

Operators say over 1m jobs lost in 12 months
Agents call for more simplified process

JOHN SALAU

Nigeria's Point of Sale (PoS) agent network has experienced remarkable growth in recent years,

expanding financial inclusion and facilitating transactions in underserved areas. However, this growth is now facing a regulatory roadblock, threatening the progress made in the recent

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₦400

Rivers' political crisis inches closer to physical confrontations, violence



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LGs' fiscal autonomy must be implemented, it must not end at Supreme Court pronouncement - Soloki



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Gbeleyi arrives BPE with aplomb



Page 36

George Edozie: Staying grounded amid rise to art fame



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Nigeria under pressure as FG, governors, others hold countless meetings to avert protest

■ Citizens plan to stockpile food

See story on page 46

Healthcare receives major boost as Eno approves medical residency fund



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Why there has been no appointment of judges in Abia since 2021

- Onuchukwu



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Retaining talent in IT sector is Nigeria's biggest challenge

- Suvarna

42

Guardiola set to renew Manchester City contract



60



Dele Alake, minister of Solid Minerals Development (r) and Moses Michael Engadu, secretary general, African Mineral Strategy Group, during a ministerial roundtable at the African Natural Resources and Energy Investment Summit held in Abuja, recently.

Rising cost of malaria, diabetes treatment strain Nigerians' wallets

■ Coartem from N1000 to N3,500
■ Insulin moves from N3,000 to N22,000 per bottle

ANTHONIA OBOKOH

Many families in Nigeria have cried out over the high cost of accessing healthcare. To procure routine drugs for malaria which is prevalent in Nigeria has become problematic.

The singsong out there is that "this is not the right time to fall ill in Nigeria."

Many Nigerians have a lot to contend with in relation to the challenges besetting them, as economic pressures

are crushing many.

Some patients who shared their experiences with BusinessDaySunday said that it has become extremely difficult to procure drugs for their ailments in the face of rising cost-of-living in the country.

They also said that going to the hospital is not a cheaper alternative as they cannot afford the bills.

"I used to buy malaria medication for my children for a few hundred naira," Aisha Abdullahi, a mother of three, said.

"Now, it costs thousands

of naira; I have to choose between buying food and buying medicine," she added.

A man who gave his name simply as Gbenga told BusinessDay that he experienced first hand the trouble people go through in the hospital to treat "ordinary malaria."

He said: "My son was having a feverish condition and we tried to handle the case without going to the hospital. But at a point, we decided to take him to the hospital when he was not responding to the

Continues on page 47

How NASS shut governors in with passage of new minimum wage bill

■ It's now criminal to refuse to pay salaries - NLC
■ N70,000 is awful, can breed inequality, affect productivity - Ozekhome

TONY AILEMEN, Abuja

The recent passage of the Minimum Wage Bill by the National Assembly has laid to rest several months

of agitations by state governors to take control of wage issues at the state level.

The retention of the Minimum Wage on the Exclusive

Continues on page 48

Nigerians resort to pieces of yam as prices of tubers soar

BRIGHT IMOHO

As food inflation continues the upward swing affecting the affordability of many Nigerians,

many citizens have since bade bye to their once-cherished staples.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS),

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News

Nigeria pushes for digital transformation in Africa's oil, gas sector

...Holds maiden Africa oil, gas digital conference

AMAKA ANAGOR-EWUZIE

Nigeria has shown commitment to driving digital transformation in Africa's oil and gas sector by pushing for the continent to harness digital opportunities in the oil industry for economic growth.

To achieve this, the Federal Ministry of Petroleum Resources in Nigeria is perfecting plans to hold the maiden edition of the Africa Oil & Gas Digital Transformation Conference 2024 in collaboration with Great Minds Events.

Scheduled for September



Lokpobiri

3 and 4, 2024 in Lagos, the event will help Africa's oil and gas sector address the dynamic challenges and opportunities presented by digital transformation in the industry.

Heineken Lokpobiri, minister of State Petroleum Resources (Oil), said the Federal Government is committed to ensuring a conducive business environment for National Oil Companies (NOCs) and International Oil Companies (IOCs) by tackling issues of pipeline vandalism and oil theft.

Lokpobiri said the conference is not just about increasing production but also ensuring the benefits are felt by all Nigerians.

"The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) has revolutionised the energy sector with a friendly regulatory framework, ensuring transparency and stimulating investment. Our shared responsibility is to protect our environment, our resources, and the livelihoods of those in oil-producing regions," he said.

The minister said the conference will address the dynamic challenges and opportunities presented by digital transformation in the oil and gas industry.

He said it would also feature keynotes and panel discussions from industry experts, including leaders from ExxonMobil Nigeria and

KPMG.

Lokpobiri commended the organisers - Great Minds Events - which he said has built strong partnerships and consistently delivers impactful industry conferences.

"The organisation believes collaboration with forward-thinking companies will drive the necessary digital transformation in Nigeria's oil and gas sector and further shape the future of Africa's oil and gas industry," he said.

Attendees are expected to benefit from networking sessions, one-on-one meetings with key opinion leaders, and an exhibition showcasing cutting-edge solutions.

UCCIMA President raises alarm over activities of group with name 'Umuahia Chamber Movement'

The Umuahia Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (UCCIMA) has raised the alarm over the alleged obnoxious activities of a clandestine organisation with the name, Umuahia Chamber Movement.

In a press statement signed and made available to newsmen in Umuahia by Chidi Aruoma, president UCCIMA, stated: "My attention has been drawn to an illegal and unauthorised gathering of some people in the name of Umuahia Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (UCCIMA) somewhere in Umuahia and associating our esteemed Chamber with the sobriquet 'Umuahia Chamber Movement' and wish to state as follows: That no Meeting or Exhibition under the banner of Umuahia Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (UCCIMA) was authorised by me as the President of the Chamber.

"That UCCIMA does not have an affiliate by the name 'Umuahia Chamber Movement' or whatever name called. That the purported meeting and Exhibition held somewhere in Umuahia on June 26, 2024 under signpost of 'Umuahia Chamber Movement' were not from UCCI-

MA and therefore, their outcome stands void.

"That the names of the attendees to the meeting and organisers of the Exhibition are not in the Chambers Register which is in my custody. No group can hold a meeting or organise an Exhibition under the ensign of UCCIMA without being first a member. That no group has the right to associate the Chamber with any affiliate association like the one above without the authorisation of Chamber.

"That no one could claim to be a member of UCCIMA when he/she had not paid his dues as constitutionally provided or attended meetings of the Chamber for upward of three (3) years."

The UCCIMA President revealed that the purported exhibitor ceased to be a member of the UCCIMA about Eleven years (11) ago and therefore, had no mandate to organise any event of such using the name of UCCIMA or any coinage that tended to hoodwink the unsuspecting public into thinking that Umuahia Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture had an affiliate body that organized an event.

He said that the convenor of the said movement had never attended any UCCIMA meeting, paid any annual dues or participated in any UCCIMA event in the last twelve years since he left office in

2012, alleging that the purported convener grounded the chamber, by owing rents to the landlord and staff.

Aruoma further disclosed that the chamber was rescued by the immediate past president who officially registered the Chamber in CAC and gave it a new status.

"That the name 'Umuahia Chamber Movement' is alien Umuahia Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture because there is no such name in the official Register," Aruoma said.

Aruoma alerted members of the public, particularly the Abia State Government, Commissioner for Trade, Commerce and Industry, organised private sector (OPS), industrialists and entrepreneurs in Umuahia and environs including investors across Nigeria, to be wary of the group that was using the name of Umuahia Chamber Movement. He noted that only one UCCIMA was duly registered and operational with fully constituted executives.

The UCCIMA boss however, pointed out that any group of persons was free to register another Chamber of commerce in Corporate Affairs Commission and compete like the other newly registered and operational ones; Arochukwu Chamber of Commerce, Ohafia Chamber of Commerce, and Abia North Chamber of Commerce.

Bauchi LG polls: PDP vows to win Bogoro chairmanship position

AYUBA MAFFI, Bauchi

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) has, ahead of the forthcoming local government election in Bauchi State scheduled to hold August 17, 2024, said it would win the Bogoro Local Government Area chairmanship

The party chairman, Amos Faruk made this known during a rally that took place at the party Secretariat in Bogoro Local

Government Area.

The leadership of the party in the area, equally presented a flag to its sole candidate, Yakubu Lawi Sumi.

Faruk reiterated the preparedness of PDP to ensure that PDP wins the local government election, adding that Bogoro belongs to PDP and that it would remain for PDP.

He called on the electorate to come out en masse on the election day to elect the PDP and its candidate, Yakubu Lawi Sumi for the development of

Bogoro local government.

Lawi Sumi, who is the chairmanship candidate of the party, expressed gratitude to the Almighty God and the people of the area for choosing him as candidate of the party.

"I want to become chairman in order to contribute my own quota to the development of the local government," he said.

He called on party members to work hard to ensure that all candidates of the party emerge winners to ensure that the state witness greater.

Slashed UAE DVN/visa fees to alleviate financial burden on Nigerian travellers - stakeholder

JOHN SALAU

Stakeholders in the Nigerian air travel business have disclosed that a reduction in Document Verification Number (DVN) and visa fees would alleviate the financial burden on Nigerian travellers, making it easier for them to visit the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Accordingly, stakeholders are of the view that lowering the fees would likely increase the number of Nigerian visitors to the UAE, thereby boosting tourism and economic activities. They also said that it would also provide an opportunity for more Nigerians to explore business and investment opportunities in the UAE.

"This move is expected to foster stronger ties between the two nations, encouraging more tourism, business engagements, and cultural exchanges,"

Ugochukwu Udoji, head, corporate communication, News instinct, a non-governmental media agency, said in a statement.

He stated further that although the exact timeline for the fee reduction has not been announced, changes are anticipated soon. According to him, detailed guidelines and updated fee structures are expected following the review. "The potential reduction of visa and DVN fees underscores the UAE's commitment to maintaining strong bilateral relations with Nigeria." Udoji stated further that the development signifies a positive step towards more inclusive and affordable travel policies, which will benefit Nigerian citizens and enhance diplomatic ties between both countries.

"The DVN will improve Nigeria's image in the UAE, hoping that more credible people will be able to travel and do

business in UAE with ease and remove negative perception from the few Nigerians involved in crime," he stated.

Recall that on October 21, 2022, the UAE government announced a ban on 20 African countries, including Nigeria.

However, on July 15, 2024, Nigeria's information minister, Mohammed Idris, announced that the ban had been lifted following a mutually beneficial discussion between Nigeria and the UAE.

Since the announcement, there has been a frenzy of information activities in the media, and sources close to the UAE revealed that changes are imminent.

However, the UAE has imposed more controls on the visa process, requiring document verification to ensure the authenticity of documents submitted by applicants, following the recent lifting of the visa ban.

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News

Obaseki's investment in digital connectivity attracts more businesses to Edo - Uwaibi, ESIPO boss

IDRIS MOMOH, Benin

Edo State Government has said that the provision of digital connectivity has attracted huge businesses to the state.

Kelvin Uwaibi, managing director, Edo State Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO), who disclosed this in an interview with newsmen, said the digital connectivity was also fostering innovation and making Edo State a hub for technological advancement.

