creating new platforms that complement its established operations while responding to wider economic and social needs.

From Insurance Brokerage to a Diversified and Vibrant Group

UNDER Prof. Salawudeen's leadership, SICL grew from its early beginnings into an established insurance and reinsurance brokerage organization, serving clients across a broad range of sectors. The company's profile today covers industries including but not limited to oil and gas, financial services, marine, manufacturing, the public sector, healthcare, aviation and space technology, construction, hospitality and education.

Recognising the importance of building specialised capabilities within the financial and risk-management ecosystem, the Group expanded into reinsurance brokerage through SICL Reinsurance Brokers Limited. The expansion created another specialised arm through which the Group could participate in a wider segment of the insurance and risk-management value chain.

That same philosophy of diversification eventually led to the creation and growth of Signature Global Real Estate LLC, headquartered in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Taking the Business Beyond Borders

The emergence of Signature Global Real Estate represents one of the clearest examples of the Professor's evolving business vision. Rather than viewing real estate solely through a Nigerian lens, the Group established a platform with an international orientation, creating access to property opportunities beyond its traditional market.

Today, Signature Global Real Estate is building on that foundation by developing relationships with property developers, representatives and strategic partners across international markets. Through these relationships, the company has access to opportunities across 10 markets and expanding, further extending the reach of the Group's real estate business.

For the Chairman, this evolution reflects a broader understanding of how businesses must grow in an increasingly interconnected economy: by developing strong foundations at home while remaining open to opportunities across borders.

Diversification with a Broader Social and Economic Vision

Prof. Salawudeen's diversification strategy extends beyond building businesses across different sectors. It is driven by a broader vision of identifying practical needs within society and creating solutions that can contribute to Nigeria's economic and social development.

One area that reflects this vision is healthcare and wellness. Having recognised the growing need for Nigerians to travel abroad in search of specialised medical services, Prof. Salawudeen believes that Nigeria has the capacity to develop world-class healthcare and hospitality facilities that can serve people locally while also positioning the country as a destination for quality medical and wellness services.

Through the Group's hospitality interests, he is therefore investing in the development of a **state-of-the-art medical and wellness centre in Nigeria**, designed around the belief that Nigerians should have access to high-quality healthcare and wellness services within the country. The initiative represents his confidence in Nigeria's hospitality and healthcare potential, as well as his commitment to developing facilities that meet international standards.

To this end, the group has concluded a strategic arrangement with **Asia Medicare Group, Bangkok Thailand** to bring its expertise, capabilities and specialised services to Nigeria's **six geopolitical zones**, with a broader vision of extending the initiative beyond Nigeria to other markets across the **African sub-regions**.

Beyond healthcare and hospitality, Standard Group Holdings is also supporting efforts in the housing sector, exploring the use of technology to make mass housing development faster, more efficient and durable. This aligns its real estate activities with the broader need to expand access to quality housing and support the development of sustainable communities.

Together, these initiatives reflect Prof. Salawudeen's broader philosophy that business should not only create commercial value but should also respond to real needs, develop local capacity and contribute meaningfully to national development.

Technology and the Future of Insurance

Having built his career in insurance, Prof. Ahmed bin Salawudeen continues to look towards the future of the industry.

Technology is increasingly becoming part of that vision, particularly in making insurance more accessible, easier to understand and easier for more people to engage with. His continued interest in technology reflects an understanding that the future of insurance will depend not only on traditional industry structures, but also on how effectively businesses can use technology to reach underserved markets, simplify processes and improve the customer experience.

For a businessman whose career began in insurance more than four and a half decades ago, this represents another stage in the evolution of the original vision: taking an established industry and continually finding new ways to make it more relevant to changing generations and markets.



Prof. Ahmed bin Salawudeen,
Founder and Chairman, Standard Group Holdings

A Legacy Built on More Than Business Growth

Prof. Salawudeen's influence has also extended beyond the growth of his own businesses into the wider insurance profession. In 2023, *BusinessDay* honoured him with a "Lifetime Achievement Award in Insurance", in recognition of his invaluable contribution to the development of the sector. In the same year, SICL was recognised as "Insurance Broker of the Year" at the *BusinessDay* BAFI Awards. For four consecutive years, Prof. Salawudeen has been recognized by *The Guardian* in its Annual 100 CEOs Series in 2022; 2023; 2024; and 2025.

Similarly, the Nigerian Council of Registered Insurance Brokers (NCRIB) has recognised his contribution to the insurance brokerage profession and the Council's work. These recognitions form part of a career that has spanned more than four decades and reflects his long-term involvement in the development of the insurance profession.

But for Prof. Salawudeen, legacy extends beyond professional recognition. It is also reflected in the impact that businesses and individuals can have on the wider community.

As Standard Insurance Conslants Limited celebrates its 46th anniversary, the Founder and Chairman, a philanthropist per excellence, is marking the milestone with a significant gesture of giving back to the society. As part of the activities to mark the anniversary, Prof. Ahmed bin Salawudeen is providing fifty (50) free Health Maintenance Organisation (HMO) plans to fifty (50) beneficiaries, extending access to healthcare coverage to individuals who will benefit from the initiative.

The gesture adds another dimension to the story of the Group's growth. After more than four and a half decades of building businesses within the insurance and financial services ecosystem, the anniversary initiative reflects the Prof Salawudeen's continued interest in using the platform he has built to create tangible benefits beyond the corporate environment.

The Fifty Beneficiary HMO Initiative is particularly symbolic given the Group's longstanding connection to insurance and risk management. It brings the anniversary celebration back to one of the fundamental purposes of the industry: helping people manage risk and providing greater security when it matters most.



Built on Trust. Defined by Credibility. Driven by Professionalism.

At the heart of Standard Group Holdings is a philosophy that extends beyond business performance: **trust is earned, credibility is built, and professionalism is demonstrated through every interaction.**

For a Group whose journey has spanned more than four decades, these principles have become more than corporate values. They are part of the culture that has shaped its relationships with clients, partners, institutions, employees and communities. In industries where people entrust businesses with their assets, their aspirations and, at times, their most significant decisions, the value of a trusted relationship cannot be measured solely in financial terms.

Trust remains one of the Group's most important foundations. It is reflected in the confidence clients place in the organisation, the relationships it maintains over time, and the responsibility that comes with every mandate. The Group's philosophy is rooted in understanding that business is ultimately about people—and that lasting relationships are built when commitments are honoured and responsibilities are taken seriously.

Credibility has been cultivated through experience, consistency and the ability to deliver with substance. Over the years, Standard Group Holdings has developed a reputation founded not simply on what it says, but on what it does. Its expanding interests across insurance, reinsurance, real estate, hospitality and emerging opportunities reflect an organisation seeking to create meaningful value while maintaining the confidence of those it serves.

And **professionalism** defines the manner in which that responsibility is carried. From client engagement and strategic partnerships to the development of new businesses and international relationships, the Group places importance on discipline, integrity, expertise and attention to detail. As its footprint expands across markets, this commitment provides a consistent standard by which its businesses operate and its relationships are built.

These values also reflect the philosophy of its Founder and Chairman, **Professor Ahmed bin Salawudeen**, whose journey from establishing an insurance brokerage in 1980 to building a diversified business group has been defined by long-term thinking and relationship-driven enterprise. His belief in creating businesses that serve practical needs has remained central to the Group's evolution.

For Standard Group Holdings, therefore, growth is not simply measured by the number of businesses created, markets entered



Visionary, Dogged Insurance Industry Titan, Building Businesses That Create Value for Clients, Uplifting Humanity

or opportunities pursued. It is also measured by the trust placed in the Group, the credibility it carries into every new market, and the professionalism with which it serves every relationship.
That is the distinction between building businesses and building an institution.

A business can be built in years. A reputation is built over generations.

Looking Beyond the Business

Prof. Ahmed bin Salawudeen's vision also extends beyond the growth of his businesses to the broader economic potential of Nigeria. Through his participation in business and investment events across different countries, he has consistently used these platforms to promote Nigeria as a destination for trade, investment and business opportunities.
His international engagements have provided opportunities to connect with business leaders, investors and institutions while highlighting the potential of the Nigerian market. This commitment to promoting Nigeria is also reflected in his upcoming participation in the **Business Summit in Abuja on the 12th and 13th of November, 2026**, where discussions will focus on opportunities for **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Nigeria.**
This business summit is expected to bring over USD$100 Billion investments through the Oil & gas, renewable energy, technology, AI/fintech, healthcare, agriculture, mining, infrastructure, education and human-capital development.
His Excellency **Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang**'s love for his country knows no bounds. In 2025, His Excellency, together with his economic team, made a compelling case for bringing the Business Summit to Nigeria in 2026 — highlighting the country's immense potential particularly his Plateau State, investment opportunities, and its growing significance within the global business landscape. That vision has now become a reality, marking a significant milestone in creating a platform that connects Nigeria with global investors, entrepreneurs, and business leaders.
The summit is expected to provide a platform for business owners, investors and other stakeholders to explore opportunities to establish and expand businesses in Nigeria, with the aim of attracting capital, encouraging partnerships, and creating new avenues for economic growth.
Prof. Salawudeen's participation is therefore a continuation of his broader engagement with international business communities and his interest in positioning Nigeria as a viable destination for investment. His presence at such platforms reflects his belief in the role of private-sector businesses in creating opportunities, attracting investment and contributing to the country's economic development.

A Tribute to Aliko Dangote: Building Enterprise, Opportunity and Economic Value

Prof. Ahmed bin Salawudeen's admiration for **Aliko Dangote** knows no bounds. He regards Dangote not merely as a distinguished business leader, but as a defining force in Nigeria's economic development an entrepreneur whose business acumen, vision and commitment to nation-building have created value far beyond the balance sheet. From cement and manufacturing to oil and gas and other strategic sectors, Dangote's investments have strengthened Nigeria's productive capacity while creating opportunities, livelihoods and economic participation for millions of Nigerians.
Prof. Ahmed particularly recognises the significance of Dangote's expanding presence across Nigeria's oil and gas industry, alongside his longstanding contribution to cement, industrial manufacturing and other critical sectors. His enterprises represent the power of Nigerian business to build at scale, develop industries, create employment and contribute meaningfully to the country's long-term economic development.
It is in recognition of this remarkable journey and his immense contribution to Nigeria that Aliko Dangote has been invited by Dr. M. Haider Uzzaman to share the stage at the International Investors Summit in Abuja- 2026, alongside leading entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers and global business voices. His participation reflects the importance of bringing together those who have not only built successful enterprises, but have played a consequential role in shaping Nigeria's economic landscape and creating opportunities for its people.
For Prof. Ahmed bin Salawudeen, the presence of Aliko Dangote represents more than the participation of one of Africa's most prominent entrepreneurs. It is a recognition of what Nigerian enterprise can achieve when vision is matched by courage, capital, industrial ambition and an enduring commitment to the nation.
For a versatile and astute businessman whose journey has grown from establishing a single insurance brokerage in 1980 to building a diversified group with interests spanning insurance, reinsurance, real estate, hospitality and other sectors, engaging in conversations around investment and economic development represents a natural extension of that vision.

Building the Next Generation of Businesses

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Prof. Salawudeen's leadership is the way his businesses have continued to evolve with changing markets.
The transition from a single insurance brokerage operation established in 1980 to a broader Group encompassing insurance brokerage, reinsurance brokerage, real estate, hospitality and emerging technology-driven initiatives demonstrates a deliberate pattern of diversification.
For Standard Group Holdings, the next chapter is therefore not simply about preserving what has already been built. It is about using the experience, relationships, and institutional foundation accumulated over more than four and a half decades to create new opportunities.
Signature Global Real Estate represents an important part of that next chapter.
As the company expands its portfolio, secures exclusive property mandates, closes transactions, participates in major industry events and develops access to international markets, it carries with it the foundation established by Prof. Salawudeen over decades.
His journey illustrates a central principle of long-term entrepreneurship - growth is not only about building one successful business; it is about having the vision to recognise what the next opportunity can become.
From the establishment of an insurance brokerage in 1980 to the development of a diversified business group with an international real estate presence, Prof. Ahmed bin Salawudeen's journey has been one of continuous evolution, building on the past while creating businesses designed for the future.
And as the Standard Insurance Consultants Limited enters its 46th year of creation, that legacy continues to evolve through its businesses, its people, its expanding international footprint, its commitment to innovation, and its initiatives that seek to translate corporate success into meaningful impact.
The story that began with insurance more than four decades ago is still being written now across property, healthcare, hospitality, technology, and investment, with an enduring vision of building businesses that create value for both their clients and the wider society.



BABATUNDE SURAKAT: Well Grounded, Result-Driven Real Estate Expert, Creating Value, Developing People, With Unwavering Commitment To Excellence, Integrity

With a rich professional background comprising banking, entrepreneurship, construction and property development, Babatunde Surakat, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Ridgewell Construction Company Limited, brings a commercially driven approach to business leadership, strategic growth and value creation.

He holds a B.Sc. in Business Management and Information Technology from the University of Plymouth, UK, an MBA and MSc from the University of Wales, and is an alumnus of Harvard Business School and Lagos Business School. He has also held leadership and board positions across businesses in construction, facilities management, logistics and procurement.

His professional interests include real estate development, construction, investment, entrepreneurship, leadership development and building sustainable businesses across Africa. His company, Ridgewell Construction, is a Nigerian construction and real estate development company, that continues to make its mark in Nigeria's housing sector.

This year, Mr. Babatunde Surakat being one of the country's highly resourceful, ambitious and fast-rising entrepreneurs recognised by *The Guardian* as one of the "Sixty (60) Most Inspiring, Visionary, and Transformative leaders That Shaped Nigeri'a Economic Growth In 2026".

WHEN describing the intrinsic motivation and greatest passion that has brought him far in your business career, he noted that "For me, it has always been about building something meaningful. I have always wanted to create a business that goes beyond profit—one that solves real problems, creates opportunities and leaves something valuable behind. What I enjoy about construction and real estate is that you can actually see the impact of your work. You are creating homes, communities and assets that become part of people's lives."

"Ultimately, my passion is to build a company that creates value, develops people and stands for quality and integrity", he added.

Concerning what inspired Ridgewell Construction Company Limited to go into its key business areas, and the company's impact and contribution to Nigeria's GDP in the year under review, Babatunde disclosed that "Rdgewell started with renovation and subcontracting, and those early experiences gave us a strong foundation in construction. As we grew, we saw an opportunity to take greater responsibility for the entire development process, from design and construction to delivery and facility management. I believe a successful development is about more than just the building. It is about design, quality, functionality and the overall client experience.

Our contribution to the economy is also reflected in the jobs and opportunities created across architects, engineers, artisans, suppliers, contractors and other professionals involved in our projects."

He highlighted some of the key projects that have shaped the company's growth especially the earlier developments which include "Destiny Terraces, Brickell Terraces, Cromwell 1 Terraces and Cromwell 2 Terraces. These projects gave us valuable experience and helped us strengthen our systems. More recently, we have delivered Rosewood One and Rosewood Two, while our current portfolio includes Oakwood, Lennox, Forney Residence and Astoria, alongside individual apartment developments.

For me, every project is an opportunity to learn, improve and raise our standards. That has been a major part of Ridgewell's growth."

In his words, "What makes Ridgewell different, particularly in quality assurance and global best practice starts with the standards we set for ourselves. We take quality, delivery, teamwork and client's satisfaction very seriously.