Uwaibi noted that the Governor Godwin Obaseki government has prioritised the enhancement of digital infrastructure because of its critical role in modern economic development.

He said the digital technology has not only empowered citizens and enhanced transparency but also positively impacted businesses in terms of fairness in trade practices.

He opined that the State Government's economic development and infrastructure improvement, coupled with the establishment of the Edo State Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Office stands out as a strategic initiative.

According to him, the office is tasked with identifying, facilitating, and promoting PPP projects, conducting feasibility studies, engaging



Uwaibi

private investors, ensuring transparent project selection, and monitoring project implementation. "By attracting private investments and managing risks effectively, the PPP Office aims to enhance economic growth and infrastructure development.

"This initiative will lead to the creation of new jobs, improved public services, and the development of critical infrastructure, all of which are vital for the state's long-term prosperity," he said.

The ESIPO boss also noted that the agency aimed to enhance economic growth and infrastructure development through the PPP Office.

He also said that the six executive orders recently signed by Governor Obaseki were a bold step and comprehensive strategy to enhance the ease of doing business in the State.

"His executive order on Right of Way (RoW) procedures sets a maximum fee of N145 per linear meter for broadband deployment and

outlines a streamlined process for obtaining RoW approvals within 30 days.

"This initiative simplifies and regulates the process for broadband deployment, encourages investment in digital infrastructure, and ensures timely processing of applications. "By promoting widespread access to broadband services, the order aims to boost technological infrastructure, enhance business operations, and support the state's economic development.

"Improved digital connectivity will attract more businesses to the state, fostering innovation and making Edo State a hub for technological advancement," he said.

Uwaibi explained that the six executive orders are geared towards addressing key areas such as grievance redress, digital infrastructure, public-private partnerships, responsible agricultural investments, open governance, and simplified tax regimes.

He opined that the executive orders initiatives lay the foundation for a more transparent, efficient, and inclusive business environment.

"As these policies take effect, Edo State is poised to become a model of economic development and good governance, attracting investments, fostering sustainable growth, and improving the quality of life for all its citizens," he said.

DBN gets green accreditation to unlock more climate funds

...Boosts Nigeria's fight against climate change

ANIEFIOK UDONQUAK, Uyo

The Development Bank of Nigeria Plc (DBN) has announced that it has received the Green Climate Fund (GCF) accreditation as the first Direct Access Entity (DAE) and the only authorised Nigerian channel for accessing green financing from the GCF.

The GCF is the world's largest dedicated fund helping Small Island states, and least developed and developing countries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and enhance their ability to respond to climate change.

It does this by channeling climate finance to developing countries and investing in their adaptation and mitigation activities through a project portfolio that is implemented by its partner organizations, known as accredited entities.

The accredited entities, which can either be International Accredited Entities or Direct Access Entities (DAEs), develop funding proposals to be considered by the GCF. The accredited entities also oversee,

supervise, manage, and monitor their respective GCF-approved projects.

"It will also help create greater awareness on climate change, culminating in greater involvement of Nigerians in climate actions prompting a shift towards green economy as well as raise the Nigerian portfolio in climate financing globally, and unlocking more climate funds," Tony Okpanachi, the managing director, DBN, said in a statement.

He stated that with the accreditation, DBN is empowered to develop and submit funding proposals for projects and programmes; deploy a range of financial instruments such as concessional loans, co-financing and blending for loans and mobilise private sector capital for such climate change initiatives.

Okpanachi noted that climate change has become an existential threat to humanity as extreme weather conditions have caused devastating effects on livelihoods – depletion of grazing lands for livestock, rising sea levels causing excessing flooding that displaces communities.



UK Summit offers practical steps to business opportunities, financial security

CHUKA UROKO

A business summit held in the United Kingdom recently has been described as impactful and insightful as it offered participants practical steps to tapping business opportunities and achieving financial security.

The New Money Summit UK, according to the organisers, also inspired participants to take decisive steps towards unlocking new wealth and also taught participants how to calculate their 'wealth number' which is a personalized measure of financial health and strategies to build new wealth.

"We had a pre-summit webinar which emphasized the importance of pursuing opportunities for financial security. The main summit was held at the Hilton London Kensington, London and featured an impressive lineup of speakers,"

Grace Ofure Ibhakhomu, the summit host, told BusinessDay.

Ibhakhomu, who is an astute entrepreneur and real estate investor/developer, said that the event featured an array of speakers, including Hansatu Adegbite, Bola Leke-Sanus, Ebere Iyiegbu, Olabisi Ola-Soetan, Drew Uyi, Jola-Grace Emmanuel, Chioma Ibezim and Tope Mark-Odigie.

"Each of these speakers brought her wealth of knowledge and experience to bear on their submissions, providing participants valuable insights into various aspects of wealth creation and financial management," she said.

She noted that one of the key highlights of the summit was the call on participants to join a Wealth Creation Club where they would receive direct mentorship from her, explaining that the initiative aims to provide ongoing support and guidance, helping individuals to apply the knowledge gained from the summit to practical

and sustainable actions.

Femi Lazarus, an Apostle, kicked off the event with a compelling pre-summit webinar, urging participants to explore every available opportunity to secure their financial future. His message, expectedly, set the stage for engagement and empowerment that resonated throughout the summit.

The main event saw each speaker share unique insights and offer practical advice. For instance, Adegbite highlighted the importance of strategic investments and financial literacy, while Leke-Sanus discussed the role of faith and ethical principles in wealth creation.

Iyiegbu offered legal perspectives on financial security while Ola-Soetan provided strategies for effective wealth management. Uyi and Emmanuel inspired participants with motivational talks on perseverance and mindset. Ibezim and Mark-Odigie shared their experiences on entrepreneur-

ship and building sustainable businesses.

"There's no gainsaying that participants left the summit equipped with practical knowledge and a renewed sense of purpose," Ibhakhomu noted, adding that the emphasis on practical skills, such as calculating wealth numbers and building new wealth, ensured that participants learnt practical steps to take post-summit.

An exciting development following from the summit is that the New Money Summit is now open for franchising, offering an opportunity for individuals and organizations to bring this transformative event to their regions. This is aimed to expand the reach of financial literacy and empowerment to a broader audience.

Additionally, there is now New Money Summit Masterclass that will be held in various cities, further spreading the knowledge and strategies for financial success imparted at the summit.

CIPM's 56th conference to focus on 'managing people, businesses for resilience'

MIKE ABANG Calabar

The Chartered Institute of Personnel Management (CIPM) is gearing up to host its 56th International Conference and Exhibition (ICE).

The Themed: 'Managing People and Businesses for Resilience', the event will bring together HR professionals from across Africa to explore strategies for navigating today's dynamic business environment.

According to a statement by CIPM, the conference would be a gathering of global experts and industry leaders.

The Chairman of the Planning Committee, Kennedy Dike described the upcoming event as significant for HR leaders.

Scheduled for October, at the Chida Event Centre, the CIPM's ICE is the largest HR

gathering in Africa.

The conference will feature renowned speakers and industry leaders who will share their expertise on fostering resilience in both people and businesses.

"In the face of ongoing economic challenges, organisations need adaptable and effective HR practices to thrive," says Dike.

"This year's ICE provides a platform for HR professionals to gain valuable insights and practical tools to build resilience within their teams and organisations," he further said.

He also said that the CIPM #ICE2024 will offer a variety of learning opportunities, including keynote speeches, panel discussions, interactive workshops, and an exhibition showcasing the latest HR technologies and solutions. Participants will also have the chance to network with colleagues from across Africa.



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News

Otti gives approval of land for building of Bankers' Training Institute in Abia

UDOKA AGWU, Umuahia

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State has given approval of land for the building of Bankers' Training Institute in Abia State.

Otti gave the approval in his country home of Umuehim Nvosi, Isiala Ngwa South LGA, when he received in audience the executive of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN) that paid him a working visit.

Delegates of the Bankers' Institute during the visit had requested from the governor for a parcel of land to build Training Institute and Secretariat and he in response said: "The request for land to build the secretariat is in order and we are going to accede to the request. I will ask the Principal Secretary to engage with the Honourable Commissioner for Land and Housing to identify a suitable place for the Secretariat to be erected."

Otti called on the CIBN to subscribe to the two state-of-the-art New Smart Cities his administration was planning to build, one in Aba and the other in Umuahia.

He said the new cities would be so sophisticated that everyone would want to live there.

He also disclosed that there would be low cost Housing Estates conducive for living for those who might not



Otti

be able to afford the high cost ones.

While addressing one of the concerns raised by the CIBN which has to do with the 'japa' syndrome – a common parlance used to describe those running to foreign lands from Nigeria in search of greener pastures.

Otti said that it was something that required the leaders in the country to put on their thinking cap and develop programmes and policies that would throw up opportunities comparable to the ones that attracted Nigerians to foreign lands.

According to him, "Japa syndrome is actually the reality that faces us. You can-

not legislate it; you cannot do anything about it. Once your economy and your system don't look conducive or don't look attractive or if other economies are looking better than yours, you must have the right policies to attract young talented people, they will go there, no matter what you do.

"So, the only response you have is to create the enabling environment, create jobs for them and encourage them to stay back.

"It's a demand and supply situation. That demand and supply is a very interesting concept from economics it has gone to everywhere. If demand is higher than supply, prices will go up. If your

prices go up, demand will go down. So, that is how it is.

"So, it behooves on us who form the leadership cadre in the country to put on our thinking cap and come out with solutions to the 'japa' syndrome."

Kelechi Adiele, Public Relations Officer of CIBN, earlier in their speech, said that they came to identify with one of their own and discuss various ways of deepening the relationship between the CIBN, the Bankers Committee and the state.

They commended Governor Otti for his visible and verifiable achievements within a short period in office which had enhanced the productivity and the economy of the state.

"Sir, first of all, we want to thank you for the environment that you have made very conducive for banking activities to take place in Abia State; from the road infrastructure which has greatly improved in your tenure to the security architecture that you have put in place to make banking easier and life easier for bankers in Abia State.

"For instance, prior to your taking over as the governor of Abia State, banks in Abia State were not working on Mondays. This had affected negatively both the turnover of these banks and even the personal security of bankers who more or less had to sneak into the office on Mondays, but today, we move freely even on Mondays," Adiele said.

Unemployment: Group trains over 300 Niger Delta women in digital skills

PIUS DUKOR, PH

THE Stakeholder Democracy Network (SDN) has trained 330 women from the Niger Delta in various digital skills to tackle the unemployment challenge.

The programme, which took place in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, was funded by the European Union (EU) with the following digital skills: Marketing/Content Creation, Data Analysis, Web Design, Computer Appreciation, Graphics and Product Design and Cyber Security. The Project is titled: 'Reducing Digital Gender Gaps in the Niger Delta.'

In his welcome address, the Executive Director, SDN, Adam Heal encouraged the beneficiaries to support one another and not stand in isolation since they have shown remarkable commitment, while promising to assist them to stand strong as they are part of the growing network with unending possibilities.

Earlier, the Rivers State Commissioner for Youth Development, Chizom Kenneth Gbali, in his remarks, assured the women of state's government support.

The commissioner disclosed during the ceremony of second batch of Women in Digital Skills, saying that Governor Siminalaiye Fubara has built the biggest Youth Resource Centre ever in Nigeria.