Personally, I believe your reputation is built one project at a time, so we pay attention to every stage—from planning and design to materials, construction, supervision and delivery. We also embrace technology, professional expertise and processes that reflect global best practice, while adapting them to the Nigerian environment. At the end of the day, I want our clients to be confident not only in what we build, but in how we do business."

Speaking on the major challenges facing entrepreneurs in Nigeria today, and how entrepreneurs like him have been navigating through them, the award-winning real estate expert explained that "Doing business in Nigeria requires resilience and adaptability.

In construction, we deal with rising costs, inflation, foreign exchange volatility, financing constraints and infrastructure challenges. We manage these through careful planning, financial discipline, strong procurement and continuous project monitoring.

Similarly, we understand the importance of having good people and strong relationships with our clients, consultants, contractors and suppliers. The environment will continue to change, so our focus is to remain adaptable without compromising our standards."

For the long-term vision for Ridgewell Construction Company Limited, he said "Our vision is "To be recognised as a foremost construction and development company in Africa using our expertise and experience." My long-term goal is to build Ridgewell into a company that is recognised not only in Nigeria, but eventually in the global market.

For me, growth is not just about having more projects. It is about building the right people, systems and capacity to sustain that growth. I want Ridgewell to be known for quality, integrity and excellence, while creating opportunities and developing people. Most importantly, I want to build an institution that can outlive me and leave a lasting impact on the built environment."



How Nellyval Group's building indigenous capacity that solves real economic challenges, driving sustainable national growth, by Okolie

Despite the plethora of challenges facing Nigeria, her economic growth has been primarily shaped by visionary industrialists, financial pioneers, ICT disruptors, oil and gas moguls, hospitality giants, amongst others, who have revolutionalised local brands, thereby creating the foundational infrastructure that continues to impact the nation's GDP growth.

One of such truly transformative business leaders is ***Chief (Amb.) Valentine Anele Okolie, the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Nellyval Group*** *- a visionary entrepreneur, philanthropist, and dedicated Christian leader, with over a decade of experience in the Freight Forwarding Industry. As the Founder and Chairman of Nellyval Group of Companies and Nellyval Oil and Gas, Chief Okolie, an established trailblazer and business mogul of repute, has demonstrated exceptional leadership and a commitment to providing quality services within different sectors where his companies operate.*

Astute, highly resourceful, and focused businessman, he has built a reputation as a reliable and innovative service provider, offering a range of top-notch services in the freight forwarding industry including shipping, clearing and forwarding, exports/imports, haulage, consultancy, express concerns, and logistics. As the CEO of Nellyval Group, he has established a leading clearing and forwarding agent in Africa with the company's services designed to meet the demands of an ever-changing world, focusing on quality, reliability, customer satisfaction.

Similarly, he founded and pilots the affairs of Nellyval Oil and Gas — a licensed distributor of refined and unadulterated petroleum products — Nellyval Lubricants for all engines in Nigeria. Nellyval is the First Recognized and FG-Accredited Compressed Natural Gas Station in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

With a team of highly trained, experienced experts, and over 500 staff strength, offering quality services to meet the demands and needs of an ever rapidly technologically-changing world, Amb. Valentine Okolie's vision to build an indigenous company with a core mandate of proffering solutions to an array of global customer problems, with a view of eradicating poverty in Nigeria through mass employment, humanitarian services and empowerment, is afoot.

Inspired by some of the world's reputable philosophers who believe that the world is guided by insight and reason, Chief Okolie has selflessly submitted himself to the pursuit of the greatest good for the greatest number. He is a recipient of numerous prestigious awards in recognition of his exceptional leadership, business acumen, and philanthropic contributions.

Through the Anele Val Foundation (AVF), Amb. Okolie has made a significant impact on the lives of millions of Nigerians. His philanthropic efforts are focused on eradicating poverty through mass employment, humanitarian services, as well as empowerment of the less privileged, through AVF's Community Development and Humanitarian Projects. Many of AVF's interventions dotted several communities across different geo-political zones of Nigeria including markets, parks, provision of boreholes, renovation of classroom blocks, provision of ICT gadgets, rebuilding of churches, donation of buses; giving scholarship to 100 indigent children in Imo, Abia and Rivers States. AVL is also involve in monthly feeding scheme for widows, orphans, the less privileged across selected States in Nigeria, amongst other engagements.

In recognition of his excellent character, innovative ideas, remarkable achievements, significant contribution to national socio-economic development, broad-based humanitarian services, advancement/support for youth empowerment and strong family life, Chief Valentine Okolie has received several awards and testaments in and outside Nigeria that this space cannot accommodate

While reacting to his recognition by ***The Guardian*** *as one of the* ***"Sixty Most Inspiring and Transformative Business Leaders That Shaped Nigeria's Economic In 2026", Chief Amb. Valentine Okolie*** *spoke about the inspiration behind the emergence of the Nellyval Group, the company's engagements/partnerships that have shaped its growth, the Nigerian business environment, the long term vision for Nellyval Group, amongst pertinent issues. Excerpts . . .*

As a diversified Nigerian conglomerate operating across multiple sectors, including logistics, oil and gas, shipping, and international trade, what can you say inspired Nellyval Group to go into its key business areas?

Nellyval Group was established to bridge critical infrastructure and operational gaps across vital, high-impact sectors of the Nigerian economy. Through our logistics, maritime, and shipping divisions — including Nellyval Investments and Nellyval Global — our drive was inspired by the pressing need for reliable, efficient supply chain solutions that bypass traditional port bottlenecks, connect local industries to global trade networks, and showcase indigenous corporate capability.

At the same time, our expansion into energy and downstream products through Nellyval Oil & Gas was driven by a commitment to strengthen local content execution, deliver world-class operational support, and provide high-grade energy solutions — from international-standard lubricants and Automatic Transmission Fluids to clean energy initiatives under the Federal CNG coalition.

Furthermore, our diversification into real estate through Nellyval Luxury Homes Limited stems from a vision to address urban housing deficits with modern, high-quality developments in high-growth commercial corridors. Across every division, Nellyval Group is inspired by a singular goal; building indigenous capacity that solves real economic challenges while driving sustainable national growth.

What are the key projects or business engagements and partnerships that have shaped the company's growth, especially those that were delivered in recent time and others that are currently under development?

In recent times, Nellyval Group has significantly strengthened its operational footprint across key maritime, logistics, real estate, and energy sectors in Nigeria through several milestone engagements. These include the following:

Terminal Expansion & Regional Logistics Footprint

We expanded our throughput capacity by establishing and commissioning new bonded terminals earlier this year—Integrity Point (Abuja) and Lipodent (Alakija, Lagos State)—alongside active facilities like Rhodes Dynamic (Port -Harcourt, Rivers State), Nellyval Global (Sagamu, Ogun State) an Val & Good (Asa, Abia State). To further optimize transit job handling, speed up cargo clearance, and ease congestion at major southern ports like Onne Port, we have advanced plans to open additional strategic bonded terminals in Costana Global Limited , Uli, Anambra State, which is currently undergoing final preparations ahead of its official commissioning, and a new facility in Kano to service Northern commercial corridors.

Energy Solutions, Downstream Products & Federal CNG Coalition

In alignment with the Federal Government's energy transition agenda, Nellyval Group has partnered within the Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) coalition initiative to expand natural gas infrastructure, lower transportation costs, and provide cleaner energy alternatives. Simultaneously, through our downstream energy and trading operations, we deliver high-performance products nationwide — supplying top-tier industrial lubricants under our proprietary Nellyval Oil brand (available in 25L, 5L, 4L, and 1L containers) and high-grade Automatic Transmission Fluid (ATF) (available in 4L and 1L sizes). Formulated strictly to international standards, these products support commercial fleets, heavy industrial machinery, and the broader automotive market.

Real Estate & Urban Development

Through our real estate subsidiary, Nellyval Luxury Homes Limited, we are actively driving residential infrastructure growth along the Lekki corridor in Lagos, developing modern, high-quality housing units designed to address critical urban housing needs and deliver long-term value in high-growth commercial hubs.

Freight & Customs Optimization

Across all logistics operations, we continue to enhance nationwide freight movement and customs clearance while maintaining strict compliance with regulatory bodies (such as the Nigeria Customs Service, PAAR, and CRFFN) to minimize demurrage and ensure seamless supply chain delivery for major corporate clients.

How can you describe Nellyval Group's impact in the sectors where it operates and by extension its contribution to Nigeria's GDP growth in the last twelve months?

Over the last twelve months, Nellyval Group has served as an economic growth catalyst—transforming critical sectors of the Nigerian economy by expanding industrial infrastructure, driving energy cost-efficiencies, and strengthening indigenous corporate capacity. Our macroeconomic impact and ector-by-sector contribution to national GDP are reflected across four strategic pillars:

Unlocking Maritime & Trade Logistics Efficiency: Through our nationwide network of bonded terminals—including active hubs like Integrity Point, Lipodent, Val and Good et al alongside pending expansions in Uli (Anambra State) and Kano—we directly mitigate severe port congestion at major gateways like Onne Port. By streamlining customs clearance, accelerating transire job handling, and eliminating costly demurrage penalties for importers, we safeguard corporate capital and maintain uninterrupted supply chains for local industries.



Driving Energy Transition & Industrial Mobility: In direct alignment with national economic goals, our participation in the Federal Government's Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) coalition is helping lower nationwide transportation and energy costs. Simultaneously, through our downstream energy operations, we support industrial productivity and transport logistics by manufacturing and distributing international-standard lubricants under the Nellyval Oil brand and high-grade Automatic Transmission Fluid (ATF)—safeguarding heavy machinery, commercial fleets, and private vehicles nationwide.

Stimulating Capital Formation & Infrastructure Development: Through Nellyval Luxury Homes Limited, our ongoing residential projects along the Lekki corridor in Lagos drive urban renewal, stimulate local building-material supply chains, create skilled real estate and engineering. jobs, and unlock long-term asset value in prime commercial zones.

In Direct Contribution to National GD: By removing supply chain bottlenecks for manufacturers, lowering transport and logistics overheads through clean energy initiatives, and expanding our direct and indirect labor force across multiple geopolitical zones, Nellyval Group preserves industrial productivity, supports domestic revenue generation, and directly contributes to Nigeria's real GDP growth.

Can we attribute the aforementioned success story to what makes Nellyval Group different from other Nigerian companies, especially in its approach to quality assurance and global best practice in its operations, as well as the high standard of its products/services?

What sets Nellyval Group apart is our uncompromising operational integrity, speed of execution, and total quality control across our logistics and manufacturing arms. Unlike market players who rely solely on third parties, we build and manage our own infrastructure — from inland bonded terminals to real estate developments and energy products. Our proprietary Nellyval Oil lubricants and ATF lines are formulated strictly to international specifications, adhering to ISO quality frameworks and regulatory standards set by SON and the Nigeria Customs Service. This commitment ensures our products and services consistently deliver world-class reliability regardless of local operational complexities.

As a seasoned and highly resourceful entrepreneur, how can you say Nellyval Group has been able to earn the trust of both clients and other stakeholders under your watch and what are the measures being put in place to sustain this feat?

In high-stakes sectors like maritime logistics, trade, energy, and real estate, trust is earned strictly by honoring commitments—minimizing cargo clearance delays, guaranteeing exact technical specifications for our energy products, and delivering quality housing developments on schedule. Earning the confidence of clients, regulators, and shipping lines stems from extreme transparency and strict regulatory compliance. To sustain this trust, Nellyval Group continuously institutionalizes rigid internal compliance protocols, upgrades digital tracking systems across our logistics network, and maintains open, proactive feedback loops with all corporate partners.

In your opinion, what are the major challenges facing entrepreneurs like you in Nigeria today and how have you been able to consistently navigate through them?

Operating in Nigeria requires navigating distinct macroeconomic headwinds—from port congestion and regulatory shifts to FX volatility and infrastructure deficits. We have consistently overcome these hurdles through strategic foresight, agility, and proactive multi-sector diversification. To bypass port bottlenecks at major maritime gateways, we established inland bonded terminals across key commercial corridors. To hedge against energy cost inflation, we joined the Federal CNG coalition while expanding our downstream product lines.

Furthermore, diversifying into real estate along high-growth commercial corridors gives us a balanced portfolio capable of absorbing economic shocks while maintaining steady growth.

Can you tell us more about the long term vision for Nellyval Group?

Our long-term vision is to establish Nellyval Group as Africa's premier indigenous logistics, trade, energy, and real estate conglomerate. Over the next decade, we aim to expand our bonded terminal footprint across major West African corridors, directly supporting regional trade under the AfCFTA framework.

Simultaneously, we will scale our real estate footprint, deepen clean energy adoption through the Federal CNG initiative, and widen the nationwide distribution of Nellyval Oil. Beyond commercial expansion, our vision focuses on driving sustainable economic growth, empowering local talent, and building an enduring institution that sets the standard for Nigerian enterprise on the global stage.


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TOTAL FREEDOM.
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BENJAMIN AKHAMERE: Ambitious, Result-Driven, Savvy Entrepreneur, Creating Values, Putting Vision To Work At DreamCity Group

Benjamin Akhamere, Founder/Chief Executive Officer, DreamCity Group, is seasoned and highly resourceful entrepreneur with over two decades of business experience and broad knowledge in construction, real estate, hospitality, financial technology, and international trade. His company, DreamCity Group is a well-structured conglomerate with diversified interests in real estate development, civil engineering, mining, manufacturing, hospitality and e-commerce.

With a mission to create exceptional real estate portfolio that guarantees high returns on investments, value for money and long-term financial security, DreamCity has grown to become one of the leading and dependable real estate developers in Nigeria, over the years. Today, apart from operating in key Nigerian cities - Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Warri, Ibadan, and Benin, the Group has opened international offices in Canada and the United Kingdom.

Besides value creation, through high returns on residential and commercial investment packages, DreamCity also offers contemporary design concepts in architecture and project consulting services that range from project planning to completion and with its new entrant, the Gravy Global Holding, the Group intends to take the world of e-commerce by storm.

While reacting to his selection by ***The Guardian*** *as one of the "**Sixty (60) Most Inspiring, Visionary and Transformative Business Leaders That Shaped Nigeria's Economic Growth In 2026**", **Mr. Benjamin Akhamere** spoke about the repositioning of the DreamCity Group as one of fast-growing Nigerian conglomerates, the company's inroad into tech/e-commerce, opportunities and challenges in the Nigerian business environment, amongst other sundry issues. Excerpts …*

Can you tell us more about the DreamCity Group's operation, some of the key projects that defined the brand's success and shaped the growth of the company over the past few years?



DREAMCITY was founded in 2010 and what we do now is a vision of who we wanted to be. Surely, it takes time to achieve what has been conceptualized, however, since we commenced operations sixteen years ago, we have been growing from one project to another. Under the Group, we have four companies with interests in real estate, hospitality, fintech and e-commerce.

At the moment, we have built over 2,000 units of houses between Abuja and Lagos, comprising three detached building and apartments. Across our hospitality arm, we have a fully running hotel in Maitama, Abuja; two currently under construction; and two more at the planning phase. Our goal is to have 400 hundred serviceable hotel rooms in the next 24 months, in addition to other eight ongoing projects.

Similarly, we have invested heavily in fintech, providing a global and borderless digital ecosystem for day-to-day living. Our Gravy App is created to ensure users do not get stranded wherever they are in the world - from Nigeria to China, Philippines to Cote D'Ivoire, South Africa to Canada, etc. Gravy combines financial services with digital technology and a whole other services including digital commerce and online purchase. This is different from other digital platforms that have restrictions in certain countries, Gravy users are able to integrate with business partners in any part of the world. It is a kind of super app – a platform that enables global business users have access to multiple and diverse transactions.

Now that DreamCity has built the Gravy App, what do you intend to achieve with the digital tool?

Gravy was launched officially on 1st April, 2026 after four years' trials, modifications, and necessary approvals on Google Play Store and Apple Play Store. Presently, we still have a lot of features on the app yet to be deployed. An app is much more than the technology itself. There is a business that supports the tech's robustness which make it truly borderless and seamless for users.

The objective is to create a multifunctional ecosystem for highly mobile individuals. Users can conduct several multiple transactions while connecting day-to-day activities. In the future, Gravy will integrate all necessary infrastructures whereby a user can buy flight ticket, book taxi, pay for hotel reservation, order meals, and many other purchases. It is going for trading, traveling, training, access to loan services, as well as allow vendors to sell their goods and services, convert currencies, under the terms and conditions of the country of use. In July 2026, we opened our operations office in Canada and by the end of the year, Gravy would be officially launched in Canada and the UK.

How does DreamCity Property approach quality control in its operations in order to ensure that every project meets the company's high standards?

DreamCity Group has an internal process with tremendous support from external consultants. Each project has a consulting team that we have signed an exclusive partnership with, across architectural, M&E and structural components of our projects. The external consultants are practically responsible for standards both at the design and construction phases, and ensure that every stage of the project is supervised, and approved by them.

Thus, within the company, we have projects supervisory team handling quality assurance in conjunction with the external consulting team. This is more of a water tight approach whereby no stone is left unturned - if the internal team misses a point, the external consultants comes in immediately to remedy it.

What can you say are the key differentiating factors between the DreamCity products/services and others within the industry?

DreamCity is a company built with a clear vision of growing into an institution. A financially-stable company, with business cutting across different countries. Built from medium to very large, our vision is to become comparable to other conglomerate anywhere in the world. Right now, we are more than just a real estate company - one that has surpassed several challenges and developed into an institution.

Many companies and global brands did not start with the product or service they are now known for today. Samsung, for example, was a textile company but metamorphosed into electronics and technology products. From a small trading company into what it is today. Therefore, for us, we are in real estate today, tomorrow we can step into oil and gas, or aviation.

Looking into the future, DreamCity will be divesting aggressively into finance and tech. The reason is simple. If we can acquire a measure of knowledge, we can implement it in any other country we choose to. Thus, DreamCity is a company with a vision to grow into a blue-chip organisation and as a result acquire the requisite knowledge, stamina, and capacity needed to survive in any economic environment we find ourselves.

Real estate is one of the most difficult businesses to do in Nigeria, where inflation, incoherent government policies, unstable prices, and dwindled purchasing power, have severely reduced sales of houses. Hence, as a real estate company, what happened in the past four years has really taught us not to put all eggs in one basket. It is imperative to think as entrepreneurs rather than estate developers, who will remain static hoping for a positive outlook in the economic situation before selling. Profit has been eroded by cement, iron, and granite sellers.

What can you say inspired DreamCity Group to veer into other areas of business?

Looking back, if I have mentorship, possibly I would not have started my entrepreneurial journey with real estate. I started with car selling before venturing into frozen foods, at some point, media services before settling into real estate.

However, I will dare say that real estate is a calling because I actually failed in other aforementioned businesses until I came to real estate. There, I discovered a passion. It is what a ministry is to a cleric, yet real estate is one of the most difficult businesses and quite challenging because it involves a number of diverse skills.

To succeed in real estate, I had to learn designs, engineering, construction, finance, procurement, legalities, etc, To survive in these critical aspects, I had to learn from the scratch without mentorship or guidance. You can imagine the pain of learning through mistakes, and all. The knowledge in real estate has built in me the grit, wisdom and understanding to succeed in other businesses.

DreamCity has diversified into other sectors because no company can survive solely on a single stream income in today's economic environment in Nigeria. As an entrepreneur, our goal is to create a global company and we are working hard to achieve that by cutting across a number of sectors. Today, we are looking at finance and digital commerce in addition to real estate. Tomorrow, it could be oil and gas. It is doable because there are a number of individuals who have achieved same feat. In Nigeria, we have Tony Elumelu; there is a Warren Buffets having interests in over 60 companies; the Andani Group in India with interests across multiple sectors, with thousands of workers.

Thus, our goal is simple. As the Chief Executive Officer, my duty is to lead an army of men and women, trained them to create an organisation that can be rated as one of the top 500 companies in the world in the nearest future.

Apart from the DreamCity brand and the innovation being promoted by the company, given the economic situation in Nigeria, how does an entrepreneur like you navigate your way to survive?

An entrepreneur does not live life based on guesswork. Entrepreneurship itself means someone who goes through high risks, in the midst of hardship, impossibilities and obvious resistance, to create business ideas, opportunities, profit and wealth. The life of an entrepreneur is a tough one. You must be resilient and ready to forfeit sleep sometimes, simply because the information you are working with presently will expire in another few hours. Apart from financial intelligence, an entrepreneur must continue to strive to acquire new knowledge, yet there are challenges coming at each point of the way. Meanwhile, on the outside, there is a shield that masks the pain.

Generally speaking, no company has become great by operating in just one single country except China because they have that population. Even at that, each company has a serious competition to face internally. Consequently, to become a great organisation, there is the need to constantly go beyond one piece of knowledge and one geographical location. For example, the principles used to succeed in real estate few years ago have become obsolete, if you do not upgrade, you run into a huge loss. Just as obsolete education will lead to backward knowledge which in turn will stifle productivity. Thus, Nigeria government needs to fix the education system, control social media and initiate policies whereby children cannot access social media until certain age. Children can only become responsible when they are well monitored between 5 to 10 years to their teens when they are still trainable so that entrepreneurs will not just have visions that are unattainable because there are not useful or ably skilled workforce. By fixing education, other spheres of life will be fixed - healthcare system, transportation, engineering, social relations, and the economy at large.

What is the long term vision for the DreamCity Group?

Turning a business into a global brand is not what any random person can do without a particular mindset. In the nearest future, I want to see multiple businesses founded and managed by Nigerians having their headquarters in key cities across different continents with branches in several countries, globally. South African companies are already doing it. To see a number of Nigerian banks competing favorably like any other entities on the floor of the US Stocks Exchange. African businesses should not be contented with growth and that is why I am so impressed with what Dangote is doing. That audacity, we need plenty of it. Nigerian businesses should be able to chase opportunities across the world competing globally, employing foreigners, earning hard currencies. To get to that point, we have to do a lot of learnings. We have to step out of our "comfort zones".

DREAMCITY GROUP

ABEL AGBO ONYEKE: Astute Financial Advisory Expert, Deepening Professional Practice, With An Unwavering Commitment To Nigeria's Economic Growth

ABEL Agbo Onyeke *PhD, FCA, FCTI*, **Executive Chairman, Nexia Nigeria**, a leading and proudly Nigerian-owned accounting firm with a strong regional presence in Abuja, Lagos, and Kaduna. Demonstrating its commitment to global standards and reach, the firm is a valued member of Nexia International, a worldwide network of independent auditors, business advisors, and consultants operating across over one hundred countries. As the visionary founder of the firm in 2004, Dr. Onyeke has expertly guided it to its prominent position as a reputable market leader in Nigeria's accounting and advisory landscape.

A seasoned professional boasting over 30 years of distinguished experience in audit, assurance, tax, and consulting, Dr. Onyeke further contributes to the profession as the Chairman of the Professional Practice Forum of the ICAN Abuja & District Society. His leadership at Nexia encompasses all strategic and operational aspects, including vision and strategic planning, the development of impactful policies and practices, service innovation and delivery, rigorous quality assurance, proactive risk management, and comprehensive personnel management and development.

Beyond his significant professional achievements, Dr. Onyeke is deeply committed to serving his community as a respected leader, dedicated philanthropist, and passionate educationist. Dr. Onyeke's robust academic foundation comprises a PhD in Accounting from Nasarawa State University, complemented by a Master of Science degree in Accounting & Finance from the same institution. He also holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree in Management and a Bachelor of Science degree in Accountancy, both earned from the prestigious University of Nigeria. His professional affiliations stand as a testament to his expertise and commitment to excellence, including Fellowships with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (FCA), the Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria (FCTI), and the Certified Pension Institute of Nigeria, as well as membership with the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE). Dr. Onyeke's professional journey, culminating in his founding and leading Nexia Nigeria for over 20 years, is enriched by valuable prior experience as a Financial Management Consultant with the World Bank, as well as impactful tenures at renowned firms KPMG and Deloitte. His extensive service expertise spans a wide spectrum of sectors. In the public sector, he has provided invaluable statutory audit, investigative, personnel audit, executive selection/recruitment, organizational effectiveness, and capacity building services to numerous Ministries, Departments, and Agencies of Government. Hiprivate sector engagements encompass statutory audits, investigations, comprehensive tax services, insightful business planning & valuation, organisational effectiveness initiatives, impactful capacity building programs, efficient start-up solutions, as well as expert liquidation and secretarial services.

Furthermore, he has consistently contributed to the non-profit sector, offering expert financial management consultancies to a range of International NGOs and donor agencies. His core competencies represent a comprehensive suite of skills, encompassing audit and assurance, tax advisory, business planning & valuation, strategic financial management, tailored training programs, forensic accounting investigations, thorough due diligence assessments, and strategic consulting services.



While reacting to his recognition by **The Guardian** as one of Nigeria's **"Sixty Most Inspiring, Visionary and Transformative Business Leaders That Shaped Nigeria's Economic Growth In 2026"**, **Dr. Abel Onyeke** spoke on what inspired Nexia Nigeria's excellence, its corporate vision and success story, as well as Nexia Nigeria's firm's engagements and partnerships, and the long-term vision for company, amongst sundry issues. Excerpts …

As an indigenous multi-skill and multi-discipline professional advisory firm, what can you say inspired Nexia Nigeria to go into its key business area and how can you describe the company's impact in the sector where it operates and by extension the company's contribution to Nigeria's GDP growth in the last twelve months?

Nexia Nigeria was established in November 2004 by professionals who had learnt their craft at KPMG and Deloitte. The founding conviction was simple: first-class professional service should not be the exclusive preserve of multinationals. Nigerian SMEs, family businesses and public institutions deserve the same rigour, delivered at a sensible cost and with direct access to senior people.

That conviction still shapes the firm. From Lagos, Abuja and Kaduna, our five partners and professional teams serve listed and private companies, public institutions and donor-funded programmes. Our work spans audit, tax, restructuring, forensic investigations and advisory.

Our contribution to GDP lies in strengthening the conditions for growth. Reliable financial statements improve access to credit and investor confidence. Sound tax advice supports compliance and public revenue. Restructuring protects viable jobs, while forensic and donor-funded work strengthens accountability. Over the last twelve months, our role has been to help clients make credible decisions in a difficult economy. We do not claim to move GDP single-handedly. We help keep the machinery honest, and that matters.

What are the key projects, engagements and partnerships that have shaped the company's growth, especially those that were delivered in recent time and others that are currently under development?

Our recent growth has three markers. First, sustained assurance work across construction, energy, manufacturing, financial services, government and development programmes. Nairametrics' reviews have continued to place us among the indigenous firms competing outside the Big Four. Its July 2026 mapping also underlines the context: the Big Four accounted for 59.38% of the 128 companies reviewed. For an indigenous firm, every credible mandate outside that concentration is earned, not inherited.

Second, partnerships. Nexia International gives us access to global methods, training and cross-border capacity. A Nexia International case study published in 2025 records our role in a partner-led, multi-country audit for a US$3.5 billion trading and distribution group. That is Bridging Global Gaps with the work attached.

Third, future capability. We are investing in ESG and sustainability assurance, integrated reporting, data-enabled audit, cyber-risk advisory, transfer pricing and global mobility. These are not decorative service lines. They reflect what Nigerian clients now ask us to solve.

How can you describe the nexus between the corporate vision of Nexia Nigeria and its success story, cutting-edge advantage, growth trajectory and how the company has been able to earn the trust of both clients/customers and shareholders?

Our vision is Care + Growth. We want our people, clients and communities to develop together. The phrase is short; the work is not.

The connection between vision and success is consistency. We apply global methods with local judgement, keep partners close to engagements, train continuously and review quality before work reaches the client. That approach has carried the firm from a 2004 start-up to a multi-city practice serving clients across the private, public and development sectors.

Our visibility has also increased over the last five years. The Guardian recognised Dr Abel Onyeke among Nigeria's 60 result-driven and award-winning professionals driving national economic growth. Nairametrics profiled our Managing Partner, Alexander Kofi Peddler, among 10 leaders steering Nigeria's leading audit firms. Nexia International, our global network, rose to eighth place in the International Accounting Bulletin World Survey ranking in 2021 and retained that position in 2022. Equally important, the FRC concluded its 2025 review with all identified issues satisfactorily resolved. We treat that as affirmation, not a trophy. Quality should survive daylight.

Can you attribute the aforementioned success story to what makes Nexia Nigeria different from other Nigerian companies, especially in its approach to quality assurance, global best practice in its operations, as well as the high standard in products and services?

Yes, but a difference matters only when the client can feel it. Three choices define our approach.

We are partner-led. Senior people remain involved from planning to sign-off, so clients do not pay for judgement and receive a revolving cast.

We are globally benchmarked and locally grounded. Our Nexia International membership shapes our methodology, training and quality management. Our Nigerian experience shapes how we apply them. A global manual is useful; local judgement makes it usable.

We deliberately serve the middle of the market. SMEs, family businesses, public institutions and non-profits need the same professional standards as multinational corporations, delivered with flexibility and at a sensible cost. That is Democratizing Excellence in practice.

Quality assurance is embedded in client acceptance, planning, fieldwork, consultation and review. We are accountable to ICAN, CITN, the FRC and the Nexia network. The first test is simpler: would we be comfortable defending our work in public?

In your own opinion, what are the major challenges facing entrepreneurs like you in Nigeria today and how have you been able to consistently navigate through them?

Entrepreneurs face foreign-exchange swings, inflation, expensive credit, power costs, regulatory overlap and a shortage of specialist talent. None of these challenges is new, but their combination is demanding.

We navigate them through prudence, diversification and relevance. Our client base cuts across sectors, our costs are managed carefully, and our tax, restructuring, forensic and governance services address the problems difficult seasons create. We also continue to invest in people because software can process data, but it cannot replace professional skepticism or the courage to give unwelcome advice.

Most importantly, we apply the same governance standards internally that we recommend to clients. It is difficult to preach controls with a straight face when your own house ignores them.

Can you tell us more about the long-term vision for Nexia Nigeria?

By 2035, we want Nexia Nigeria to be larger, deeper and more influential, without losing the personal service that brought us this far.

Scale means more than 200 professionals, a wider Nigerian footprint and selective expansion into West Africa. Capability means leadership in ESG assurance, integrated reporting, data-enabled audit, transaction advisory and cross-border tax. Talent means developing Nigerian professionals who can serve confidently anywhere in the world, including those who will become the firm's next partners. Legacy means proving that an indigenous firm can combine international quality with local accessibility.

The last five years have made us more visible. The next ten should make us more useful. Bigger, yes, but never too big to know our clients.