Gbali explained that the governor was the most youth-friendly state chief-ex-



Adam Heal

ecutive who is creating peace and waters of prosperity and opening the spectrum of development in Rivers State.

"The world belongs to those who learn more skills and apply it," he said.

He charged them to think out-of-the-box and not be relegated to the background, noting that creative imagination is the way out of hardship. He also tasked them on the need to add value to what they have learnt.

The Commissioner further tasked the women to brace up for the challenge since they have been economically, socially and politically denied for so long. He advised them not to limit themselves.

According to Afolabi Ogunmola, SDN Finance manager, the project is targeting over 1500 beneficiaries across the Niger Delta states of Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta and Akwa Ibom, out of which 330 women benefited in the second batch.

LGA election: Ododo urges APC leaders to reserve 40% of councillorship for women

VICTORIA. NNAKAIKE

Ahmed Usman Ododo, Kogi State governor, has urged the leadership of the All Progressives Congress (APC) to implement the resolution of the party to reserve 40 percent of councillorship positions to women as candidates of the party in the October 19 local government election in the state.

Ododo made this known at an expanded stakeholders' meeting of the party held in Lokoja, adding that his administration is committed to consolidating on the achievement of the former Governor Yahaya Bello on the attainment of the 35percent affirmative action for women in elective position in the state.

He noted that the APV in the state would continue to give more opportunities to women in appreciation of their loyalty and support for

the party at all levels.

The Kogi State Governor also applauded the decision of the APC in the state to nominate women as vice chairmanship candidates in the 21 local government areas in the state as well as nomination of elected women councillors as council leaders in all the local government councils of the state.

The governor equally called on the leadership of the

party to engage in wide consultations with stakeholders to produce candidates that will represent the party in the 239 wards and the 21 local government areas, stressing that the APC must avoid imposition of candidates ahead of the local government election, as he assured the people of the state that the local government election will be peaceful, free and fair.

Governor Ododo also commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his timely interventions in critical sectors at the subnational level, noted that the judgement of the Supreme Court on Local Government Autonomy is a relieve for his administration as the state Joint Account Committee now has no jurisdiction over the local government fund, stressing that fund meant for local government areas from the federation account allocation committee will now go directly to the local government areas.



Ododo

I'm here to lead, battle against criminals and win the war - Governor Ododo

...Commissions Police Quick Response office

VICTORIA. NNAKAIKE

Ahmed Usman Ododo, governor of Kogi State, has disclosed that his objective as the Chief Security Officer of the state was to lead and win the war against criminals in the state.

Ododo disclosed this in Lokoja while commissioning the office complex of the Quick Response Unit of the Nigeria Police, Kogi State Command built by the Kogi State Government under Governor Ododo within 90 days. He noted that his administration was not one that will be preoccupied by trying to deal with security challenges without an end, but stressed that he was decisive in taking the fight to criminal elements' hideout in the state with a view to flushing them out completely.

"I am not here to do my best. I am here to defeat criminals. We are winning the war against insecurity and we are

very intentional about our work to strengthen the state's security architecture," he said.

Ododo equally restated his administration's unwavering commitment to combating crime and ensuring the safety and security of lives and property in Kogi State as he assured that nothing will be spared to guarantee safety and security in every part of the state.

He stressed that the Metropolitan Quick Response operation was a proactive step to enhance security and build upon the solid foundation of the state's security architecture which started under the immediate past administration of Governor Yahaya Bello.

He commended the dedication and sacrifices of security agencies in the state and pledged to continue prioritising technological enablers to enhance intelligence gathering capabilities and to help in combating emerging security threats.

Ododo also acknowledged

President Bola Tinubu's commitment to reversing security challenges nationwide, expressed the full support of the government and people of Kogi State to the President in the fight against terrorists and criminals in the country.

The governor called on citizens of the state to remain vigilant and to provide credible and timely information to security agencies, and support the ongoing efforts to eradicate criminal elements from every part of the state, adding that the Metropolitan Quick Response Squad aims to ensure a safe environment for all residents and visitors in Kogi State, with a focus on 24-hour response capability, enhanced intelligence gathering, and community-based approach to policing.

The Quick Response Squad is a security initiative in partnership with the Rapid Response Squad of the Nigeria Police and the state's Joint Task Force to tackle criminal activities in Kogi State.



CORNERSTONE INSURANCE PLC.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

The Directors present the summary financial information of Cornerstone Insurance PLC for the year ended 31 December 2023. These summary financial information are derived from the full consolidated and separate financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 and are not the full consolidated and separate financial statements of the Company. The full annual consolidated and separate financial statements, from which these summary financial information were derived, will be delivered to the Corporate Affairs Commission with in the required deadline. The Company's Auditors issued an unmodified audit opinion on the full consolidated and separate financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2023 from which these summary financial information were derived.

| STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|--|---|
| | Group 31 Dec 2023 N'000 | Group 31 Dec 2022 N'000 *Restated | Group 1 Jan 2022 N'000 *Restated | Company 31 Dec 2023 N'000 | Company 31 Dec 2022 N'000 *Restated | Company 1 Jan 2022 N'000 *Restated |
| ASSETS | | | | | | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 19,217,453 | 10,885,696 | 14,402,330 | 9,265,799 | 5,957,724 | 9,732,527 |
| Financial Assets | | | | | | |
| -measured at FVOCI | 25,536,235 | 11,416,795 | 5,887,509 | 24,128,751 | 10,407,765 | 4,962,370 |
| -measured at FVTPL | 10,849,481 | 7,984,599 | 9,065,439 | 10,849,481 | 7,984,599 | 9,065,439 |
| -measured at Amortized cost | 8,077,587 | 4,097,350 | 3,596,926 | 133,998 | 137,052 | 293,282 |
| Insurance Contract assets | | | | | | |
| Trade Receivables | 271,955 | 607,342 | 300,788 | 207,729 | 545,407 | 255,793 |
| Other receivables and prepayments | 1,506,257 | 774,065 | 1,273,809 | 2,123,762 | 919,474 | 1,213,182 |
| Reinsurance Contract assets | 10,483,865 | 8,039,297 | 8,990,625 | 8,543,256 | 6,861,272 | 8,171,385 |
| Investment in joint venture | - | 510 | 510 | - | 280 | 280 |
| Deferred Tax Assets | 861,211 | 861,211 | 861,211 | 861,211 | 861,211 | 861,211 |
| Investment in Subsidiaries | - | - | - | 3,620,847 | 3,620,847 | 3,620,847 |
| Investment Properties | 765,000 | 680,000 | 625,000 | - | - | - |
| Property and Equipment | 3,731,447 | 2,977,613 | 1,838,314 | 1,504,929 | 1,191,083 | 582,447 |
| Intangible assets | 8,061 | 6,266 | 11,805 | 343 | 1,129 | 3,397 |
| Statutory deposits | 1,200,000 | 1,200,000 | 1,200,000 | 500,000 | 500,000 | 500,000 |
| Total Assets | 82,508,551 | 49,530,744 | 48,054,266 | 61,740,105 | 38,987,843 | 39,262,160 |
| LIABILITIES | | | | | | |
| Insurance contract liabilities | 35,174,039 | 26,236,868 | 24,124,421 | 31,211,425 | 23,818,376 | 22,100,346 |
| Investment Contract liabilities | 800,145 | 668,581 | 721,499 | 479,124 | 249,915 | 254,197 |
| Other Insurance related liabilities | 5,118,697 | 2,623,056 | 2,504,861 | 4,451,110 | 2,279,283 | 1,673,898 |
| Other payables and accruals | 3,651,199 | 942,956 | 1,058,081 | 2,458,468 | 809,480 | 790,445 |
| Current tax liabilities | 599,630 | 462,899 | 475,575 | 433,268 | 283,854 | 345,704 |
| Deferred tax liabilities | 3,235,097 | 331,604 | 88,026 | 809,794 | 175,788 | 23,211 |
| Employees benefit obligations | 10,972 | 19,493 | 13,553 | 10,972 | 17,469 | 11,529 |
| Total Liabilities | 48,589,779 | 31,285,457 | 28,986,015 | 39,854,162 | 27,634,165 | 25,199,329 |
| EQUITY | | | | | | |
| Share Capital | 9,083,196 | 9,083,196 | 9,083,197 | 9,083,196 | 9,083,196 | 9,083,196 |
| Share premium | 183,165 | 183,165 | 183,164 | 183,165 | 183,165 | 183,165 |
| Treasury Shares | (67,130) | (67,130) | (67,130) | (67,130) | (67,130) | (67,130) |
| Contingency reserve | 7,829,441 | 5,559,616 | 4,735,167 | 5,860,637 | 4,508,692 | 3,844,841 |
| Fair value and other reserves | 2,301,359 | 477,971 | 411,331 | 682,519 | (440,531) | 86,703 |
| Retained earnings | 14,127,150 | 2,695,544 | 4,428,247 | 6,143,556 | (1,913,714) | 932,056 |
| Shareholder's funds | 33,457,181 | 17,932,361 | 18,773,976 | 21,885,943 | 11,353,678 | 14,062,831 |
| Non-controlling interest | 461,591 | 312,926 | 294,274 | - | - | - |
| Total Equity | 33,918,772 | 18,245,287 | 19,068,250 | 21,885,943 | 11,353,678 | 14,062,831 |
| Total Equity & Liabilities | 82,508,551 | 49,530,744 | 48,054,266 | 61,740,105 | 38,987,843 | 39,262,160 |

The full financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on May 24, 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Mr Segan Adebunji Chairman FRC/2014/ICAN/00000008434 | Mr Stanley Nzedu Ag. Head Finance FRC/2023/PRO/ICAN/001/564971 | Mr Stephen Alangbo Managing Director/CEO FRC/2017/CIIN/00000016217 |
|---|---|---|

| STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS | | | | | |
|--|------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Group 2023 N'000 | Group 2022 *Restated N'000 | Company 2023 N'000 | Company 2022 *Restated N'000 | Company 2023 N'000 |
| Cash flow from operating activities | | | | | |
| Insurance premium received | 31,201,952 | 20,783,587 | 24,582,082 | 17,211,778 | 17,211,778 |
| Premium Deposits received | 2,539,782 | 2,935,080 | 2,367,831 | 2,535,080 | 2,535,080 |
| Deposit liabilities - contributions during the year | 640,105 | 555,638 | 487,338 | 287,622 | 287,622 |
| Deposit liabilities - withdrawals during the year | (537,860) | (627,939) | (287,448) | (311,287) | (311,287) |
| Reinsurance premium paid | (13,952,994) | (9,416,234) | (10,162,129) | (7,525,258) | (7,525,258) |
| Commission received | 180,150 | 264,182 | 128,598 | 216,180 | 216,180 |
| Claims paid during the year | (11,804,700) | (10,029,878) | (9,781,174) | (8,969,467) | (8,969,467) |
| Reinsurance claims recovered | 2,266,821 | 2,076,470 | 1,833,491 | 1,870,929 | 1,870,929 |
| Other operating income | 21,010 | 64,890 | 7,286 | 32,248 | 32,248 |
| Personnel and employee expenses | (3,692,570) | (1,708,984) | (2,976,669) | (1,269,246) | (1,269,246) |
| Other operating cash payments | (2,288,694) | (2,425,561) | (1,975,043) | (2,119,810) | (2,119,810) |
| | 4,573,003 | 2,471,251 | 4,224,162 | 1,958,769 | 1,958,769 |
| Income tax paid | (223,588) | (248,233) | (96,947) | (173,843) | (173,843) |
| Net cash flows from operating activities | 4,349,415 | 2,223,018 | 4,127,215 | 1,784,926 | 1,784,926 |
| Cash flows from investing activities: | | | | | |
| Interest income received | 2,103,866 | 612,632 | 1,698,114 | 773,001 | 773,001 |
| Dividend received | 413,747 | 344,447 | 329,691 | 273,159 | 273,159 |
| Rent received | 4,833 | 6,500 | - | - | - |
| Purchase of property and equipment | (599,613) | (270,052) | (374,376) | (259,586) | (259,586) |
| Purchase of intangibles | (7,435) | (319) | - | - | - |
| Redemptions on loans to policyholders | 168,974 | 63,756 | 168,974 | 63,756 | 63,756 |
| Proceeds from sale of property and equipment | 33,851 | 9,068 | 911 | 4,016 | 4,016 |
| Purchases of Financial assets | (5,164,396) | (10,179,569) | (4,294,172) | (8,335,217) | (8,335,217) |
| Proceeds from sale/disposal/redemption of financial assets | 1,253,898 | 4,592,654 | 1,192,811 | 2,847,805 | 2,847,805 |
| Additions to loans to policy holders | (56,625) | (62,334) | (56,625) | (62,334) | (62,334) |
| Net cash flows from investing activities | (1,848,900) | (4,883,217) | (1,334,672) | (4,695,400) | (4,695,400) |
| Cash flows from financing activities: | | | | | |
| Dividend paid | - | (908,320) | - | (908,320) | (908,320) |
| Deposit for shares | - | - | (1,200,000) | - | - |
| Finance cost | - | (630) | - | - | - |
| Net cash flows from financing activities | - | (908,950) | (1,200,000) | (908,320) | (908,320) |
| Net Increase/ (decrease) in cash & cash equivalents | 2,500,515 | (3,569,149) | 1,592,543 | (3,818,794) | (3,818,794) |
| Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year | 10,885,696 | 14,402,330 | 5,957,724 | 9,732,527 | 9,732,527 |
| Effect of exchange rate changes on cash & cash equivalents | 5,831,242 | 52,515 | 1,715,532 | 43,991 | 43,991 |
| Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year | 19,217,453 | 10,885,696 | 9,265,799 | 5,957,724 | 5,957,724 |

| STATEMENTS OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME | | | | | |
|---|------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Group 2023 N'000 | Group 2022 *Restated N'000 | Company 2023 N'000 | Company 2021 *Restated N'000 | Company 2023 N'000 |
| Insurance revenue | 25,914,108 | 20,484,375 | 20,006,981 | 17,018,350 | 17,018,350 |
| Insurance service expenses | (17,952,762) | (10,871,859) | (14,141,057) | (9,766,901) | (9,766,901) |
| Net expenses from reinsurance contracts held | (8,298,907) | (8,357,202) | (5,957,538) | (7,263,549) | (7,263,549) |
| Insurance service result | (337,561) | 1,255,314 | (91,614) | (12,101) | (12,101) |
| Interest revenue using effective interest rate method | 2,200,230 | 1,765,037 | 1,210,606 | 1,255,590 | 1,255,590 |
| Net trading income | 4,166,780 | 85,415 | 4,166,780 | 45,030 | 45,030 |
| Other investment income | 498,089 | 405,985 | 334,015 | 273,159 | 273,159 |
| Net gain from foreign exchange | 17,318,191 | 606,356 | 10,080,019 | 399,733 | 399,733 |
| Gain on deposit administration/ investment contracts | 382,764 | 319,156 | 382,764 | 319,156 | 319,156 |
| Impairment losses on financial assets | (55,786) | (173,310) | (12,651) | (167,539) | (167,539) |
| Investment returns | 24,510,268 | 3,008,640 | 16,161,533 | 2,125,129 | 2,125,129 |
| Net finance expenses from insurance contracts issued | (1,030,184) | (991,501) | (1,030,184) | (991,501) | (991,501) |
| Net finance income from reinsurance contracts held | 11,684 | 163,298 | 11,684 | 163,298 | 163,298 |
| Net insurance finance expenses | (1,018,500) | (828,203) | (1,018,500) | (828,203) | (828,203) |
| Net financial result | 23,491,768 | 2,180,437 | 15,143,032 | 1,296,926 | 1,296,926 |
| Other operating income | 21,010 | 64,890 | 7,286 | 32,248 | 32,248 |
| Share of profit in joint venture | 361 | - | - | - | - |
| Management Expenses | (6,094,246) | (3,111,885) | (4,782,122) | (2,376,812) | (2,376,812) |
| Other Finance cost | - | (630) | - | - | - |
| Profit/(loss) before minimum tax | 17,081,332 | 388,726 | 10,276,582 | (1,059,739) | (1,059,739) |
| Minimum tax | (212,322) | (69,280) | (143,082) | (69,280) | (69,280) |
| Profit/(loss) before tax | 16,869,010 | 318,846 | 10,133,500 | (1,129,019) | (1,129,019) |
| Income tax expense | (3,030,249) | (302,457) | (724,286) | (144,580) | (144,580) |
| Profit/(Loss) for the year | 13,838,762 | 16,389 | 9,409,215 | (1,273,599) | (1,273,599) |
| Attributable to shareholders | 13,701,431 | 65 | 9,409,215 | (1,273,599) | (1,273,599) |
| Attributable to non-controlling interest holders | 137,330 | 16,324 | - | - | - |
| | 13,838,762 | 16,389 | 9,409,215 | (1,273,599) | (1,273,599) |
| Other Comprehensive income: | | | | | |
| Items that are or may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss | | | | | |
| Net change in fair value | (620,249) | (1,434,250) | (620,249) | (1,434,042) | (1,434,042) |
| Expected credit losses | 66,960 | 296 | 66,960 | 296 | 296 |
| | (553,289) | (1,433,954) | (553,289) | (1,433,746) | (1,433,746) |
| Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss | | | | | |
| Net change in fair value | 2,005,314 | 534,016 | 1,559,339 | 450,125 | 450,125 |
| Revaluation gain on property and equipment | 413,353 | 1,073,976 | 130,000 | 507,097 | 507,097 |
| Related tax | (41,990) | (107,398) | (13,000) | (50,710) | (50,710) |
| | 2,376,677 | 1,500,594 | 1,676,339 | 906,512 | 906,512 |
| Other Comprehensive Income, net of taxes | 1,823,388 | 66,640 | 1,123,050 | (527,234) | (527,234) |
| Total Comprehensive Income for the year | 15,662,150 | 83,029 | 10,532,265 | (1,800,833) | (1,800,833) |
| Attributable to shareholders | 15,513,485 | 64,377 | 10,532,265 | (1,800,833) | (1,800,833) |
| Attributable to non-controlling interest | 148,665 | 16,652 | - | - | - |
| | 15,662,150 | 83,029 | 10,532,265 | (1,800,833) | (1,800,833) |
| Basic and diluted earning per share (Kobo) | 76 | - | 52 | (7) | (7) |

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
To the Shareholders of Cornerstone Insurance Plc.
Report on the Summary Financial Information.

Opinion
The summary financial information, which comprise:
• the consolidated and separate statements of financial position as at 31 December, 2023;
• the consolidated and separate statements of profit or loss and other comprehensive income; and
• the consolidated and separate statements of cash flows for the year are derived from the audited consolidated and separate statements financial statements of Cornerstone Insurance Plc for the year ended December 31, 2023.

In our opinion, the accompanying summary financial information are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited consolidated and separate statements financial statements, in accordance with the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020 and the Insurance Act, 2003.

Summary Financial Information
The summary financial information do not contain all the disclosures required by the IFRS Accounting Standards as issued by the International Accounting Standards Board, the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020, the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (Amendment) Act, 2023, the Insurance Act, 2003 and relevant National Insurance Commission of Nigeria ("NAICOM") Circulars. Reading the summary financial information and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited consolidated and separate financial statements and the auditor's report thereon.

The summary financial information and the audited financial statements do not reflect the effects of events that occurred subsequent to the date of our report on the audited financial statements.

The Audited Financial Statements and Our Report Thereon
We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited consolidated and separate financial statements in our report dated 2 July 2024. That report also includes the communication of key audit matters. Key audit matters are those matters that, in our professional judgment, were of most significance in our audit of the financial statements of the current period.

Directors' Responsibility for the Summary Financial Information
The Directors are responsible for the preparation of the summary financial information in accordance with the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020 and the Insurance Act, 2003.

Auditor's Responsibility
Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the summary financial information are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited consolidated and separate financial statements based on our procedures, which

News

FG trains 56 UBE master trainers in Ibadan

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan

The Federal Government has trained 56 master trainers for the recently launched Universal Basic Education (UBE) Effective Schools Programme, selected from states across the Southern part of the country, including Kwara and Kogi states.

Hamid Bobboyi, executive secretary, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), who announced this in Ibadan during a 5-day training session for the participants, said that the programme marks a significant step towards enhancing educational quality and accessibility.

Bobboyi emphasized that the programme is part of UBEC's broader efforts to address the dual challenges of the learning crisis and the high number of out-of-school children.

He said that UBEC has taken steps to achieve an effective UBE programme in 111 schools, adding that there are three UBE Effective Schools per senatorial zones and three in the FCT, selected as pilot for the programme.

The training of master train-

ers, according to him, is one of the activities in the implementation of the ESP.

"From here, you will be expected to cascade the training to the teachers in the 111 schools. This is in furtherance of the Commission's plans to promote smart education at basic education level and lay an enduring foundation for the development of relevant technological skills to cope with the 21st century

world.

"The Effective School Programme was designed to progressively improve instructional tools and practices to maximise the potential of both educators and students within the educational system.

"This initiative introduces a new perspective and practice in learning across the 111 schools previously designated as UBEC E-learning centers," Bobboyi

stated.

He further noted that the schools have been equipped with ICT equipment and alternative power supply to enable technology-supported teaching and learning.

"To this end, the Commission has established 37 Smart Schools, one in each state and FCT, with some already operational. A Digital Resource Centre (DRC) has been built and

commissioned", he added.

Also speaking, Nureni Aderemi Adeniran, executive chairman, OYOSUBEB, highlighted that the Board under his supervision has keyed into the smart education system initiated by UBEC.

He added that the Board is currently recruiting with the aim to employ 7,000 primary school teachers who are digitally literate.

Adeniran maintained that the efficient operation of the smart schools in the state will enhance the overall effectiveness of UBE delivery by ensuring that all educational programmes meet and maintain minimum standards.

Mayowa Aleshin, director, Teachers' Development, UBEC, said that the UBE Effective Schools Programme represents a substantial investment in Nigeria's educational future, with the aim to bridge gaps in learning and foster an environment where every child can thrive academically.

Meanwhile, the Oyo State Post Primary School Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM), has said that a total of 62,000 persons scaled the application exercise for the computer-based test for teaching and non-teaching recruitment exercise. The state government recently approved the recruitment of 7,500 teachers, and 3,000 non-teaching staff members into the state teaching service, as part of efforts to improve the post-primary education sector.