HABEEB OKUNOLA: Quintessential Business Leader, Forward-Thinking Serial Entrepreneur, Restoring Productive Capacity, Expanding Footprint Across Africa

Chief Akosin Habeeb Olalekan Okunola, OFR, MON, FICAb, is a highly resourceful serial entrepreneur whose vision is in complete alignment with Nigeria's National Development Plan. His company, CINI Holdings is an African-based conglomerate built on the foundation of collaboration, innovation, and sustainable growth. Driving growth through strategic partnerships, innovative solutions, and sustainable practices across diverse sectors, the company's commitment is to simplify complexities, unlock new opportunities, and deliver value across multiple industries. These include construction, engineering, energy, technology, supply chain management, mineral exploration, real estate, and agro-allied services.

While expanding its footprint across Africa and emerging markets worldwide, CINI Holdings' focus remains on delivering high-impact solutions that address real-world challenges through cutting-edge technology, steadfast commitment to excellence, while shaping industries, empowering communities, and contributing to a more sustainable future.

As a dynamic business leader and philanthropist whose accomplishments were crowned in excellence, he won the 'Excellence In Business Leadership and Community Development' Award, 2019 at the Pan-African Humanitarian Summit and Award in Abu Dhabi. This is a clear acknowledgement of his forward-thinking business acumen and significant achievements in humanitarian initiatives, as well as dedication to socio-economic development within underserved communities.

For these and more, ***Dr. Habeeb Olalekan Okunola*** *has been recognised by* ***The Guardian as one of the "Sixty Most Inspiring, Visionary, and Transformative Business Leaders That Shaped Nigeria's Economic Growth In 2026".***

In a brief chat, he spoke with ***The Guardian*** *on CINI Holdings' key projects, engagements/partnerships, the company's quality assurance and global best practice, the business landscape in Nigeria, and the long-term vision for CINI Holdings, amongst sundry issues. Excerpts . . ..*

As an indigenous conglomerate, what can you say inspired CINI Holdings to go into its key business areas and how can you describe the company's impact across these different sectors where it operates and by extension the company's contribution to Nigeria's GDP growth in the last twelve months?

CINI Holdings grew out of a conviction I have held since my earliest years in business - that Nigeria's development must never be completely outsourced. Our journey began from a simple conviction that Nigeria has enormous opportunities in sectors that directly influence the quality of life and productive capacity of its people. Infrastructure, construction, engineering, energy, technology, supply chain management, real estate, agriculture and mineral development are not isolated sectors. They are interconnected parts of the economic system. When one performs poorly, it affects the others. When they develop together, they create jobs, stimulate enterprise and expand the productive capacity of the economy.

That thinking has shaped the evolution of CINI Holdings. Today, our portfolio cuts across construction and engineering, energy, technology, procurement and supply chain management, mineral exploration, real estate and agro-allied services. Our subsidiaries are structured around this wider capacity, with each business addressing a particular need while contributing to the strength of the group as a whole.

Collaboration is the new innovation; one company, one sector or one individual cannot solve every problem. We bring together expertise, capital, technology and relationships to deliver solutions that create value for clients, partners, communities, and shareholders.

Our contribution to the Nigerian economy should, therefore, not be viewed only through the narrow question of corporate turnover. Every road, power project, housing development, procurement contract, engineering solution, technology deployment, and agricultural intervention creates economic activity around it. It engages professionals, contractors, suppliers, artisans, transporters and communities, while strengthening value chains and keeping money circulating within the economy.

What are the key projects, engagements and partnerships that have shaped the company's growth, especially those that were delivered in recent time and others that are currently under development?

Our growth has been shaped by a combination of major infrastructure engagements, international partnerships, and the discipline to build relationships around capability rather than convenience. One of the projects particularly close to me is the Bahrain Power Plant project in Delta State. We secured the contract to revive a power plant that had been out of operation for several years. The project involves gas turbine technology and a partnership with Schneider Electric of France. For me, its significance goes beyond the value of the contract. It is about helping to restore productive capacity in a sector that has a direct bearing on Nigeria's economic development.

Similarly, we have developed international relationships around major opportunities in renewable energy and infrastructure. In Saudi Arabia's NEOM City, for instance, we have been involved in renewable energy opportunities in partnership with Energy China. These relationships demonstrate the kind of international collaboration that we believe will increasingly define the next phase of CINI's growth.

Our international expansion has not been limited to large infrastructure projects. In the United Kingdom, our real estate activities include social housing, where we have grown from an initial portfolio of about 10 rooms to more than 700 rooms across locations including Hackney and Cuba. That experience has reinforced our belief that sustainable business models can be built around solving real social needs while generating dependable long-term returns.

At home, our heritage projects in transmission infrastructure, construction, remediation, housing, marine engineering and public-sector infrastructure have provided a strong foundation for the group. Our current structure builds on that experience while positioning newer platforms such as Future Minerals, Value Exchange Real Estate and TILT Property Rescue for growth.

Essentially, what matters to us is not the number of projects we can announce. It is the capacity to deliver projects that remain useful long after the ceremony is over.

How can you describe the nexus between the corporate vision of CINI Holdings and its success story, cutting-edge advantage, growth trajectory and how the company has been able to earn the trust of both clients and shareholders?

The meaning of CINI captures our philosophy: Collaboration Is the New Innovation.

That is not simply a corporate slogan. It is the way we approach business. The old model of business was largely built around trying to control everything internally. The world has changed. The most valuable opportunities today often exist at the intersection of different capabilities, markets and ideas. Thus, know what you are good at and otherwise, build the right relationships around both.

Our competitive advantage has come from this ability to bring different capabilities together and create solutions around complex problems. We combine local knowledge with international partnerships, technical expertise with commercial understanding, and physical infrastructure with technology.

Diversification has also given the group resilience. We operate across sectors that have different cycles, not dependent on the performance of one market alone. More importantly, these sectors complement one another. Procurement supports construction. Engineering supports infrastructure. Real Estate creates investment opportunities. Technology improves business management. Agriculture and natural resources open additional value chains.

Trust, for us, is earned through consistency. Clients want to know that when you say something will be delivered, you have the capacity and integrity to deliver it. Shareholders want to know that their capital is being managed with discipline and that growth is not being pursued at the expense of sustainability.

Value must come before money. When you consistently solve problems, honour commitments and create value for the people around you, trust becomes an outcome of your conduct rather than something you ask people to give you.

That philosophy has helped CINI move from being predominantly Nigeria-focused into a business with an expanding international footprint.



Can you attribute the aforementioned success story to what makes CINI Holdings different from other Nigerian companies, especially in its approach to quality assurance, global best practice in its operations, as well as the high standard in products and services?

Our difference is not that we claim to be better than everyone else. It is that we have deliberately built a culture where excellence is treated as a responsibility.

Quality is not a marketing concept. It determines whether infrastructure projects will perform as intended, whether resources have been properly deployed and whether the client can depend on what you have delivered. Therefore, CINI places considerable emphasis on technical competence, project controls, quality assurance, professional standards, technology and the use of appropriate international expertise.

Technology has also become an important part of how we work. We have adopted tools such as Building Information Modeling, drone surveys, real-time project communication and digital project management systems in areas of our construction operations. These tools improve visibility, decision-making and control over complex projects.

Our international partnerships expose our teams to standards, systems and ways of working that go beyond the traditional Nigerian operating environment. Working with global companies also means that you have to meet expectations that are measured against international benchmarks. Nonetheless, standards are sustained by people. You can buy technology, systems and equipment, but you cannot outsource organisational culture.

At CINI, we expect our people to understand that every assignment carries our name and that reputation is one asset that takes years to build but can be damaged by one careless decision. That is why we continue to invest in learning, leadership development and exposure to global business thinking. I have personally undertaken executive programmes at institutions including Harvard Business School, London Business School, Wharton and INSEAD because I believe leadership itself must remain a continuous learning process.

In your own opinion, what are the major challenges facing entrepreneurs like you in Nigeria today and how have you been able to consistently navigate through them?

Entrepreneurship in Nigeria requires resilience, but resilience by itself is not enough. You need adaptability, sound judgement, patience and the ability to make difficult decisions without losing sight of the long-term.

One of our greatest challenges remains the operating environment. Infrastructure deficits, energy costs, access to affordable capital, regulatory uncertainty, foreign exchange pressures and the cost of doing business can significantly affect the ability of Nigerian companies to compete. For businesses working in infrastructure and manufacturing-related value chains, these challenges can be particularly pronounced because projects require substantial capital, long planning horizons and dependable supply chains.

My response has always been to focus on what we can control. We control our standards. We control how we treat clients. We control the quality of our people. We control our willingness to learn. We control our financial discipline. We control the relationships we build.

Can you tell us more about the long-term vision for CINI Holdings?

Our long-term vision is to build CINI Holdings into a globally respected African business group that can originate, finance, execute and manage complex opportunities across strategic sectors. We are not building for the next financial year alone. We are building an institution that can outlive individuals and remain relevant across generations.

Our expansion into areas such as mineral exploration, real estate, infrastructure, energy, technology, procurement and agro-allied services is part of that wider ambition. We want to develop businesses that are commercially sustainable while responding to the real economic and social needs of the markets in which we operate.

Africa has enormous resources, talent and markets, but much of its potential remains underdeveloped because capital, expertise, infrastructure and markets do not always connect effectively. We want CINI to operate in that space.

Our ambition is therefore not simply to take a Nigerian company into other countries. It is to build an African group that can partner with serious global institutions, attract international capital and expertise, create opportunities for African talent and participate meaningfully in projects that shape the future of our continent.

I also want CINI to remain a company with a conscience. Profit is necessary for sustainability, but profit cannot be the only measure of success. The businesses that will endure are those that create value for shareholders while creating opportunities for employees, suppliers, communities and the wider economy.

For me, the ultimate measure of success is not how much one has accumulated. It is what one has been able to build, how many people have been empowered by that journey and whether the institutions one leaves behind are stronger than the ones one inherited.

That is the CINI Holdings we are building.

LOLA UDU: Savvy, Highly Resourceful Amazon, Leading An Indigenous Firm With An International Outlook, Solving Everyday Problems for Nigerians

The involvement of women in nation-building is an inalienable right, as well as inescapable reality for a holistic and comprehensive political, economic and social advancement in the modern world. Over time, some women who have been entrusted with leading roles to manage human and material resources have, more often than not, proved that given adequate backing, they can perform creditably. Indeed, the 21st Century has birthed the long-awaited desire of women to be in the corridors of power, to be vocal about their needs, and to execute their dreams by contributing their quota to national development.

One of these fast rising amazon is ***Lola Udu, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Lavita Group*** *– an indigenous multifaceted conglomerate and contracting firm founded in 2011, and operates across several industries, including retail, health and wellness, and energy. As a Nigerian business leader whose work spans healthcare infrastructure and energy, As Chief Executive Officer of Lavita Group, she leads businesses that address essential needs across Nigeria's health system, institutions and commercial operations.*

Since 2011, Lola has led Lavita Life Limited in the development, upgrading and equipping of public healthcare facilities, nationwide. Her approach considers the full life of a project, from infrastructure advisory to implementation and continued technical support. She also leads Kachy Petroleum & Gas Limited (KPG), which supplies petroleum products and related services to government institutions, international nongovernmental organisations, private sector including mega estates, hospitality businesses, manufacturing plants, and educational institutions.

A significant part of Kachy Petroleum & Gas Limited work supports offshore marine and oil operations, where dependable supply and careful logistics are critical. Lola is also guiding the Group's development of new energy solutions.

Lola holds a Bachelor of Science in Accounting and an MBA in International Business, with a focus on public health policy, from Wayne State University. She began her career in international tax at KPMG, then worked as a financial analyst for Wayne County in Detroit. Her experience in the United States and Nigeria has shaped a leadership style that brings financial discipline and an international outlook to the realities of delivering projects locally. She also serves as a Non-Executive Board Member of Louer Capital & Advisory Partners.

Beyond business, Lola runs the Lola Udu Foundation (LUF), which supports indigent children's education and provides relief assistance to widows. She is committed to building lasting institutions, developing opportunities for Nigerians and helping essential services reach the people who rely on them.

Based on available record of your transformative accomplishments, exemplary leadership, pragmatic approach and measurable contribution to the growth of Nigeria's economy, ***Lola Udu*** *has been recognised by* ***The Guardian*** *as one of the* ***"Sixty (60) Most Inspiring, Visionary, and Transformative Business Leaders That Shaped Nigeria's Economic Growth In 2026".***

While reacting to this recognition, she spoke with ***The Guardian*** *on her business career journey, Lavita Group's key projects, engagements/partnerships, the company's quality assurance and global best practice, challenges and opportunities in the Nigeria's business environment, and the long-term vision for Lavita Group, amongst sundry issues. Excerpts ….*

What do you consider the greatest passion that has brought you this far in your business career?

MY greatest passion is building businesses that solve practical problems and improve lives. In healthcare, that means helping facilities obtain the infrastructure, equipment and technical support they need to serve patients well. In energy, it means delivering dependable products and services that allow organizations to keep operating.

I am particularly motivated by the gap between what is possible in Nigeria and what people experience every day. Closing that gap requires more than a good idea. It takes disciplined execution, capable teams and a willingness to stay with a project until it works.

How has professional training shaped your worldview, career journey and day-to-day work as Chief Executive Officer of Lavita Group?

I studied Accounting at Wayne State University and went on to earn an MBA in International Business, with a focus on public health policy. I began my career in international tax at KPMG, then worked as a financial analyst for Wayne County in Detroit. I later served as International Marketing Director at Laboratory Assist Nigeria Limited. Those roles gave me experience across finance, public administration, healthcare and business development. They taught me to assess a decision from several angles: whether it meets a real need, whether it can be delivered properly, whether its finances are sound and whether it can create lasting value. My training gave me a framework; experience has taught me relationship, listening to client, and to remain accountable for the outcome.

What can you say inspired Lavita Group's key business areas, and how would you describe its impact and contribution to Nigeria's economy over the last twelve months?

Lavita Group is a conglomerate that has grown around two essential needs: accessible healthcare and reliable energy. I have always believed that business can make its strongest contribution when it solves problems people encounter every day, most especially the people it was intended to serve.

What are the major challenges facing entrepreneurs in Nigeria, and how have you navigated them?

Access to affordable finance, delayed payments, exchange-rate and petroleum price volatility, infrastructure gaps and the cost of doing business are significant challenges These are the key variables that can place immense pressure on even a well-managed company, particularly when a project requires substantial spending before payment is received. I navigate these pressures through careful planning, close attention to cash flow, strong supplier relationships and a willingness to adapt when circumstances change.

What is your long-term vision for Lavita Group?

As a multi-faceted conglomerate and contracting firm that operates across several industries, imy long-term vision is for Lavita Group to be a trusted institutional partner for building sustainable solutions that aid national impact and development beyond the walls of healthcare and energy.



LAVITA GROUP

BUILDING VALUE IN NIGERIA: How Dr. Parimal Vipani's Visionary Leadership is Shaping AVN Global Ventures Limited

As Nigeria marks her 66th Independence anniversary, the spotlight turns towards the pivotal role of vision-driven professionals shaping the economic trajectory of the nation. Industrial growth, infrastructure advancement and sustainable commercial expansion rely on corporate leaders who possess the resilience to navigate complex markets while remaining committed to long-term value creation. Dr Parimal Vipani, Managing Director of AVN Global Ventures Limited, is one professional whose career stands as a testament to disciplined leadership, human capital development and impactful enterprise in the Nigerian economy.

A Journey Grounded in Resilience and Market Knowledge

Dr Vipani's professional association with Nigeria commenced in 1998, when he assumed the position of Managing Director within a large business organisation. In 2009, he transitioned to another major group as Group Managing Director. These executive appointments afforded him extensive exposure to the Nigerian commercial landscape. Through decades of hands-on stewardship, he developed a firm conviction that sustainable success stems from understanding customer needs, scrupulous resource management, honouring commitments and building dependable, high-performing teams.

When establishing the operational vision for AVN Global Ventures Limited, Dr Vipani sought to build a respected organisation that solves practical challenges and consistently delivers on its promises. In a dynamic market, his management approach focuses on controlling internal variables, maintaining high service standards, and cultivating trust amongst clients, staff and international partners.

Powering the Built Environment and Infrastructure

Under Dr Vipani's guidance, AVN Global Ventures Limited has grown into a key player within Nigeria's building materials and project-solutions sector. The company provides finishing products, including lighting solutions, sanitaryware, tiles, water heaters, and switches and sockets. Rather than functioning merely as a product merchant, AVN offers complete technical, commercial and after-sales support across diverse client segments, serving retail customers, developers, architects, contractors, industrial clients, hospitality brands and oil and gas firms.

AVN's operational portfolio features significant contributions to major public infrastructure and commercial landmarks. In aviation, the firm delivered specialised lighting solutions for regional airports in Anambra, Ogun and Ibadan. Within luxury hospitality, AVN supplied premium bathroom solutions to prestigious five-star establishments, including Abuja Continental and Sheraton. The company's technical execution was further demonstrated in a landmark high-rise residential development at Banana Island, Lagos, exemplifying meticulous planning and structural coordination.

To enhance direct customer engagement and market visibility, AVN established its flagship showroom in 2020 at 36 Adeola Odeku Street, Victoria Island, Lagos. This location enables architects, designers and developers to directly experience AVN's premium sanitaryware range. Simultaneously, the company has actively cultivated its proprietary VOLGA brand, engineered to combine international quality benchmarks with the specific technical demands of the Nigerian market.

Disciplined Leadership in Complex Economic Times

Navigating macroeconomic headwinds such as currency volatility, inflationary pressures and regulatory changes requires remarkable fortitude. Dr Vipani's leadership philosophy centres on realistic evaluation, financial prudence and disciplined risk management. Rather than relying on outdated strategies, he emphasises protecting cash flow, maintaining optimal inventory levels, communicating transparently with trade partners and avoiding unviable commitments.

Central to his strategy is empowering managers and decentralising decision-making. By cultivating accountable leaders who take ownership of outcomes, AVN ensures operational agility and scalable growth. Dr Vipani anchors the organisational culture on four core principles: integrity, accountability, discipline and respect for people. Integrity mandates truthfulness in commercial commitments; accountability focuses on solving operational problems rather than assigning blame; discipline ensures financial rigor across all divisions; and respect fosters open communication across every level of the workforce.

Human Capital Development and Social Impact

For Dr Vipani, corporate success is intrinsically linked to transforming lives and fostering human capital. AVN actively creates career growth trajectories for staff, turning entry-level opportunities into pathways for executive responsibility. A compelling example is an employee who originally joined as a graduate driver and, through structured mentorship and diligence, rose to become AVN's Logistics Manager. In another instance, a junior team member progressed through seven years of service to earn the role of General Manager for Procurement.

Extending his vision beyond corporate operations, Dr Vipani established the Suprabhat Care Foundation, a philanthropic organisation supporting children aged 0 to 12 fighting serious and life-threatening medical conditions. A deeply touching milestone involved sponsoring life-saving surgery for a four-year-old child from a single-parent family diagnosed with a congenital heart defect. This philanthropic focus underscores his belief that commercial success achieves its highest purpose when it directly improves human welfare.

Future Horizons: Local Value Addition and Economic Legacy

Looking ahead, AVN Global Ventures Limited is poised for its next growth phase. Strategic priorities include expanding showroom networks into Abuja and northern commercial hubs, while deepening brand penetration for VOLGA. Furthermore, the company is evaluating feasibility studies for local manufacturing of construction chemicals, such as tile adhesives, grouts and waterproofing compounds. This initiative aims to deepen local value addition, boost domestic employment, transfer technical expertise and reduce reliance on imported finished goods.

As Nigeria celebrates 66 years of independence, the trajectory of AVN Global Ventures Limited illustrates how private enterprise can meaningfully strengthen the national economy. Through sustained investment, skill building, adherence to international quality standards and unwavering social responsibility, Dr Parimal Vipani continues to exemplify the vision-driven professional leadership required to build a prosperous future for Nigeria.



The Guardian
Conscience, Nurtured by Truth
NIGERIA @ 66: CELEBRATING VISION-DRIVEN PROFESSIONALS ADDING VALUE TO NIGERIA'S ECONOMY

Securing National Assets Through Insurance Excellence: The Strategic Vision of Ms. Omowale Olatunde-Agbeja



ECONOMIC resilience rests on professionals who safeguard enterprise value and ensure commercial continuity amidst uncertainty. To celebrate Nigeria's 66 years of independence, The Guardian spotlights Ms. Omowale Olatunde-Agbeja, Managing Director of Boff & Company Insurance Brokers Limited, in recognition of a distinguished career rooted in Energy and Aviation insurance, her strategic role as Technical Assistant to the Executive Director, and her transition into insurance broking leadership. From early risk management achievements to serving on the NCRIB Board and AIBA Executive Council, her trajectory showcases how specialised risk solutions protect national wealth.

The foundation of Ms. Olatunde-Agbeja's professional journey is rooted in family heritage, as insurance was her father's lone profession. Driven by curiosity regarding risk management, she commenced NYSC training at Leadway Assurance Company Limited. Assigned to a small team, she jumped feet first into Energy and Aviation insurance—bidding, client engagement, underwriting, reinsurance, and claims handling. Following an early organizational transition, she quickly recognized the imperative to demonstrate value addition—a commitment that yielded retention at Leadway Assurance after NYSC.

Determined to commit to a lifelong career in insurance, Ms. Olatunde-Agbeja combined full-time work with studies, passing twice-yearly examinations to achieve Associateship of the Chartered Insurance Institute (CII) in 2019. Progression at Leadway Assurance culminated in her serving as Technical Assistant to the Executive Director, General Business. This role provided an up-close view of executive management while freeing the Executive Director for key priorities. A key milestone included representing her boss on the project team for new software implementation, where she learned about IT for Business Operations and Project Management whilst on the job—lessons that continue to inform her strategic approach.

Seeking to broaden professional impact, Ms. Olatunde-Agbeja transitioned six years ago to insurance broking, dedicating expertise to representing policyholders across Life and Non-Life risk portfolios. To maintain high standards, she earned Chartered Insurance Broker status with the CII, alongside Associate memberships with the CIIN and NCRIB. Her leadership footprint extended further over the past year through admission as Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Directors (AM.CIoD), re-election to the AIBA Executive Council, and co-option to the NCRIB Board, providing a platform to lend her voice in shaping the development, operations, and future of insurance broking in Nigeria.

At the core of Ms. Olatunde-Agbeja's philosophy lies a passion for problem-solving, number crunching, extensive reading, and helping people. These drives translate into an unwavering commitment to client satisfaction, ensuring policyholders understand the value of their coverage even when preferences are unobtainable. This aligns seamlessly with Boff & Company Insurance Brokers Limited, where she plays a vital leadership role. Established in 1991, Boff & Company has sustained market relevance over 35 years by upholding propriety, professionalism, and precision. Founded by a Past President of NCRIB and Chairman of AIBA—a stickler for excellence focused on client needs and collective growth—Boff & Company remains dedicated to client-first solutions.

In an era of digital transformation, Boff & Company leverages technology to simplify insurance processes. While automated solutions enable clients to generate insurance certificates independently, Ms. Olatunde-Agbeja emphasises that technology must complement professional guidance. In retail insurance, digital platforms facilitate self-service, whereas corporate clients rely on expert advisory. Crucially, she stresses that professionalism and an Insurance Broker's Duty of Care cannot be delegated. Technology may enhance the process, but responsibility ultimately remains with the Broker.

Furthermore, Boff & Company balances personalised service with regulatory requirements, recognising that regulatory obligations take precedence where necessary. For policy placements, the firm works closely with clients to understand current and emerging risks, ensuring policy terms, conditions, and peculiarities are clearly explained and documented to achieve contract certainty. When losses occur, Boff & Company moves quickly to provide reassurance, confirm coverage where applicable, and preserve relevant information and documentation. Operating under the principle of providing an update before the client asks, the firm actively monitors claims to avoid unnecessary delays or reliance on policy fine print.

As Nigeria reflects on 66 years of independence, Ms. Olatunde-Agbeja highlights how specialised risk management drives economic development. Practical insurance solutions for Government MDAs, the informal sector, and MSMEs—grounded in rating risks and charging premiums adequately, and achieving contract certainty prior to policy inception where practicable—allow policyholders to pick up from their pre-loss position, rather than spending growth funds to rebuild from scratch. In Aviation, Energy, and Marine, insurance provides financial certainty for major projects, while Reinsurance expands underwriting capacity beyond owned capital to support growth and shareholder returns.

A central theme in Ms. Olatunde-Agbeja's vision is generational legacy building. Drawing a parallel to indemnity in insurance, which restores foundations so structures can continue to be built, she argues that Nigerian businesses must build on the foundations, knowledge, and achievements of previous generations rather than starting afresh with every generation. In broking, founders guide the baton exchange so successors learn from different mistakes rather than repeating those of predecessors. Boff & Company stands as an exemplary second-generation institution celebrating its 35th anniversary this October, demonstrating how knowledge transfer across generations creates enduring economic value.

For young professionals aspiring to leadership, she offers practical advice: strive to add value as measured by organizational goals, engage with direct and indirect mentors, pursue continuous professional development through structured and unstructured learning, build intentional networks without burning bridges, and work smarter by delivering results rather than merely counting working hours.

In conclusion, the spotlight on Ms. Olatunde-Agbeja reaffirms that Nigeria's future prosperity rests on vision-driven professionals and enduring corporate institutions. Through technical rigor and commitment to propriety, professionalism, and precision, Ms. Olatunde-Agbeja and Boff & Company champion economic resilience, institutional continuity, knowledge transfer, and long-term value creation.



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Kano Durbar: Emir Sanusi, Bayero Risk Arrest For Breach Of Peace

From **Murtala Adewale**, Kano

THE joint security forces in Kano State have threatened to arrest the 16th and 15th Emirs of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi II and Aminu Ado Bayero respectively, for any action capable of breaching peace in the state.

Rising from an emergency meeting on the security situation in the state, the joint forces vowed to prosecute any individual or group that henceforth violates the embargo placed on horse riding and durbar activities in Kano.

Addressing journalists on Friday, the Commissioner of Police, CP Ibrahim AdamuBakori, declared that the executive order restricting horse riding and any form of durbar remains in force and is binding on all persons in the state, irrespective of their status or position.

According to Bakori, the joint security forces have observed with concern recent developments capable of disrupting law and order, stressing that further violations would not be tolerated.

2027: PIG Predicts APC's Victory In 19 States, NDC 10, ADC Eight

By **Suliyat Tella**

THE Political Intelligence Group (PIG) of Politico.ng has projected that if election is conducted in early October across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), the All Progressives Congress (APC) has an edge in 19 states, the Nigeria Democratic Congress (NDC) in 10 states and the African Democratic Congress (ADC) in eight states.

Speaking during a press conference in Lagos on his group's forecast, the Convener of PIG, Lai Omotola, stated that the monthly electoral map should not be interpreted as a final declaration of the eventual election result, but as a snapshot of the political landscape based on developments at the time of the assessment.

Omotola said: "Last month of September you were here to receive the briefing on the only authentic electoral map and we are all witnesses to the intense debate it created.

"Our monthly electoral map is for parties to see where they are weak and strong and this does not suggest the final result but rather if elections were to be held this month this projection is likely to be the outcome.

"In the course of September, notable political activity occurred such as the denial of entry of Mr. Peter Obi, one of the leading political opponents of President Bola Tinubu, into Benue State.

Abacha's Creation Of Bayelsa Freed Ijaw People From Oppression, Says Diri

From **Julius Osahon**, Yenagoa

• Late Head Of State, Jonathan, Others Get State Awards
• Former President Dedicates Award To Alamieyeseigha

GOVERNOR Douye Diri of Bayelsa State has paid tribute to former Nigerian Head of State, the late General Sani Abacha, expressing gratitude on behalf of the Ijaw nation for the creation of Bayelsa on October 1, 1996.

Diri said Abacha deserved continuous commendation for the gesture as he freed the Ijaw people from oppression and injustice.

The Bayelsa governor spoke at the Dinner and Awards Night of the Bayelsa at 30 anniversary celebrations on Thursday tagged 'Celebrating Legacies' at the Chief Diepreye Alamieyeseigha Memorial Banquet Hall, Government House, Yenagoa.

The well-attended grand finale of the four-day celebrations attracted dignitaries from all walks of life, including former President Goodluck Jonathan, his wife, Dame Patience Jonathan; Abacha's family, including Alhaji Abba Abacha and HajiaFatima GumsuAbacha; National Assembly members, the diplomatic community, business moguls, top government officials, among others. At the event, state honours were presented to 63 recipients.

Top on the list were the late Abacha, Jonathan, Major Isaac Adaka Boro, Chief Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, Chief Harold Dappa-Biriye, former military administrators of the state, including the late Navy Captain Caleb Olubolade (rtd), Navy Captain Phillip Ayeni (rtd), Police Commissioner HabuDaura (rtd) and Col. Edor Obi (rtd) as well as the immediate past governor, Senator Seriake Dickson.

Diriemphasised that mentioning Abacha's name in all his remarks was significant, explaining that the late Head of State might mean different things to different people, but to Bayelsans, he was the one who freed them by creating a homogeneous Ijaw state.

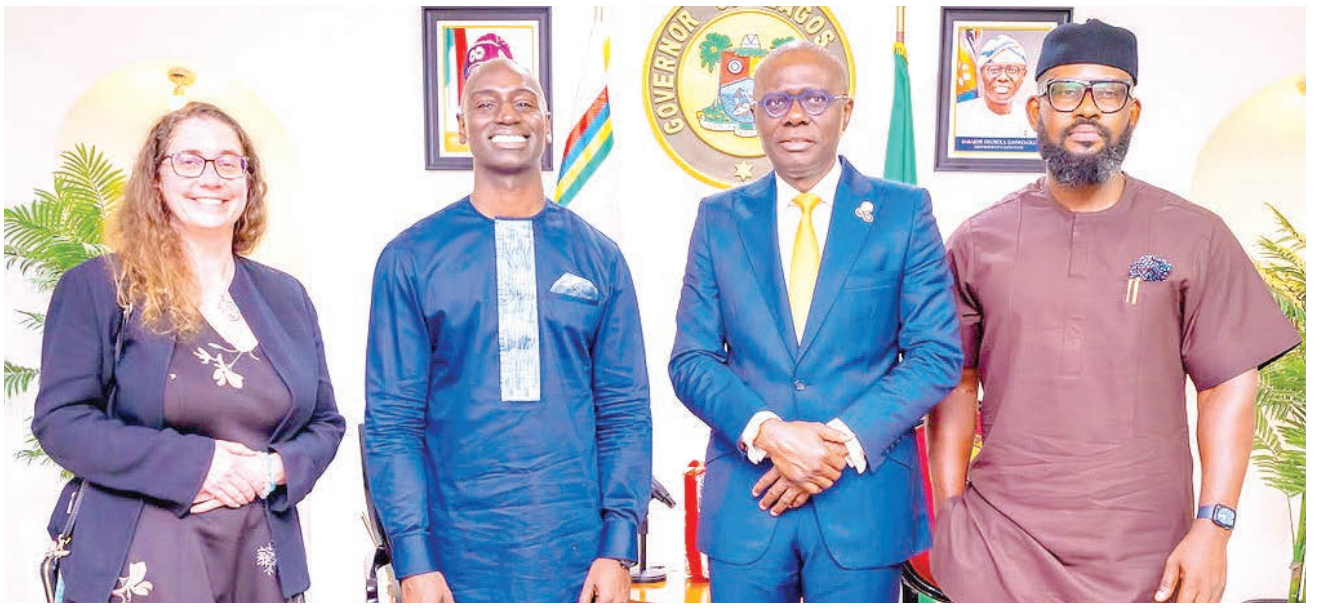
His words: "If at every point in my remarks I keep calling him, it is because of what God used him to do for the Ijaw ethnic nationality. As I said yesterday, General Abacha might mean different things to different people, but to Bayelsans, he is the one who freed us from oppression.