To fill the available positions, TESCOM has fixed Monday, July 29- August 2, 2024, for the computer-based test (CBT) for the applicants.



L-R: Member, Nigerian Institution of Civil Engineers (NICE), Engr Okodugha Dauda Aluyah; General Manager, Lagos State Public Works and Corporation, Engr Tokunbo Ajanaku; National Chairman, NICE, Engr Virgilus Ezugu; Chairman, Organizing Committee, Engr Robbie Owivry; Past Chairman, NICE, Engr Emeka Ibeh, during the Construction Expo Africa, Organized by Nigerian Institution of Civil Engineers (NICE), Construction Expo Africa (CEA), Construction & Engineering Digest (CED) held at Landmark event Center in Lagos

Stakeholders divided over proposed NDIC Amendment Bill

GODSGIFT ONYEDINEFU

Critical stakeholders in the banking, financial, and insurance sectors have raised opposing views and concerns over a bill to amend the Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) Act No. 63, 2023. The bill aims to enhance the Corporation's effectiveness, independence, and autonomy.

The Bill which is sponsored by Tokunbo Abiru, chairman Senate Committee on Banking, Insurance and other Financial Institutions have passed second reading at the Senate.

Among several proposed amendment, one of the most contentious is the removal of the "Concurrence" role for the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and substituting it with a rather "collaborative" role in an attempt to make the NDIC more independent in taking decisions bordering on its policy objectives. While the Central Bank of Nigeria noted its opposition against this amendment during a public hearing on the Bill at the Senate on Thursday, the bankers directors and other stakeholders however endorsed it.

The CBN tackled proposed amendment to sections 2, 3 and 4 of the principal Act substituting the word "collaboration" for the word "concurrence".

Section 2 of the principal Act which provides the Corporation shall protect depositors by providing an orderly means of compensation in the event of failure of their insured institutions or the inability of such insured institutions to make payment to depositors "provided that in the latter case such payment shall only be

made with the concurrence of the Central Bank of Nigeria" was deleted.

Also Section 2 subsection C (iii) which stipulates "with the concurrence of the Central Bank of Nigeria, providing a framework for the resolution of failing insured institutions." The word "concurrence" was substituted with collaboration.

John Onoja, acting director, financial policy and regulation department of CBN the meaning of Collaboration means that NDIC takes the decision and collaborates with CBN, but in

the situation with concurrence they must first of all, get the input of the CBN, rather than to just collaborate with the NDIC on its own decision.

Conversely, Mustafa Chike-Obi, chairman of the Bank Directors Association of Nigeria, applauded the removal of the CBN concurrence requirement in Section 32. He noted this change aligns with the NDIC's mandate to independently regulate insured deposit liabilities.

However, Pius Olanrewaju, president of the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria, urged the Senate to restore the concurrence requirement.

The Financial Services Regulation Coordinating Committee (FSRCC), in its memoranda to the Senate Committee also protested amendment to section 16, increasing the capital base of the NDIC from 50 billion to 500 billion which shall be subscribed and held only by the federal government.

"The FSRCC is suggesting to retain the current authorised share capital of 50 billion because NDIC does not require such huge capital to operate as it is not in the business of lending or creating risk assets.

"Increasing authorised share capital from 50 billion to 500 billion and fully owned by the federal government render the additional capital redundant as it would not be yielding the required return on investment.



UNICEF, NPC to digitally register 9.3m under-five children in 2024

IDRIS MOMOH, Benin

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in partnership with the Nigeria Population Commission (NPC) said it targeted to register 9,362,399 under five Nigerian children digitally in 2024.

Dennis Onoise, UNICEF Child Protection Specialist, disclosed this recently at a two-day Media Dialogue for E-birth registration in South West, including Edo State in Lagos State organised in collaboration with Lagos State Government.

Noise said that out of the 9,362,399 children under-five children, 4,626,417 would be under one.

He noted that available statistics revealed that 78.90 percent of people in the rural areas registered their children during birth than those in the urban areas with 44.8 percent.

He said to achieve the objectives of e-birth registration of children in the country, there was a need for UNICEF and NPC to partner primary health centres.

He opined that the integration of e-birth registration with the National Identification Number (NIN) would go a long way in providing adequate data in the country.

While adding that there are 4,000 registration centres across the 774 local government areas in the country, he posited 2022 population statistics showed Nigeria had an estimated population of 216,783,381.

He said that out of the figure 16,705,671 are under five children while 3,554,005 are under-one children.

Noise further added that according to the statistics, of the 164 million unregistered children worldwide more than half representing about 91 million lives in Africa which is 56 percent of the unregistered under five children globally.

The UNICEF Child Protection Specialist disclosed that the organisation had in 2023 worked in 20 states and would also flag off the programme in Ekiti, Edo, Ondo, Osun, Ogun and Oyo states before the end of July. "We worked in 20 states in 2023, and we plan to add five other states in 2024. We intend to flag off the e-birth registration in States like Ekiti, Edo, Ondo, Osun, Ogun and Oyo states," he said.

Earlier, Celine Lafoucriere, chief head of UNICEF field office for South West Nigeria, described media as a crucial partners in support of the agency's mission to ensure that every child in Nigeria is given the right to legal identity.

"Your (journalists) platforms are critical for raising awareness with us for educating the public and holding stakeholders accountable to taking care of those children, making sure they have a legal identity and access to basic services.

"Without child registration, the children remain invisible to our governments, making it a very big challenge to plan adequately for the children's rights.

"So, your discussions and the field work will be centered around that transformative potential of E-birth registration. E-birth registration is a formidable opportunity," she added.

Lafoucriere added that accurate and timely data from birth registrations would allow the agency to monitor the progress that is collectively made across several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

She said the SDGs include elimination of poverty and hunger to promote quality education and reduce inequities, adding that journalists' roles are "crucial and cannot be overstated." On his part, Bamidele Sadiku, the National Population Commission (NPC) Director in Lagos State, opined that e-birth registration platform would provide better lives for Nigerians and prevent double birth and death registrations in the country.

News Feature

Gas flaring: Nigeria must take decisive action now - NOSDRA DG

...As industry stakeholders brainstorm on way forward

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

Industry operators came together in the week with regulators and other stakeholders to assess the journey so far in the much-desired gas flare-down necessities and ever-changing targets.

It provided a huge opportunity to the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) to hand down perhaps one of the strongest policy declarations; that Nigeria must take decisive action on gas flaring, now.

According to Rivers-born Chukwuemeka Woke, an engineer, technocrat, and the Director-General (DG) of NOSDRA, the decisions the stakeholders would take at the Abuja and other such forums and the actions taken would unequivocally shape the future of Nigeria's environment, the economy, and the health and well-being of Nigerians and our communities.

Gas flare with its attendant methane emission pushes Nigeria to 39th in global pollution rating with China topping the chart with its over 14 billion tons of carbon dioxide (Co2) and Mexico the 10th with less than one billion. These contribute to greenhouse effects and global warming that have caused upheavals in nature such as melting of ice into oceans and change in seasons, bush fires especially in the US, flooding around the world, and much more.

This is why Woke, while speaking at the 3rd National Extractives Dialogue 2024 (NED2024) in Abuja, Nigeria, said Nigeria must act, now.

Experts including Fyneface Dumnemene Fyneface, the Executive Director of Youths and Environmental Advocacy Centre (YEAC-Nigeria), dug into the history of gas flaring in and challenges that kept the gas burning. They all agreed that Nigeria must be freed from this menace because much harm has been heaped on Nigeria over the decades.

The NOSDRA chief said the theme: "Gas Flare Reduction: Catalyst for Accelerating Nigeria's Path to Net-Zero Emissions and Sustainable Development," represents the way forward because the same gas that is needed badly in the industry to support the NLNG and other gas initiatives is being flared wastefully into the atmosphere to return to cause damage instead of create wealth.

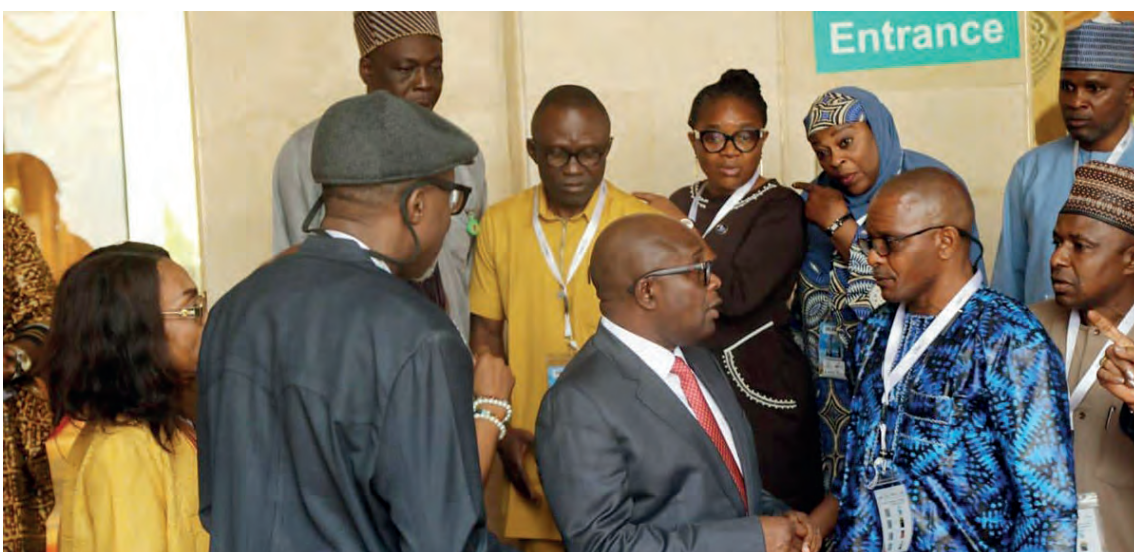
Coming from Emohua LGA of Rivers State where such menace is prominent, the DG seemed to speak from the heart to a problem that has ravaged his state and region, and harming his people and loved ones before his eyes.

He thus lamented thus: "Today, we are not simply discussing an environmental issue; we are confronting a fundamental challenge that profoundly impacts our national development and our global commitments.

"The persistent practice of gas flaring has marred the breathtaking landscape of Nigeria's abundant natural resources. It serves as a symbol of



Chukwuemeka Woke, DG of NOSDRA, delivering keynote address



Chukwuemeka Woke, DG, NOSDRA (middle) with stakeholders at NED24

the missed prospects for harnessing energy, fostering economic growth, and preserving the environment. The well-documented environmental and health ramifications of gas flaring have far-reaching effects, deteriorating air quality, and public health while also aggravating the global climate crisis. Nevertheless, amidst this seemingly insurmountable challenge lies a remarkable opportunity for groundbreaking innovation, meaningful collaboration, and tangible progress."

He benchmarked his position in line with global climate change mitigation efforts and the 'Renewed Hope Agenda' of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's commitment to end gas flaring, reduce methane emissions, and enhance environmental sustainability in the country.

He said the administration rather sees the transformative potential of curbing gas flaring, saying the view positions gas flare reduction not just as an environmental necessity but as a catalyst for broader sustainable development and a key driver towards Nigeria's net-zero emissions goal. "By tackling this issue head-on, we can unlock new pathways for energy efficiency, economic diversification, and community resilience which would in turn boost economic growth and job creation in line with Mr. President's 8-point Agenda."