"He freed us from injustice and gave a homogenous state for a people that had been balkanised into various states, and making us minority in some.

"Today is also the 66th independence anniversary of our country. So, we are celebrating the national independence and at the same time celebrating our own state at 30 years. We cannot acknowledge and thank General Abacha enough, ably represented here by his own son, Abba Abacha, and his sister. Please take our appreciation and gratitude back home to your mother."

Justifying the celebration, Diri said the journey from total absence of infrastructure to a state with legacy projects, road networks and hope for the future was a testament to the vision of its founding fathers and the grace of God.

Giving a sectoral breakdown.



Acting Political/Economic section Chief, United States Consulate General Lagos, Ilona Coyle (left); the Consul General, Mr. Brandon Hudspeth; Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu; and Political Specialist, U.S. Consulate General, Mr Arnold Abulime during a courtesy call at the Lagos House, Marina... on Friday.

Let's Built A Nation That Earns Patriotism Of Young People – Gov Mbah

From **Lawrence Njoku**, Enugu

ENUGU State Governor, Peter Mbah, has charged Nigerians to collectively build a nation that earns the patriotism of young people, while also making migration a choice, not an escape route. Mbah spoke in Awgu on Friday during the swearing-in ceremony for the 2026 Batch C Stream of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members deployed to the state.

He stressed that Nigeria's extraordinary youth population could only become a demographic dividend if the nation creates the education, skills, jobs, enterprise and institutions that enable young Nigerians to convert their energy and talent into productivity and prosperity, hence the essence of the NYSC beyond experiencing other parts of Nigeria.

"We often ask young Nigerians to be patriotic. But let us ask ourselves a more difficult question: how do we earn the patriotism of our young people if they feel excluded from their country's promise?

"Patriotism must be cultivated by creating a country in which young people can see a future for themselves.

"We must provide quality education; create an enabling environment for enterprise; expand opportunities; make our institutions work.

"We must build a country where merit is rewarded, hard work has meaning and dreams do not have to be exported before they can become reality," he said.

Lagos Varsity Unions Declare Indefinite Strike Over Unpaid Arrears, Broken Agreements

By **Adelowo Adebumiti**

ACADEMIC and non-academic staff across all Lagos State-owned universities are set to down tools from October 3, triggering a likely total and indefinite strike action that threatens to cripple academic and administrative activities across the institutions.

The declaration was made during a media briefing, on Friday, by the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of Lagos State-owned universities, an umbrella body representing four major staff unions: the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), the Non-Academic Staff Union of Educational and Associated Institutions (NASU), and the National Association of Academic Technologists (NAAT).

The affected institutions include Lagos State University (LASU), Lagos State University College of Medicine (LASUCOM), Lagos State University of Science and Technology (LASUSTECH), and Lagos State University of Education (LASUED).

Speaking on behalf of the committee, JAC Chairman, Prof. Ibrahim Bakare, announced that the strike would take effect at midnight, Saturday, October 3, following the expiration of a final seven-day ultimatum issued to the state government.

According to him, the industrial action follows months of failed negotiations, bureaucratic delays and repeated reversals by state government officials regarding the implementation of the signed 2026 Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) / Staff Unions Agreements.

While negotiations appeared to progress on August 31 with the signing of an official resolution, promising updated allowance structures, tax-exempt benefits, and the payment of backdated arrears in September salaries, workers received their September paychecks without the agreed increases or outstanding arrears.

Lagos Island APC Supporters Flag Off Campaign With Unity Walk

By **Shakirah Adunola**

PARTY faithful, political stakeholders, artisans, market traders and residents marched through the streets of Lagos Island as the Lagos Island for PBAT-KOH Campaign Support Group officially flagged off its campaign with an Independence Day Unity Walk.

Timed to coincide with Nigeria's 66 th Independence Anniversary celebration, the grassroots movement served a dual purpose: honouring the nation's historic milestone and launching an intensive door-to-door, polling-unit level mobilisation drive ahead of upcoming electoral contests.

The rally saw supporters stream in synchronised processions across major historical neighbourhoods of Island, including Olowogbowe, IsaleEko, Idunmota, Agarawu, Oko Faji, Campos, Okepopo and Lafiaji.

The Convener of the rally, Abdel-Jaleel Taiwo Olasupo, from Ward G1, Constituency 2, Lagos Island, emphasised that the event marks a fundamental shift in electoral strategy for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in Lagos Island.

Fidson, 10 Others Get Licence To Produce Generic Influenza Drug

By **Ijeoma Nwanosike**

FIDSON Healthcare Plc, a Nigerian pharmaceutical manufacturing company, has been selected alongside 10 other manufacturers across nine countries to develop and manufacture generic versions of baloxavir marboxil, an antiviral treatment for influenza, under a voluntary licensing agreement between the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) and Roche.

The sublicence agreements are aimed at expanding manufacturing capacity, diversifying supply pathways for influenza treatment and strengthening preparedness for future outbreaks and pandemics, according to the MPP.

The announcement was made in New York as global leaders gathered for the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to discuss pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, where Fidson was named among the manufacturers selected under the voluntary licence, alongside Laurus Labs and MSN of India, and Desano and Guilin Pharma (Fosun) of China, which have global manufacturing presence.

Six other regionally focused manufacturers were also selected including Biolab&Co. of Brazil, Kimia Farma of Indonesia, Hovid of Malaysia.

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ADDITION OF NAME : I, formerly known as Okeke chukwuebuka now wish to be as Okeke chukwuebuka Sylvanus .All former documents remain valid . General public take note

ADDITION OF NAME ; I, formerly known as Okoro Sunday now wish to be addressed as Oghenewohemu Okoro Sunday. All former documents remain valid .General public take note

ADDITION/RE-ARRANGEMENT OF NAME: My name was wrongly written/arranged on my Bank Account Details as Chukuka Deedee Edomwande instead of Chukuka-John Edomwande Deedee. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

ADEWOLE: I, formerly known as Adeyemi Hammod-Tijani Adewole now wishes to be addressed as Attai Adeyemi Hammod Tijani. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

AKPANEYEN: I, formerly known as Iniobong Akpaneyen now wish to be known as Iniobong Geoffrey Robinson. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

ALIYAT : I, formerly known as Okelana Aliyat Motunrayo now wish to be addressed as Okelana Fifehanmi Motunrayo. All forma docment remany valid. Public take note.

AMANEZE : I, Amaneze Uchechukwu Brendan(father) wish to change my sons' name from Uche-Amaneze Udechukwu Joseph, to Amaneze Udechukwu Joseph. General public to please take note

ARIRI: I, formerly known as Ariri Emmanuel now wish to be known as Onyeaghalam Emmanuel Ikechukwu. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

AYOBAMI: I, formerly known as Deborah Toyin Olatunji now wish to be addressed as Deborah Toyin Ayobami . All former documents remain valid . General public take note

AZI: I, formerly known as Azi Scholastica Ogwa now wishes to be addressed as Ogwa Scholastica Onah ,All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

BAJOMO: I, formerly known as Olatundun Ibiere Ajoke Bajomo now wish to be addressed as Olatundun Ibiere Ajoke Kurubo . All former documents remain valid. Public take note

BELLO : I, formerly known as Miss Bello Fatima Augustina now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Suleman Fatima Augustina, All former documents remains valid . General public take note.

CHUKWUMA: I, formerly known as Azubuike Chiehiura Esther now wish to be addressed as Chukwuma Chiehiura Esther .All former documents remain valid .General public take note

CONFIRMATION OF NAME : I, formerly known as Monday Godwin now wish to be addressed as Gordon Monday Godwin . All former documents remain valid. General public take note

CONFIRMATION OF NAME: I, formerly Mbanugo Victor Chinonso and Mbanugo Victor now wish to be addressed as Mbanugo Victor Charles .All former documents remain valid . General public take note

CONFIRMATION OF NAME: On some of my documents my name is captured as Ezeagulu Joseph, Adejoh Joseph, Adejoh Joseph E, Adejoh Joseph E. Okolo and ADEJOH Joseph Ezeagulu Okolo and now wish to be known and address as Adejoh Joseph Okolo. All former documents bearing former names remain valid. General public take note.

CONFIRMATION OF NAME: I, Onibudo Mufutau Adegbite, am the same person as Onibudo Mufutau Aremu Adegbite. All former document remain valid. General public take notice.

CORRECTION OF NAME : I,formerly known as Aderemi Saheed Abayomi now wish to be addressed as Aderemi Peter Abolore .All former documents remain valid .General public take note

CORRECTION OF NAME ON BVN: That my name was written as Akinola Idowu Oyindamola instead of Afolayan Idowu Oyindamola . All former documents remain valid. General public take note

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, formerly known as Sunday Piter Iji now wish to be addressed as Peter Sunday Iji . All former documents remain valid general public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: Lucky Ada is the same person as Lucky Celine Adanwanne. I wish to be addressed as Lucky Celine Adanwanne. All documents remain. Public note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: My name was wrongly written as Chiege Obianugu instead of Chiege Obianuju. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

CORRECTION OF NAME; I, formerly known as Fadila Shehu Abdurrahman now wish to be addressed as Fadila Abdulrahman Shehu .All former documents remain valid. General public take note

CORRECTION OF NAME; I, formerly known as Isreal Oluwadara Owuye now wish to be addressed as Israel Oluwadara Owuye .All former documents remain valid .General public take note

CORRECTION OF NAME; I, formerly known as Olude Basit Opeyemi now known as Olude Basit .All former documents remain valid .General public take note

CORRECTION OF NAME; My Name was wrongly written as Momodu Hawanat instead of Beke Abigail Yetunde .All former documents remain valid. Immigration, public take note

CORRECTION OF NAME: My name was wrongly captured as Suliamon Gbadamosi Akanni instead of Gbadamosi Suliamon Akanni. BVN and Public note

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EKEKEZIE: I, formerly known as Esther Chinasa Ekekeye now wish to be addressed as Ekekezie Chinasa Esther .All former documents remain valid .General public take note

EMENYONU: I, formerly known as Chiamaka Maureen Asoegwu now wish to be addressed as Chiamaka Maureen Emenyonu .All former documents remain valid .General public take note

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JOSIAH: I formerly known as Agba Okechukwu Joseph now wish to be addressed as Agba Okechukwu Josiah. All former documents remain valid.General public note

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OGUNJI: I, formerly known as Miss Ogunji Alice Olajumoke now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Falase Alice Olajumoke. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OJIEJI: I, formerly known as Miss Ojieji Florence Gift, now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Iheomamere Florence Gift. All former documents remain valid. General public should take note.

OKORO : I, formerly known as Okoro Uzoamaka Faith now wishes to be addressed as Onyebuchi Uzoamaka faith All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OKORO : I , formerly Okoro Doris Chinalu now wish to be addressed as Ojieh Doris Chinalu. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

OLADIPE: I, formerly known as Ogundipe Opeyemi Sholape now wish to be addressed as as Oladipe Opeyemi Sholape . All former documents remain valid General public take note

OLUYEMISI: I, formerly known as Oluyemisi Adedoyin Ogunde now wish to be addressed as Oluyemisi Ogunde. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

OMOREGIE: I, formerly known as Doris Patricia Ogbeide now wish to be addressed as Doris Patricia Omoregie. All former documents remain valid . General public

ONWUBIKO : I formerly known as Mrs Onwubiko Uzoamaka now wish to be addressed as Uzoamaka Barbara Onwubiko. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

OYEBOADE: I, formerly known as Oyeboade Halimot Abidemi now wish to be addressed as Oyeboade Moyosola Halimat. All former documents remain valid .Public take note

OZURUOME: I, formerly known as Amarachukwu Miracle Paul now wish to be addressed as Amarachukwu Miracle Ozuruome . All former documents remain valid . General public take note

PATRICK: I, formerly known as Patrick Daniel kelechi now wish to be addressed as Egejuru Daniel kelechi All former documents remain valid. General public take note

RE-ARRANGEMENT OF NAME: I ,formerly known as Dirichi Chibuogu Adams now wish to be known as Adams Chibuogu Dirichi. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

TINNO: I, formerly known as Olorunfemi Clement Olamide now known as Paul Samuel Tinno .All former documents remain valid .General public take note

TORERE : I, formerly known as Torere Royal Onajite now wish to be addressed as Ojeniyi Royal Onajite. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

UGBAJA: I, formerly known as Agiriga Terry Ugbaja, now wish to be addressed as Agiriga Terry Chuks. Former documents remain valid, general public take note.

UGBANA : I, formerly known as Ugbana Joy Nkem now wish to be addressed as Egejuru Joy Nkem. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

UWABOR : I, formerly known as Uwabor Bright Justice Njoakpor now wish to be addressed as Uwabor Moses Iyotor Bright justice Njoakpor.All former documents remain valid. Public note

YAHAYA : I formerly known as Abdullah Yahaya now wish to be addressed as Abdullahi Bala, my DOB is 01-01-2001, All former documents remains valid . General public take note

YUSUFF: I, formerly Miss Yusuff Nurat Fadejimi now wish to be known as Mrs. Adefarati Nurat Fadejimi. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

News Extra

Nothing Has Changed: Commuters In Kaduna, Oyo, Enugu, Abuja, Lagos Await Tinubu's Fare Relief

From **Lawrence Njoku** (Enugu), **Saxone Akhaine** (Kaduna), **Rotimi Agboluaje** (Ibadan), **Tina Abeku** (Abuja) and **Suliyat Tella** (Lagos)

DESPITE President Bola Tinubu's promise that transport fares would be reduced from October 1, commuters who spoke with The Guardian on October 2 in Kaduna, Oyo, Enugu, Abuja and Lagos, said that they were still paying the same fares, with no noticeable reduction in the cost of public transportation.

Tinubu had on August 27, 2027, announced that transport fare would be slashed across the country after meeting with state governors. He also re-echoed the position on September 19, 2026.

Transport fare in the Southeast region has remained the same despite the promise. Findings by The Guardian around major transport parks revealed that nothing has changed in what commuters were paying to travel to various locations in the region.

Enugu to Umuahia in Abia State by car from the Gariki terminal remains at N6,500, while buses collect N5000. Those traveling to Owerri in Imo State from Enugu pay between N7,000 and N7,500 for Sienna cars, while buses collect N6,000. Travellers from Enugu to Onitsha are paying N6,000 by car and N4,500 by bus.

The Toyota Hiace at God Is Good Motors (GIGM) to Abuja from Enugu collects N44,020 for online bookers, while those offline pay N45,000, while those traveling to Lagos from Enugu pay N42,500. These were the transport fares in major parts of September.

Commercial bus operators in Enugu urban have also not changed their fares. Tricycle operators who are the major transporters in the state still charge N300 for short distances.

An Operator, Caleb Obi, corroborated The Guardian's findings, maintaining "nothing has changed because the interventions from the federal and state governments are yet to come."

"We are still buying fuel at N1,400 per litre. There are no new transport schemes in place that could challenge what is already on ground. I don't know how somebody will start contemplating a drop in transport fare when you have not made provisions for it. If I buy fuel at N1,400, do you expect a reduction in fare out of the amount? It is not possible," he said.

Similarly, transporters and commuters in Kaduna State said they had anticipated a reduction in transport fare following the president's promise, but nothing had changed in terms of what they pay commuting.

Some of the commuters who spoke with The Guardian said that in as much as the cost of fuel is still on the high side, private transporters may not key into the announcement by the President to slash transport fares by fiat.

ERCAAN Commends Surulere Central Zone On Performance

THE National President of Estate Rent and Commission Agents Association of Nigeria (ERCAAN), Godwin Alenkhe, has commended the Surulere Central Zone for presenting an annual financial report that is a true reflection of the worth of the zone.

Speaking in Lagos during the 35th Annual General Meeting of the ERCAAN Surulere Central Zone, Alenkhe said the zone had gone through reorganisation that ensured it presented a financial report that is a true reflection of its value.

He added that everything about the performance of the zone exposed in the financial report.

"In the past, they cooked up a lot of financial report that did not reflect their true strength. You see, that the zone spent more than what they generated. But because they had a backup for last year, that is what brought the kind of stabilisation to their financial standing.

"The take home shows how advanced a body like ERCAAN is. The ERCAAN is a body that draws itself from the grassroots and you can see that we are here because a zone is observing her annual general meetings in line with the constitution of the association," he said.

The Zonal Chairman of ERCAAN, Surulere Central Zone, Adeoye Adesegun, thanked God.

Nigeria's Loss To Guinea Bissau - The Sad Truth


Super Eagles star, Ademola Lookman

JOHN Mastoroudes is the former proprietor of defunct Leventis United FC of Nigeria, one of the foremost private clubs in Nigerian football in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He is acknowledged as one of the most knowledgeable persons on Nigerian football. He sent me a message from his base in Greece after watching Nigeria's last match against Guinea Bissau.

He wrote: "Guinea-Bissau?? What a disaster again, beyond my comprehension."

I had been dumbstruck after the match, unable to make sense of what I witnessed - a truly hapless Nigerian national team.

For the first time, I was unable to respond to John because, very simply, I did not know what to tell him. There was no explanation for what I had just watched, how the players played, and what befell Nigerian football.

Finally, I sent him a single-worded message that spoke the state of my mind: "Speechless".

Since then, the country has been enveloped in a canopy of silence. Nigeria was beaten hands down. The team was completely outplayed in all departments. The Super Eagles simply did not show up. They showed no style, no class, no guts, no grit, no spirit. They went through the motions of a caricature of European football, abandoning their foundation and motivation as leaders of a Race engrained with the spirit of always fighting, never giving up, fighting till the end with flair, power, speed, and athleticism. Even when we sometimes lose, we do so leaving the scars of battle on the football field. But not this time.

Last Tuesday, the Eagles walked out of the stadium in Guinea Bissau heads bowed, and tails tucked between their legs. Since then, Nigerians have been silenced. There is no one to ask what went wrong. There is no one to take responsibility or provide an answer.

I could not put my finger on anything beyond the consolation that in history, the last two times the Nigerian national team lost as badly as they did last week, although under different circumstances, Nigeria immediately bounced back. They came back from a 5-1 loss in the very first match of AFCON 1990 to get to the finals and to lose narrowly to the same Algerian team by 1-0.

In 1996, Nigeria also woke up from the slumber of a 4-1 defeat on home soil in a friendly in Lagos (main bowl of the National Stadium) against Togo. Their backs against the wall of humiliation, they came back a few weeks later fighting like wounded lions to clinch the Gold medal of the Atlanta Olympic Games.

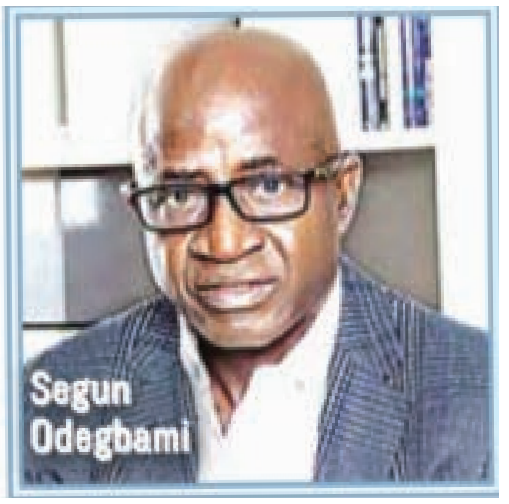
Both were reminders of who we are as Nigerians, a proud race of fighters that never give up.

I was still trying to make some sense of that match, trying to work out the implications of that defeat into the future, when, from the blue, Lacey called me from her base in the United States of America.

Lacey O'Neale is an African/American. She is a well-respected 'ambassador' for US Track and field and for diplomacy, a former international athlete. She represented the USA at two Olympic Games in 1964 and 1972.

She was a very good friend to my late friend, Lee Edward Evans, and as a result, is my friend and sister. I was still in my reverie when Lacey called me up. She was agitated. She had her thoughts and opinion about the outcome.

I can't quote her verbatim, but the substance of what she told me is what all Nigerians must hear. 'What happened to the Super Eagles?' She said it is an



absence of the right frame of mind.

Nigerians, she said, are the smartest humans on the planet. They are everywhere, doing great things in virtually all fields of human endeavour. They hold the torch for the entire Black Race, and in the not too distant future, Nigeria shall become the greatest country in the world.

Many Black persons in America carry the genes of Nigeria in their bloodline. Everyone can see the faint signs everywhere, that Nigerians are coming in an avalanche, especially in entertainment and in several sports.

The rest of the world knows about Nigeria's upsurge as unofficial leader of the Black race and civilisation in a new World down the lane of civilisation. Nigerians show it in their mannerisms- loud, educated, confident, proud, hardworking, daring and very, very smart.

Lacey says that attitude was missing in the Super Eagles. They did not fight as if their lives depended on winning. They played without the frame of mind of winners, no strategy, no determination, low energy, no fight, no spirit.

I understand what Lacey is talking about. It makes me remember past 'warriors' that epitomized the Nigerian spirit in how they played football, an ingredient that is missing in today's Super Eagles - Tuñde Abeki, Bright Omokaro, Sunday Eboigbe, Harrison Mecha, Segun Olumodeji, Felix Owolabi, Sylvanus Okpala, Emmanuel Okala, Garba Lawal, Kanu Nwankwo, Victor Osimhen, Nwabueze Nwankwo, Musa Lawal, players who will play and leave the scars of war on the field of play.

Thierry Henry, the France and Arsenal FC legend, was asked who his most difficult opponent was during his playing career. He did not hesitate - it is a Nigerian international called Taribo West.

Taribo was a 'terrorist' on the field, hard as steel. He marked Henry so tightly and so closely that Henry said he would have followed him to the toilet.

You just did not defeat a Nigerian national team fully marinated in the local culture and spirit of Nigerian football, and walk away without big 'scars' of War.

Nigerian football is at its lowest ebb in terms of development. The issues are really deep and fundamental.

Thank you Lacey!

Chaos In The Ring: Freezy Macbones Claims WBO African Title

By **Gowon Akpodonor**

Fans Treated To A Night Of Knockouts, Dance Breaks, Unrelenting Action

CHAOS in the Ring delivered a night of high-intensity boxing, celebrity clashes and unforgettable entertainment at the Balmoral Convention Centre, Federal Palace Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos, on Thursday, as Nigeria and Ghana went head-to-head in one of the platform's most action-packed editions to date.

The evening brought together championship boxing, professional contests and headline celebrity bouts, with Ghana's Seth 'Freezy Macbones' Gyimah, Carter Efe and Phyna emerging among the night's biggest winners.

The headline professional contest between Nigeria's Godday 'Zodsolo' Appah and Ghana's Seth 'Freezy Macbones' Gyimah lived up to the anticipation, with the two fighters going ten intense rounds for the WBO African Light Heavyweight Continental Championship.

Freezy came out with remarkable speed, moving rapidly around the ring and firing combinations before Appah could respond.

Appah, however, refused to be overwhelmed, constantly pressing forward and answering with heavy shots of his own. The pace remained relentless, with both fighters exchanging punches throughout the contest as the intensity inside the ring continued to rise.

The fight was so fiercely contested that the rivalry between both men appeared to soften as the rounds progressed.

Between the exchanges, the two fighters became increasingly cordial with one another, displaying a growing sense of mutual respect even as they continued battling for the championship.

After 10 rounds, the judges scored the contest 95-93, 95-93 and 94-94, awarding Freezy Macbones the unanimous decision victory and the WBO African Light Heavyweight Continental Championship.

The celebrity contests provided a very different kind of spectacle. Carter Efe and Speed Darlington delivered one of the evening's most entertaining encounters, with Carter combining his punches with several unexpected dance breaks during the contest.

Speed, meanwhile, spent much of the fight protecting his face as Carter continued pressing forward and engaging the crowd. Carter Efe was eventually declared the winner, and after the bout, the entertainer immediately set his sights on an even bigger challenge, declaring that he wants to fight boxing legend Floyd Mayweather.

The night's female celebrity contest between Phyna and Nkechi Blessing delivered perhaps the loudest reactions of the evening, as both women brought an unexpected level of intensity to the ring.


Phyna (left) and Nkechi Blessing going for it at the Chaos In The Ring held at the Federal Palace Hotel, Lagos, on Thursday.

Coal City 2026 National Sports Festival

Ekweremadu Heads LOC As Enugu State Constitutes Sub-Committees

By **Christian Okpara**

THE local organising committee (LOC) for the Enugu 2026 National Sports Festival, tagged Coal City Games, has announced the composition of the sub-committees saddled with the responsibility of organising a successful sports festival.

The LOC is headed by Enugu State Commissioner of Sports, Llyod Ekweremadu, with former international athletes, Mary Onyali, Victor Okorie and Davidson Owumi as members.

Other members of the LOC are Akuchukwu Aghazu, Blessing Chisalam Ekwe, Tony Ugwu, Jonathan Nnaji, Boniface Onovo, Ephraim Ochonma, Obiora Obasi, Henry Chinedu Okorie and Bamiduro Olumide.

The sub-committees proposed by the LOC include the Games Village Management Committee headed by Ekweremadu, with Bamiduro serving as secretary. Other members include Davidson Owumi, Dr Ademola Are, Boniface Onovo, Miriam Aniekwe and Obiora Obasi.

The Accommodation Sub-Committee will be headed by Obiora Obasi as chairman, with Henry Okorie as deputy chairman and Obinna Chukwu as secretary. Eugenia Udeh, Gbenga Omoyemi and other officials will also serve on the committee.

The Catering Sub-Committee will be chaired by Ekweremadu, with Bamiduro as deputy chairman and Nancy Nwoha as secretary. Nkiru Udunaga will serve as assistant secretary, alongside other members.

The Media and Communication Sub-Committee will be chaired by the Enugu State Commissioner for Information, with Sports Writers Association of Nigeria (SWAN) Chairman, Gideon Iwueke as deputy chairman.

The Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Media, Uche Anichukwu, will serve as secretary, while other members include Dan Nwomeh, Foster Ejikeme Chime, Dan Onwuegbuna, Frankie Omokhua, Osondu Ngwude, Nneka Anibueze, Ndubueze Chidoka of Radio Nigeria, Felicia Nwokorie, Solomon Unya and Brian Okechukwu, the media officer of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

The committee is expected to coordinate publicity, media access, information dissemination and communication activities before and during the Games, as preparations intensify for the national sporting event.

Security and ceremonial arrangements

The Protocol Sub-Committee will be headed by the Chief of Protocol to the Enugu State Government, with Princess Ugwu Obiajulu as deputy chairman and the Senior Special Assistant on Protocol to the Governor as secretary.

The Ceremonial Sub-Committee will be chaired by Akuchukwu Aghazu, with Ricky Agu, Chairman of Enugu Air, serving as deputy chairman.

TheGuardianSports

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FIFA Orders Katsina United To Pay Coach Bulus N28 Million

By Christian Okpara

• Threatens To Deduct Points, Relegate Club To Lower Division

WORLD football governing body, FIFA, has fined Nigerian Premier Football League (NPFL) club, Katsina United, the sum N28 million to Coach Tony Tope Bulus as compensation for alleged wrongful termination of contract.

The football body also ordered Katsina United pay as fine the sum of $5 million dollars for failure to obey an earlier ruling ordering them to compensate the coach.

In a letter by the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) stating FIFA's decision on the matter, the NFF told Katsina United that the world football governing body is also threatening to ban the club from registering new players and also deduct points from the club if they failed to comply by the decision within 15 days.

The letter dated October 2, 2026, and titled 'Re-Forwarding the decision of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee Regarding In Case FFD-28984,' reads: "I am directed to refer to the above subject matter and the correspondence from FIFA Disciplinary Committee dated 21st September, 2026.

"It is my instruction to inform you that FIFA Disciplinary Committee has issued a decision in Ref. No. FDD-28984, on 21st September, 2026 in respect of the case involving Katsina United FC and Coach Toney Tope Bulus.

"The Court of Arbitration for Sport issued an Award on 30th June, 2026 in fovour of the Judgement Creditor, Tony Tope Bulus to the tune of Twenty Eight Million Naira (N28,000,000), as compensation for the wrongful termination of the Employment Contract dated 10th August, 2023. As a result of failure of Katsina United to pay the judgement sum, FIFA Disciplinary Committee has issued a decision to enforce same.

"You are hereby directed to pay the sum of Twenty Eight Million Naira (28,000,000) to Coach Tony Tope Bulus and file the proof of payment to FIFA within fifteen (15) days of the receipt of this letter. You are further directed to pay the sum of USD 5,000 to FIFA, as fine for failure to comply with the decision. Such payment shall be made into the account details provided by FIFA, and attached herein, within fifteen (15) days of the receipt of this letter. Failure to comply with this directive within the stipulated period, a ban on registering new players will be issued and enforced on Katsina United FC by FIFA, without further decision, until the complete amount due is paid."

It warned the club to note that "deductions of points or relegation to a lower league may be ordered in addition to the registration ban in the event of continuous failure to comply in full."

The Guardian recalls that Coach Bolus decided to seek legal redress when Katsina United sacked him in 2023 for alleged unruly behaviour and poor team performance.

When the case went to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), the body on June 30, 2026 ordered Katsina United to pay N28 million in compensation to Bolus.

FIFA on September 18, 2026 opened disciplinary action against the club for failing to settle the judgment debt, adding further financial penalties.

Reacting to the sanctions, Katsina United Chairman, Surajo Baba Malumfashi, declined comments on the letter, saying that he is not aware of it yet.

He said: "I will make my comments only when I see the letter. For now, I have nothing to say."



Coach Bulus

NFF Moves To Sustain Improved Officiating In the EuroMatch NPFL

THE Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) Refereeing Development Committee has warned referees in the EuroMatch Nigeria Premier Football League (NPFL) against errors of judgment.

In a practice directive titled "Instructions and warnings to all NPFL Referees and Assistant Referees" and signed by Mohammed Ameenu, the memo started by commending the referees for the prevailing good performances after six matchdays.

"The 2026/2027 NPFL season has reached an advanced stage and we have witnessed several excellent performances from some you while on duty.