He gave himself a task, saying: "As the DG of NOSDRA, I am acutely aware of the intricate link between environmental protection and sustainable development. Our agency is dedicated to ensuring that the exploitation of our natural resources does not come at the expense of our environment. The reduction of gas flaring is integral to this mission, aligning with our broader mandate to safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of oil and gas activities."

The former chief of staff in the Government House of Rivers State

Each of you brings valuable perspectives and expertise to this discussion. It is through our collective efforts and shared commitment that we can develop effective strategies and innovative solutions to significantly reduce gas flaring in Nigeria

under then Gov Nyesom Wike (now FCT Minister) situated the day's dialogue as one to bring together a diverse array of stakeholders-government officials, industry leaders, environmental advocates, and community representatives. "Each of you brings valuable perspectives and expertise to this discussion. It is through our collective efforts and shared commitment that we can develop effective strategies and innovative solutions to significantly reduce gas flaring in Nigeria."

He demanded a focus on actionable outcomes that can drive real change and progress. "Our goal is not just to discuss but to act, to implement, and to transform." He poured encomiums of those behind the effort such as to the co-organizer, the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative,

This must be why Spaces For Change (SPACES4C) said the NED2024 promised to be a pivotal gathering of crucial stakeholders in the oil and gas industry, aimed at discussing strategies, practical solutions, and innovative approaches to align Nigeria's sustainability goals with its global energy landscape role.

The third edition of this annual national convening brought together about 150 stakeholders from the extractive industry in West Africa, including policymakers, regulators, international and indigenous extractive corporations, academia, media, civil society organizations, federal and state parliamentarians, and host communities.

Together, they converged to explore pathways for strengthening accountability and transparent management of oil, gas, and mineral resources in the sub-region.

Jointly organized by Spaces for Change, Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), and the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), and supported by the Ford Foundation, NED2024 offered stakeholders a constructive platform to discuss means of propelling gas flare down, carbon footprint reduction, and sustainable development in host communities.

This is because Nigeria's commitment to achieving a 'just transition' to net-zero emissions had garnered significant attention on the global stage. This commitment is said to be evidenced by the establishment of frontline advocacy initiatives following the signing of the Just Transition Declaration and the announcement of the ambitious 2060 net-zero goal at COP26. As part of this commitment, Nigeria's Climate Change Plan sets a 2030 target the cessation of gas burning as a byproduct of oil production and the reduction of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.

Recently, at COP28, Nigeria unveiled ambitious plans to cut its carbon emissions in half through the implementation of the Nigeria Gas Flare Commercialisation Programme (NG-FCP). The recent Abuja convention provided a critical platform for stakeholders to contribute to the realization of such ambitious goals, explore and evaluate the intricacies surrounding gas flare-down and carbon footprint reduction, and develop actionable strategies to propel Nigeria towards its sustainability goals.

The outcome was expected to develop strategies to mitigate climate change and preserve local ecosystems through effective gas flare-down and carbon footprint reduction initiatives.

They were also expected to strengthen regulatory frameworks and enhance compliance with national and international environmental standards to reduce gas flaring and promote sustainable practices.

Others were to unlock economic value from flared gas and reduce operational costs while promoting sustainable economic development and diversification in Nigeria's extractive industry.

and the funders of the event, the Ford Foundation through Space4Change, as well as the speakers and participants for their dedication and commitment to the important cause. "Together, we can work towards reducing gas flaring and creating a sustainable and prosperous future for Nigeria"

The enthusiasm demonstrated by the DG must have spurred some of the experts and NGOs to appeal to NOSDRA to take up the task of carrying out an annual assessment of the journey so far so the stakeholders would know who has moved from one point to another in the flare-out journey.

Background:

According to Victoria Ibezim-Ohaeri, Executive Director of 'Spaces For Change', the focus at the moment is how Nigerian catalyze (fasten) gas flare reduction and carbon footprint reduction to foster truly sustainable development. Nigeria is high on the table of Co2 polluters especially due to methane emission as well as anthropogenic (human-induced) pollution. The human-induced factor is said to be as high as 60% and experts say reducing 45% of it could lead to saving of thousands of lives lost and millions in hospital situations in Nigeria per year, according to reports from AfriTAL group which held sessions in Port Harcourt recently.

News Feature

Rivers' talents better export assets, says investor

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

The talent base in Rivers State could be a better asset base especially for export, an investor in the real estate sector, the Mayor of Housing, My-ACE China, has said.

The investor, who is the CEO of the Housing and Construction Mayor Limited, spoke after he listened to the Rivers State Government Choir last weekend where he was later installed as the patron and honorary member of the Ensemble.

The man known as a real estate success strategist said it was sad that what seemed to ooze out from the state were oil/gas and politics laced with violence instead of talents that abound.

He gave a message about the place of talents in the state, saying: "My message is that Nigeria has the best of the best in talent, art, music, and culture. What is wrong is that we have been carried away by politics and eking out a living that we tend to neglect these things.

"Neglect leads to death and whatever you neglect dies. So, my message to Nigerians is, don't neglect the rich heritage of where we come from; especially our skills and talents. You will be surprised how much more that would get us to our destination than politics and the like."

Some of the talents in the music and entertainment industry from Rivers State include Mercy Johnsons, Hilda Dokubo, Yibo Koko, Julius Agwu, Duncan Mighty, Sam Dede, the Isakaba man, and of late, Burna Boy. But many may never know that a big voice asset is an ensemble in the womb of power, the Brick House, which is the Government House of Rivers State. Yet, many only reckon with power, crisis, and threat from the seat of power over the years.

Reacting after his installation, China said he was very privileged to be so conferred with the award of Patron of the Government House Choir because the onus and responsibility of taking the best part and the best light from Rivers State to the rest of the world is an honour to him.

"And, it is a privilege I find very rare. It is rather like a spiritual conferment on me than a choral role from this or any other choral group for that matter. I feel like a man called into ecclesiastical mission.

"This will spur me to, not only make sure they get all the resources and personnel they need to be world class, but to ensure that they are seen as world class. This is because we live in a 21st century reality that nobody sees or values you if you are not known. It is my onus to make sure that this beautiful choir in this Government House in this beautiful entity called Rivers State is known all over the world as the best of what Rivers State has to export."

Giving insight into the status of the Ensemble in the Government House, the Music Director, Enitoun Ezekiel Iyalla,



Choir in session



Leaders of the Govt House Choir

said the umbrella body of the Government House Choir is the Riv-Harmonious Mission Ensemble.

He went on: "The Rivers State Government, at the initial stage, requested we prepare for them in the services of the Chapel 50-man Ensemble (Choir, Band & Mini Orchestra). At the final stage of actualisation, after the construction of the Chapel, the available space was 26, for only Choir & Band.

"From the pool of over 60 strong singers and instrumentalists, we service the music arm of the Government House Chapel Ensemble, based on the available space of 26.

"The Choir moves out when representing the State Government or on an exclusive Government Programme. Also, in very selective outings in stand-up performances or own concerts.

"However, for exclusively private performances, we go by our umbrella name - Riv-Harmonious Mission Ensemble."

The coming of the Mayor of Housing is expected to expose

the talents globally and attract more value.

Some of the members of the Ensemble talked on why and how the Mayor of Housing, a businessman, was found fit for inclusion into the exclusive place.

Asueiza Ezekiel Iyalla (Alto Singer) said: "In the Mayor of Housing, we saw somebody full of respect to God. We see someone that can bring value to this choir. We only had a very short meeting and he said things that would amaze us about things that can bring value to this project and this state. Working with him, we will go higher and higher.

"We appeal to other Nigerians to come and see the roles they can play to lift the talents of Rivers people. We have the best organist in Nigeria, now in Germany. If people come in, they can see exportable talents."

His colleague, Mike Julius (Bass singer), said the Mayor of Housing, despite being in real estate, finds time for God.

"He takes out time to commune with his Maker. He is also a singer. So, we bring him

closer to see the talents we have in this state. Today, he has joined the choir of the Government House and he came to see what he can do to lift it higher," Julius said.

Yet, Kate Ogan, another member said they saw a lot of qualities in My-ACE China including his exploits promoting human capacity development in Rivers State.

"When we identified these qualities in him, we resolved after investigations to bring him closer.

"It is clear that no one person can do everything for a society or a state, so we need others to help to develop people. Let people take a cue from My-ACE China in seeking ways to develop the society.

"Some people are usually scared of business people but we are comfortable with him. We couldn't have just brought him or anybody in without background checks or investigations. Each of us was also screened before we were accepted. We also pray before we touch anyone. We prayed and we got the leading of the spirit to go ahead."



Mayor of Housing

On assessment and comparison, the group is said unique in their own way, boasting of some of the best singers and instrumentalists.

Ezekiel said: "Consequently, our strongest uniqueness is in our culture of discipline and maturity in musical discipline and interpretation. We are currently the defending champions in the Niger Delta Choral Competition organised by the Bayelsa State Government, with the support of the NDDC."

No doubt, with the right needed support, we are looking forward to the African and Global arena, as we have all it takes to be there.

"Uniqueness: Spirituality and musical interpretation, owning every song we sing and interpreting same with utmost dexterity and near accuracy. We don't perform, we minister.

Help means a lot to us. Our existence has been centred on help, first from the Almighty God on whom we have our existence, and from few individuals in their capacity. But having the right backing, the sky will be our starting point.

"Unfortunately, that is what has been lagging in these parts, hence most of our few talents have decided to relocate to Lagos and Abuja, where they believe there is the right support and investment for development.

"Yes, professionals in terms of singing and occupation. We have in our midst graduates in diverse fields as well as career professionals - Business men, chartered accountants (ICAN), On Air Personalities (OAPs), entrepreneurs, etc.

"Some of us have more than 30 years of singing and instrumental careers. That is only possible with commitment, dedication, passion and basically, service to God."

The performance that wowed the Mayor of Housing ranged from classical to the contemporary and culturally tinged choral renditions.

The surprise of the night could be the soprano solo by a man that does not see physically (vision impaired) but who is being compared with the greatest sopranos in the world, Cameroon Ayebatari.

The highlight of songs seemed to be 'Peace, Be Still' which was dedicated to the affairs of Rivers State where peace and still waters are known to be most needed.

Then, the conferment of Patron and honorary membership to the Mayor of Housing. Those who talked to this writer from the choir said they were shocked to discover his versatility, academic brilliance (best graduating student in both secondary school in Jos with 9As and in the UNN), generosity, and above all, his fire burning spiritual life.

Beyond all this however is the determination of all concerned to promote the choir beyond being an ensemble in an enclosure. The voice that came from the locked doors need to escape to the larger Rivers society and to the world. The coming of the Mayor of Housing may ensure this, because he does not believe that good should hide for evil to outshine.

Words have never been enough to describe songs. So, it would need to hear from the ensemble to know that graces fly and perch in Rivers State but in a cubicle. The listener may not know when he would fly to the needs of origins of choral music found in traditional music like in Ancient Greece and in contemporary European choral setting. Did David not event choir music in the Bible powerful enough to calm a troubled king?

It was when the songs got to George Frideric Handel's classical that the uninitiated rose to welcome the Alleluia messiah droplets.

The night ended pleasurably with hopes that the hiding is over and that this great asset would escape from the walls of the Chapel to the world in need of peace. This is what the Mayor of Housing has vowed to ensure. After all, he is a Un Peace Ambassador.

Now, it is expected that the talents of Rivers State will be exposed more after the Rivers Economic and Investment Summit and the resolution to use entertainment as the driver for the low hanging fruits where the Mayor of Housing is now partner to the Rivers State Tourism Development Agency (RSTDA) headed by Yibo Koko.

China's introduction and involvement the Choral assets in the Government House may be an avenue to further the works in the partnership with the RSTDA to expose the talents in the state and boost tourism, even as his involvement with the comedy leaders in the state is also yielding same fruits.

Politics

Why Tinubu may not restructure Nigeria, by Odinkalu

INIOMBONG IWOK

Chidi Odinkalu, a former chairman of the National Human Rights Commission, has President Bola Tinubu can't champion the devolution of more powers to the federating units because it will threaten the powers enjoyed by the Federal Government

Odinkalu was a guest on Inside Sources with Laolu Akande, a socio-political programme aired on Channels Television on Friday.

Restructuring was a major issue in the build-up to the 2023 presidential election which was won by ex-Lagos governor Tinubu.

In recent years, prominent Nigerians, regional socio-political groups like Afenifere in the South-West zone, Ohanaeze Ndigbo in the South-East zone, and groups in the Middlebelt area had demanded restructuring along fiscal lines.

Their demands include the removal of some responsibilities from



Chidi Odinkalu

the exclusive legislative list to the concurrent list to legally empower federating units like states to carry out such functions as policing, among others.

Tinubu was a major advocate of restructuring while in the oppo-

sition, upon assumption of office, hopes with high that he would implement some of the tenets of restructuring, but Odinkalu said the idea is not likely to fly because doing so will mean an attrition of the powers domiciled at the centre.

The law professor also said Lagos is not Nigeria, so the President can't govern the country the way he did in Lagos when he was governor from May 1999 to May 2007.

Odinkalu said, "President Tinubu is now seeing Nigeria from the centre, not from the circumference. I've lived in Lagos for clearly 40 years and I have tried to tell my friends that Lagos is not Nigeria; Lagos is Lagos. And I say this as a full-time Lagosian. Lagos is not Nigeria. All of that he was talking about is different when you are the President.

"So, the idea that Tinubu is going to come to the job with an idea of restructuring is not likely to fly. The mechanics of presidentialism make it unlikely that an incumbent President is going to be the advocate of the cannibalisation of that power. Even if the President were to be enthusiastic about that, the presidential team, many of whom would lose relevance, would slow workings.

"So, you are going to have two levels of resistance one from the occupant of the office himself but

more also from the people around him who don't have interest in seeing that happen. So, the redesign of Nigeria from the centre is going to be very difficult."

On new constitution

The human rights activist said that Nigeria does not necessarily need a new constitution but a constitutional settlement where all the ethnic nationalities and the different heterogeneous groups will sit down and agree on how they want to live as a country.

"I am not of the idea that we need a new constitution. What we need is a constitutional settlement. A constitution is a text, anyone can write it.

"A constitutional settlement precedes a constitution and we have never really had one; the closest we came to one was in 1971, but the military stepped in constitutional settlement precedes a constitution and we have never really had one; the closest we came to one was in 1971, but the military stepped in," he said.

Unlocking Nigeria's mining potential: Akper identifies challenges, opportunities in the sector

NATHANIEL GBAORON, Jos

Nigeria's mining sector has long been recognised as a vital component of the country's economic diversification strategy. With an estimated \$750 billion worth of mineral resources, the sector has the potential to contribute significantly to the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

However, despite its vast potential, the mining sector has faced numerous challenges, including inadequate policies, lack of infrastructure, and security concerns.

At the 7th inaugural lecture of Nigeria Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS) titled: 'Towards Realising the Potentials of The Mining Sector: Policy, Legal and Institutional Reform Imperatives for Nigeria,' presented by Peter Terkaa Akper, a Research Professor of Law in Abuja and monitored by BusinessDay virtually in Jos, he asserted that in recent years, the government has made efforts to address these challenges through policy reforms and institutional frameworks.

He noted that the Nigerian Minerals and Mining Act of 2007 and the Nigerian Minerals and Mining Regulations of 2011 are examples of these efforts.

Akper however, said despite these reforms, the sector still faces significant challenges, one of the

major challenges is the lack of a comprehensive policy framework that aligns with the African Mining Vision.

Akper, who is also a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), informed that another challenge is the inadequate legal and regulatory framework, which has led to conflicts between the federal government and state governments over regulatory control.

He said the absence of an independent sector regulator has also hindered the effective administration of the mining sector.

Furthermore, he noted that the availability of geoscience data is crucial for investment decisions, but Nigeria's exploration strategy has been criticised for not focusing on legacy mines.

"The Road Map on the Development of the Solid Minerals and Metals Sector was launched in 2012 to ensure the realisation of government developmental objectives in the sector. It identified the challenges to the development of solid minerals to include: Inadequate geoscience data needed to support detailed mineral investigation, development and exploitation;

inadequate infrastructural facilities such as roads.

"Very high proportion of Artisanal and Small Scale Miners (ASM) operations deriving mineral exploitation in the country resulting in environmental degradation, and exposure to high risk and health haz-

ards due to the use of unsafe mining and mineral processing practices; lack of adequate legislation, and low institutional and human capacity."

He also noted that "the present wave of insecurity in the country has grave implications for the development of the mining industry. Nigeria has in recent times witnessed unprecedented security challenges such as terrorism, insurgency, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, farmer-herder clashes, etc.

"The drivers of insecurity in Nigeria are myriad, but have been identified to include ineffective and inadequate security architecture, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, resources control agitations, high incidence of poverty and unemployment, porous borders, access to illicit drugs and psychotropic substances, climate change impacts,

inefficient criminal justice systems, etc. These security challenges impact negatively on mining operations."

To address these challenges, The professor said the government needs to develop a comprehensive policy framework that aligns with the African Mining Vision.

He also said the government also needs to establish an independent sector regulator to effectively administer the mining sector.

Additionally, Akper noted that the government needs to focus on providing adequate infrastructure, including roads, rail, and power grids, to support mining operations.

According to him, the government also needs to address security concerns and provide a safe environment for mining activities

"The mining sector has the potential to contribute significantly to

Nigeria's economic development, but it requires the right policies, laws, and institutional frameworks to unlock its potential.

"With the right policies and frameworks in place, Nigeria can attract investments, create jobs, and increase its GDP.

The government needs to prioritize the development of the mining sector and address the challenges facing it.

By doing so, Nigeria can unlock its mining potential and achieve economic diversification.

"The mining sector is not just a source of revenue; it also has the potential to create jobs and stimulate economic growth. Therefore, it is essential that the government takes the necessary steps to develop the sector," Akper noted.

The professor, who also has the national honor of OFR, recalled that Dele Alake, Nigeria's Minister of Solid Minerals Development, had said "Nigeria currently possesses a deposit of mineral products worth \$750bn...the mining has the potential to contribute a large part of the nation's goal to achieve a trillion-dollar economy."

The researcher added that the development of the mining sector requires a collaborative effort from all stakeholders, including the government, private sector, and civil society, by doing so, Nigeria can achieve economic prosperity and create a better future for its citizens.



Peter Terkaa Akper

Politics

Rivers' political crisis inches closer to physical confrontations, violence

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

Thursday, July 25, 2024, parts of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, under the Obio/Akpor council area where the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike comes from, and where the Speaker, Martin Amaewhule comes from, and where some of the strong men of the Wike regime come from, exploded in violence.

News filtered out that the Speaker learnt that their rival, Chijioke Ihunwo, the caretaker committee boss of Obio/Akpor, was going to inaugurate a committee to carry out some functions.

Amaewhule was said to have mobilised to the place to stop Ihunwo on the basis that the caretaker committees were illegal. The result was huge confrontation and smashed vehicles.

This makes the latest development of the political crisis in the state where Wike is pitched against his political son, Governor Sim Fubara.

Wike said he singlehandedly brought in Fubara (accountant-general of the state) into the guber race and into victory. He said Fubara has turned against his benefactor. The next thing was impeachment notice by the House of Assembly controlled by Wike. The venue suffered fire.

The governor fought back and the venue that heard the notice was demolished. More troubles continued to this day, despite efforts by the Presidency to intervene.

The crisis has been largely in the air, courts, and others, but not much in physicality and confrontation. Nigeria seems to have enjoyed the crisis because it provided melodrama.

Now, it seems to get to push and shove. The nearest to physical confrontation was on June 18, 2024, when the term for Wike-backed LGA council chairmen elapsed but they refused to leave, saying they had got tenure elongation. The ones appointed by Fubara as caretaker committee chairmen came to take office but met resistance. The police used the excuse to seal all LGA secretariats. Each group claims legitimacy and pushes the other camp away, no matter what the courts said.

That aspect still poses threat to peace as it may explode any moment. There are two committees in each LGA inaugurated by both the Wike and the Fubara LGA council authorities. Violence is a matter of time.

Ishi Samuel, termed former Chairman of Ikwerre LGA, allegedly led members of OSPAC



Nyesom Wike



Sim Fubara

in Ikwerre LGA to destroy the ward-to-ward empowerment programme in Omueleru community.

The situation in Ogu/Bolo (Okrika area) seems dicey. The Fubara-backed chairman, Caretaker Committee of Ogu/Bolo Local Government Area, Evans Bipi, has ordered the immediate stoppage of the construction of a multi-purpose townhall in Ogu over what he called failure by the developer to seek the consent of the Council before initiating the project.

The project was reportedly attracted to the area by the Executive Director of Finance and Administration (EDFA) of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Boma Iyaye, believed to be a Wike man.

Speaking to newsmen during an on-the-spot-visit to the project site, Bipi said the building plan violates the development masterplan of the area.

The Ogu/Bolo CTC Chairman while commending the EDFA of NDDC for attracting such project to the area said it was sited at the wrong location.

He said the developer ought to have consulted with the Local Government Council to be given a suitable location for the project in order not to distort the development plan of the area.

Evans Bipi explained that the site of the project is a green area reserved for recreational purposes and not for project like a Multi-purpose Townhall.

"This Land belongs to the

Community, as the CTC Chairman of the Local Government Area, I am the Chief Security Officer, all Lands are in my custody in trust for the people according to the Local Government bye-law that regulates customary Land."

Another major danger moment would be the processes to the LGA elections in the state. The Wike camp (Rivers APC), has rejected the election plans.

The Fubara group has gone to court to stop the stopping of the elections. So, the justice, Peter Lifu, of the Federal High Court in Abuja has thus issued a restraining order preventing the Department of State Services (DSS), Police,

This Land belongs to the Community, as the CTC Chairman of the Local Government Area, I am the Chief Security Officer, all Lands are in my custody in trust for the people according to the Local Government bye-law that regulates customary Land

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and seven other entities from obstructing the conduct of congresses for the Rivers State chapter of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), according to newspaper reports.

The police:

As in the crisis between Wike and Rotimi Amaechi, the police are always accused of compromise or of taking sides.