"Equally, we have witnessed wrong calls, some of which are errors of judgment while others are gross misrepresentation of the content and context of the Laws of the Game 2026 as Amended", the memo noted.

It went on to state that it has become necessary to remind the referees of their duties, obligations and responsibilities towards upholding the principle of equity, fairness and standard interpretations and applications of the Laws of the Game.

It added that "in order to ensure that matches are prosecuted without any form of negative tendencies in refereeing decisions, the NFF Acting General Secretary has further instructed the existing Monitoring Committee to deploy personnel to each match centres and be more vigilant in ensuring that the integrity of the NPFL matches and football generally are preserved as well as protected. The Monitoring Committee is mandated to directly report actions and inactions of Match Officials to the Ag. General Secretary for appropriate actions".

It directed all Referees and Assistant Referees in the ongoing season to carry out their duties diligently, truthfully and fairly to all concerned without fear or favour.

Sounding a note of consequential official response, the memo noted that "all Referees and Assistant Referees are warned that anyone who disregard these instructive guidelines and act in manners capable of bringing the integrity of the game into disrepute shall not only be dismissed from Refereeing but shall equally be handed over to security agencies for prosecution for sabotage and match fixing".



Osuji

International Friendly: Chelle Picks Osuji, Omotewo As Injured Ndidi, Victory's Replacements

SUPER Eagles Coach, Eric Chelle, has named Tromsø centreback Vince Osuji and Stade Reims defensive midfielder John Otomewo as replacements for Skipper Wilfred Ndidi and FC Basel defender, Victory Akpe, who pulled out of next week's international friendly against Russia due to injury.

Ndidi played the full 90 minutes of Nigeria's 2-1 win over Madagascar in their 2027 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying opener but was substituted with around 15 minutes remaining in the following match against Guinea-Bissau, fuelling speculation that he had picked up a knock.

Victory, on the other hand, was forced to withdraw from the squad to face Russia after suffering a training-ground injury two days ago.

Ndidi's withdrawal means Chelle is now without nine members of his preferred starting lineup, with Ola Aina, Bruno Onyemaechi, Semi Ajayi, Calvin Bassey, Alex Iwobi, Ademola Lookman, Samuel Chukwueze and Victor Osimhen also absent from the travelling squad.

Osuji has made two appearances for Tromsø since joining the Norwegian club in the summer, while Otomewo has featured as a substitute in seven Ligue 2 matches so far this season.

Man City Whistleblower Launches Brutal Attack On Infantino, Alleges Another Saga

• UEFA Prepares Documents For Legal Proceedings Against FIFA Boss

FOOTBALL whistleblower Rui Pinto has launched a brutal attack on FIFA boss Gianni Infantino, claiming he was involved in another financial saga involving Manchester City, reports sportbible.com.

Eight years ago, Pinto leaked a series of confidential club documents on his website, Football Leaks, that later resulted in the Premier League charging Manchester City for financial breaches.

Following the news that City had been found guilty, it appears that Pinto has now turned his attention towards FIFA boss Infantino, claiming that he shielded both City and another major club, PSG, from UEFA punishments.

It's been a tough year for Infantino following a series of dramas at the 2026 World Cup, followed by his highly controversial failed "sell-off" plan that led to mass protests from nations across the globe.

In recent months, the FIFA President has faced increasing pressure to stand down from his role, despite Infantino confirming his intention to stand for re-election as FIFA president ahead of the vote, which is due to take place in February.

But the pressure on Infantino is only likely to increase following Pinto's latest social media post as he's doubled down on previous allegations claiming that Infantino, while working as UEFA general secretary, helped both City and Paris Saint-Germain avoid punishments.

Reports from German outlet Der Spiegel have claimed that both City and PSG artificially inflated sponsorship deals, similar to the 'sham' deals that the Premier League revealed City had been using, to bypass Financial Fair Play (FFP) rules.

Now, Pinto appears to have backed up these reports with a damning post on his X account. "Back in 2014, there was a man who was already aware of the irregularities involving Manchester City," Pinto wrote.

"The infamous Gianni Infantino, then UEFA general secretary, abused his authority, shared confidential documents and, in short, outmanoeuvred the investigatory chamber, doing everything in his power to ensure that both Manchester City and PSG would merely receive a fine, avoiding a deeper investigation that could have led to a Champions League ban.

"All of these details were also revealed through Football Leaks. Given his actions as UEFA general secretary and, more recently, as FIFA president, I can only say, in my humble opinion, that Gianni Infantino has become a cancer on football and should have no place in the future of the game."

As the voting process for the next FIFA president rapidly approaches, the last thing Infantino needs is to be labelled a 'cancer' in the media.

This is particularly true as several national associations continue to confirm that they will not be supporting his re-election bid next year, including England.

Meanwhile, the European football governing body UEFA is planning to institute criminal proceedings against Infantino following the latest revelations.

A leaked legal document has revealed UEFA is preparing to bring criminal proceedings against Gianni Infantino over his controversial proposal to sell shares in the World Cup.

The documents, revealed by Sky News, confirm that UEFA is subpoenaing FIFA and the financial institutions involved in the US to obtain documents related to the proposal.

After obtaining this information, proceedings would be launched in Switzerland, where FIFA's headquarters are based.

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INSIDE STUFF WITH MARTINS OLOJA



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When Will Our Leaders Fix Nigeria's Hospitals?

'The puzzle of 240 million people with Doctors everywhere but no hospital at home'

THERE is a video in circulation this week that should make every Nigerian leader hide his face in shame. In it, a former Head of State - General **Abdulsalami Abubakar**, who handed over power to President Olusegun Obasanjo 27 years ago in 1999 - is seen advertising an Indian hospital where he just had a knee replacement surgery. He is smiling. He is grateful. He is advertising. He is our former Commander-in-Chief advertising foreign healthcare as if he is an influencer for Indian medical tourism. Gen. Abdulsalami is 84. We wish him long life and quick recovery. This is not an attack on him. It is an attack on the system he led, the system he handed over, and the system that has refused to build a hospital that can replace a knee for its own former leader. This video is just an addition to many reproaches. President Umaru Yar'Adua returned from a Saudi Arabia hospital in 2010 and died in Aso Villa. Former President **Muhammadu Buhari** actually died in a London hospital in July 2025 after spending more days in London hospitals than in Daura between 2015 and 2025.

President Bola Tinubu has been visiting France repeatedly since 2023. The State House says it is holidays. There have been persistent speculations that he goes there on health grounds. When Macron, his host in France, goes to UNGA, our President stays back in France. The optics is terrible. The list is endless: Our former leaders, ex-this, ex-that have died in hospitals in Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, US, UK, Germany, etc. We have a roll call of shame: Former Vice Presidents, Senate Presidents, Governors, Ministers - all dying abroad as if Nigeria is cursed never to have good hospitals.

Which raises the question that will not go away: When will Nigerian leaders, including physicians who became Governors and Ministers, combine resources to build and equip hospitals for Nigerians and for themselves?

When will the bicameral legislature debate the danger of non-existent all-Nigerian health insurance whereby most people won't depend on out-of-pocket expenses on healthcare? How many leaders must die abroad before we get angry and intentional about healthcare as a fundamental objective and directive principle of state policy under Chapter 2 of our Constitution?

Lest we forget, when will citizens be active enough to demand this responsibility from government at all levels? This is the puzzle of 240 million people.

'The irony – We have the Doctors, but no hospitals': Nigeria has no shortage of doctors. In fact, we export doctors. According to the UK General Medical Council, over 12,000 Nigerian-trained doctors work in the UK alone. In the US, over 4,000. In Canada, Saudi Arabia, Australia - thousands more. These are our doctors. Trained with our tax money in our universities. Now they are brain gain to the West. Why did they run? They ran because there is no hospital to work in at home. We have so many universities - federal and state - offering medicine and health sciences with teaching hospitals. University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, Ahmadu Bello University, University of Nigeria Nsukka, University of Benin, University of Ilorin, University of Port Harcourt, University of Jos, Bayero University Kano. Over 40 federal and state universities offering MBBS. There are universities of medical sciences of late. What of the University of Ibadan and its University College Hospital, UCH? UCH Ibadan was once ranked the 4th best hospital in the entire Commonwealth - comprising UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, and all former British colonies. Yes, 4th.

It was built and equipped to the standard of the London University Teaching Hospital. In the 1960s and 1970s, even the Saudi Royalty used to visit UCH Ibadan for medical care. Saudi princes flew to Ibadan, not Ibadan flying to Saudi Arabia.



Tinubu



Pate

Today, UCH cannot do a simple CT scan consistently. Its theatres are in darkness. Its doctors are on strike over lack of gloves. Its roof leaks. Our leaders who graduated from UI cannot be treated there. The National Hospital in Abuja - built as the national flagship, with helipad, with oncology centre - is still ill-equipped. The University of Abuja Teaching Hospitals and others in the Territory are glorified consulting clinics. They refer everything abroad. Lagos State built Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, LASUTH. Still not fit for a Governor's knee replacement. Delta State has two former governors who are medical doctors: Dr. **Emmanuel Uduaghan** and Dr. **Ifeanyi Okowa.** Both were commissioners for health before becoming governors. Delta should have been the medical hub of Nigeria. Is it? Ondo State had Dr. **Olusegun Mimiko** - a medical doctor - as governor for eight years. He tried with Mother and Child Hospitals. Where are they today? Underfunded, understaffed. Enugu state had Dr. **Chimaroke Nnamani** - a doctor, professor of fetal medicine - as governor. Where is the legacy hospital? So the puzzle: Doctors have ruled us as Governors, Ministers, Commissioners, but none left sustainable healthcare system, let alone good hospitals as legacies. Why?

'The culture of medical tourism as status symbol'. Medical tourism is not just about lack of equipment. It is about status. For Nigerian elite, going abroad for treatment is a status symbol. It is like buying a private jet. "I did my knee in India" is a bragging right at Ikoyi Club. "I did my check-up in London" is a class marker.

General Abdulsalami advertising Indian hospital is not just seeking care. He is - perhaps unconsciously - telling Nigerians: If you can afford it, go to India. India is good. But India built that hospital because its leaders decided to invest in healthcare as industry. Apollo, Fortis, Medanta - these are private hospitals built by Indian doctors who stayed back. Why did Indian doctors stay back while Nigerian doctors ran? Because Indian government created environment: power, water, equipment, pay, respect.

Nigerian elite did the opposite: They killed environment at home and use their looted money to pay Indian hospitals. The economics is staggering: Central Bank of Nigeria estimates Nigeria spends "over $1.5 billion annually on medical tourism". The African Development Bank says Africa spends $6 billion, with Nigeria taking 25%. That $1.5 billion can build 10 world-class hospitals every year. In 10 years, 100 hospitals. That money can equip UCH, LUTH, ABUTH, UNTH, National Hospital to world class.

But we prefer to give it to India, UK, Egypt, UAE. And the shame: most of these foreign hospitals are run by Nigerian doctors who ran abroad! You fly to the UK to see Dr. Okonkwo who left UCH because UCH had no electricity. You fly to India where the orthopedic surgeon is Dr. Naresh Trehan, but his assistant is Dr. Adeyemi from Ibadan who left because he was paid N250,000 per month. It is a comedy of shame.

But our National Assembly has never debated healthcare as an emergency. What do they debate? New cars for senators, new jets for president, new state creation, tax bills that tax poor more. When did the Senate last have a 3-day emergency session on why Nigerians spend out-of-pocket for health? According to WHO, over "75% of health spending in Nigeria is out-of-pocket" - the highest in the world. Meaning you pay cash before you are treated. No insurance. No cover.

NHIS - National Health Insurance Scheme - covers less than 5% of Nigerians, mostly federal civil servants. The rest - 230 million - pay cash. If you have no cash, you die. How many times has the House Committee on Health summoned the Minister of Health to explain why National Hospital Abuja has no PET scan? How many times has Senate asked why UCH Ibadan's radiotherapy machine has been broken for two years? They don't because they themselves will go abroad. So why fix it? This is the danger of a legislature that does not use the hospitals it appropriates money for.

'The Doctor-Governors who failed us': This is the most painful part. We expected doctor-governors to be different. Dr. **Olusegun Mimiko** in Ondo state (2009-2017) is a medical doctor. He founded Nigeria's first University of Medical Sciences. He built Mother and Child Hospitals in Akure and Ondo that reduced maternal mortality by 50%. It was celebrated globally. But after he left, funding stopped, doctors left, equipment collapsed. Today, those hospitals are shadows. He did not build a system, he built projects. Systems survive governors. Projects die with them.

Dr. **Emmanuel Uduaghan** in Delta (2007-2015) is a medical doctor, who had a vision of Delta as medical tourism destination. But Delta State University Teaching Hospital, Oghara, remains underequipped. His successor, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa, another medical doctor, also continued. Yet Delta's biggest export is still medical patients to India.

Dr. **Chimaroke Nnamani** in Enugu (1999-2007) is a U.S-trained professor of medicine. He built ESUT Teaching Hospital Parklane. But today, Enugu residents still go to private hospitals or abroad. Why did they fail? 1. They built hospitals as buildings, not as ecosystems. A hospital is not cement and paint. It is power (24-hour electricity), water, equipment maintenance, supply chain for drugs, retaining doctors with good pay, training nurses, health insurance to pay bills. Nigerian governors build edifice and commission it with fanfare. No budget for diesel to power generator. No budget for spare parts for MRI.

2. **They fell into the federal trap**: "Federal Government will do healthcare." No. Healthcare is on concurrent list. States can build world-class hospitals. Lagos can build hospitals better than India if it wants. But Governors prefer flyovers that can be seen from helicopter.

3. **Corruption.** Hospital equipment procurement remains the most corrupt in Nigeria. A $100,000 MRI machine is invoiced at $1 million. The balance is shared. So machines bought are fake or refurbished. They break in six months. No warranty. The doctor-governors were inside that system and could not break it.

What will make Nigerian leaders serious about domestic healthcare?

1. **Law:** Make it illegal for public officers to seek treatment abroad with pubic funds: Rwanda did it. President Paul Kagame does not go abroad for treatment. If you are a minister, you must use King Faisal Hospital in Kigali. Nigeria must pass a law: No public funds for medical tourism for President, Vice President, Governors, Ministers, National Assembly members. If you want to go abroad, pay from your pocket, not from estacode. If that law is passed, National Hospital will be fixed in six months.

2. **Mandatory health insurance:** NHIS must cover all 240 million. 1% of GDP must go to health insurance. Make it mandatory for employers to pay. Make it work like in Ghana where NHIS covers 60%. If people have insurance, hospitals will have money to retain doctors.

3. **Fix power for hospitals first:** You cannot run a hospital without regular power supply. Declare all teaching hospitals as strategic power zones. Give them dedicated gas turbines, solar grids. UCH, LUTH, ABUTH, UBTH, UNTH, National Hospital, Abuja must have 24-hour electricity before Aso Presidential Villa energy system.

4. **Citizen activism:** When will citizens too be active enough to demand responsibility? When will Nigerians stop saying "God will provide" and start saying "Government must provide"? Healthcare is not a privilege. It is a right. Citizens must vote on health. Must protest when hospitals have no drugs. Must sue government for violating Section 17. We have the doctors abroad, waiting to come home if home is ready. We have the money. $1.5 billion medical tourism money every year is enough. We have the land. UCH land alone is bigger than many Indian hospitals. What we lack is intentional anger. A nation that is not angry when its former leader advertises Indian hospital has lost its majesty. A nation that watches its President holiday in France while its teaching hospitals have no electricity has lost its shame.

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