A Commentator, Meshach Alaputa Jaja, said the allegations of compromised policing in Rivers State, highlighted by the recent attack in Obio/Akpor LGA, demand urgent attention and intervention. "The little girl you see here is a victim of the police teargas effect. She is asthmatic. She went to the community health center for medical care, now see her struggling for her dear life, what a police brutality to a minor.

"The Inspector General of Police must fulfill their constitutional duty to protect the people and restore trust in the police force. By conducting a thorough investigation, holding those responsible accountable, and implementing measures to prevent politicization, Rivers State can move towards a more secure and just society.

"The citizens' faith in the police must be restored, as they deserve a policing system that serves and protects them without bias or compromise. The Civil Society Organisation should come out and speak for this little girl, she is not a

criminal, not a politician and not wrong by going to seeking medical care as a Rivers citizen.

Another report said a chief superintendent of police (name withheld), said to be head a tactical unit a part of Obio/Akpor, has been accused of becoming a rogue enforcer of the order of a minister.

"Today, he led his officers to disrupt a vital health program in partnership with the Rivers State Ministry of Health, held at the Eliozu community. The event, aimed at aiding pregnant women and nursing mothers, was violently interrupted after a call from Martin Amaewhule.

"Upon arrival, the police officer and his men shot sporadically, fired tear gas indiscriminately causing panic and endangering the lives of vulnerable attendees. Also, at an empowerment program organized by the Ikwerre LGA Caretaker Committee, was disrupted by the same man aided by the opponents of Fubara."

The people asked the Inspector-General of Police to intervene, probably the same they called on the IG of the Wike-Amaechi era to intervene and it never happened.

Conclusion:

The stage is getting set for clashes that may take life and lead to open violence, except something is done now. Some political observers in the state say that widespread violence may lead to renewed call for declaration of state of emergency.

Politics

LGs' fiscal autonomy must be implemented, it must not end at Supreme Court pronouncement - Soloki

Gbenga Soloki, executive director of the Centre Against Injustice and Domestic Violence (CAIDOV) and a development expert, spoke on the financial autonomy granted local governments in the country through recent Supreme Court ruling and the state of governance at that level. INIOBONG IWOK brings the excerpts:

Local government is the third tier of the government in Nigeria; what are your comments about the roles the local governments are playing in Nigeria generally?

Let me salute the courage, the sagacity and the proactive nature of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for taken the bull by the horn to say that our local governments must run independently and not as appendages of the state governors.

The local governments that we have today are more or less appendages of the state governors because they always go cap in hand to source their dues, which should have come to them directly.

But because of the fraudulent allocation committee of the states, the local governments have been turned into beggar organisations whereby they just go to the state governments to collect handouts from them whereas they are the closest to the people.

We used to see local governments carrying out fundamental functions in those days. But, today most of the state governors have taken over their responsibilities. I am not happy with the way our local governments are being run. They have not been able to perform their responsibilities as expected, which hinders development at the grassroots level.

There was a time local governments were paying salaries of primary school teachers and some local government chairmen diverted the money, if they have full autonomy, will that not lead to more corruption at that level?

If we say because somebody is stealing then we should not do what would benefit others, then we are wasting our time. That some people are tampering with the salaries of teachers does not stop us from doing what is needful.

So, I would not agree with that assertion, whoever is found wanting should be made to face the music. Whoever siphons money or salaries of teachers should be taken to a law court.

We have laws that deal with those things and there are government agencies that are empowered to take care of those who engage in financial malpractices. Some states governments too are not better than some of these local governments.

You cannot divorce corruption from state governments too, we have seen governors that have left office and are being hounded today by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). We are not



Gbenga Soloki

saying that people would not steal, but it is for us as a people to allow institutions to work so that they can deal with those who pilfer money.

We cannot say that because some local government chairmen tamper with teachers' money, then we will not do what we need to do, no, I would not support that. I will support local government autonomy anytime, any day because that is the closest tier of government to the people at the grassroots and the only tier that can take development to the grassroots.

Are you satisfied with the roles of the local governments in Nigeria because they are given better roles in some parts of the world?

I am always of the opinion that the constitution is very clear about the roles of all the agencies of the government. It is not about law or the constitution; it is about the implementation of our laws.

The environmental department of the local governments should be strengthened. Also, there are some resources that are accruable to the local governments that have been taken over by the state governments including and not limited to tenement rates. The local governments should be made to collect money from those who built houses in their domain. The issue of hygiene should also be strongly worked upon.

I could remember when we were growing up, when we had sanitary inspectors, "wole wole," let us bring them back. Most of the councils don't even understand their roles because of the ways they emerge, and the understanding between them and their governors who handpicked them. So, we need to go back to the books and look at their roles.

We must look at what the state governments should do and what the local governments should do. How many local governments rehabilitate roads, just few. As the closest to the people, they should be allowed to carry out certain responsibilities so

The local government election in Lagos State is coming up next year, so they can be area officers because the constitution does not recognise them as at now, I mean the LCDA chairmen and councilors

that the people can feel their impact. I want to commend Lagos State for taken the bull by the horn on most of these things, but that does not mean they have got it right.

Even the governor of the state, Babajide Sanwo-Olu said this week that the state was joined in error in the law suit on local government autonomy initiated by the Attorney General of the Federation, but we need to go to the books and let us separate the functions of the states from those of the local governments to avoid duplication of efforts.

But how do we reconcile the issue of Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs), for instance, Lagos State has 20 local governments and 37 LCDAs, how would they share the money if they get their money directly from the federal government?

It is also an opportunity for those from Lagos State at the National Assembly to ensure that the LCDAs are listed as full local governments in the constitution. The processes of creating the local governments were completed in Lagos State except the enlistment into the constitution.

So, the representatives and senators from Lagos State and the South West should ensure that these LCDAs are enlisted as local governments in the Nigerian constitution. If Kano has 44 local governments and the state was created the same time with Lagos that has 20, then we need to look at this.

Unfortunately, Lagos is the most populated state in Nigeria. Initially, they were saying they were not listed because the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was in power then, now the All Progressives Congress (APC) has been in power for nine years; so, the governor should call the senators and the members of the Federal House of Representatives to fight this out now. But if we could not solve this at the National Assembly now, they could be turned to area offices.

What happens to the elected officials such as the chairmen and councilors if they become area offices?

The local government election in Lagos State is coming up next year, so they can be area officers because the constitution does not recognise them as at now, I mean the LCDA chairmen and councilors.

But they are there today because of the arrangements in Lagos State. But we have experts in law and jurisprudence, who will tell us how to do it, but we cannot close down the LCDAs.

Let's talk about elections at the local government level, would

you support that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should take over the elections into the councils because of the things that are happening with local government elections across the states of the federation? I think the President, who is the Commander-In-Chief, would have thought about it, but I want to align with the thought that the INEC should conduct elections at the local government level because that is the only body that has the final say on electoral matters. But the States Independent Electoral Commissions were created for administrative conveniences. Let us allow the agency saddled with election responsibilities to do their job so that all these local governments that are not working would work. At the state level, the governors control those at the state electoral commissions. If INEC conducts the elections, you would see them performing because when you look at what happened at the National Assembly, we have people from different political parties there.

So, we can also have a uniform base for the councils to hold elections so that nobody would manipulate the process. I believe that we should have one body to conduct the elections.

What is your view about the performances of local government chairmen in Lagos State and their performances?

Many of them are not performing and those who are performing should be encouraged to do more. But when you look at the Chairman of Oshodi Local Government, Kehinde Oloyede Almaroof, he has performed well. In the first 100 days, he had constructed or rehabilitated over 25 roads.

It is unprecedented and he has not gone to sleep since then. That is where I do my business, so I know what I am talking about, there is no day you go to Oshodi that you would not see his impact. The Chairman of Orile Agege LCDA too, Babatunde Johnson is doing well, but Kehinde Oloyede is a fantastic man and today, I have gone round Oshodi and I can tell you that people are scared to contest against him.

I grew up in Shogunle and about three road projects are ongoing there. On health, he wants to facilitate a general hospital to Oshodi. He has provided about 25 boreholes for the people and he is taking care of the elderly. There are others that are also performing. We want to call on the Governor not to represent those who did not perform in the next local government election.

Politics

Leadership development: Lessons for Nigeria from Singapore's rigorous selection process

DAVID IJASEUN

Nigeria could benefit from adopting a more stringent leadership selection process, akin to Singapore's, according to Christopher Kolade, former Nigerian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.

In an exclusive interview with BusinessDay, Kolade emphasised the importance of thorough vetting and preparation for leadership roles.

"Nigeria is brimming with rich human and material resources, waiting to be harnessed by purposeful, creative, and innovative leadership," Kolade said.

"Leadership that aligns with cultural values and follows a bottom-up approach is crucial for unlocking Nigeria's developmental potential." Nigeria however, faces significant challenges due to leadership failures, corruption, and poor governance. A report by African Journals



Christopher Kolade

Online highlights these issues, underscoring the need for a transformative approach to leadership.

Kolade pointed to Singapore's leadership selection process as a model to em-

ulate. "In Singapore, they spend four years evaluating an individual for leadership," he noted. "The character and temperament of a leader are key to performance. If a leader lacks the right qualities

and understanding of people, their leadership can fail."

He stressed the critical importance of selecting the right leaders through rigorous testing. "To choose a leader, assessing their

past actions and behaviour is vital. What has this person done before? How have they performed? This evidence is crucial in determining their readiness for higher responsibilities,"

Kolade explained.

Kolade also highlighted the contrast between business and national leadership training. "In business, we invest in training and preparing senior managers. But for national leadership, we often neglect this. Singapore's approach ensures that leaders have proven themselves at various levels before taking on new roles," he said.

Kolade, a Fellow of the Institute of Directors, discussed the broader issue of leadership failure across Africa. "Leadership failure is inevitable if the conditions for good performance are not established. Leadership is a responsibility, not just a title or status. It requires learning and humility. Leaders must acknowledge the need to learn, sometimes even from those junior to them," he remarked.

Kolade's insights call for a reassessment of how leaders are chosen and prepared in Nigeria, advocating for a system prioritising proven competence and continuous development.

Akwa Ibom's Lagos gamble: A misplaced priority?

TAOFEEK OYEDOKUN

Governor Umo Eno's decision to embark on the construction of an 18-storey building in Lagos has sparked intense debate. In a recent statement by Ekerete Udoh, the governor's spokesperson, the Lagos building, dubbed "Ibom Towers," is expected to generate substantial income for the state. The tower will house residential and commercial spaces, targeting high-income earners.

In addition to the Lagos project, the governor has also announced plans to build a three-star hotel in Abuja. These initiatives, according to the state government, are aimed at capitalising on the lucrative real estate markets in both cities.

Udoh emphasised that the projects are part of an audacious plan to transform state-owned moribund assets into profitable ventures.

"We will undertake the construction of Ibom Towers, an 18-storey commercial property on Abovade Cole, Victoria Island, Lagos. This will serve as an income-earn-

er for the state, in the nation's commercial capital. We will also build a medium-density housing estate in Ewet Housing and sell the homes to high-income earners. A three-star hotel will also be built in Abuja, where our current liaison office is located," Udoh quoted the governor as saying in his first-anniversary speech.

While the state government justifies the project as a strategic move to boost Internally Generated Reve-

nue (IGR), a closer look at the state's financial health raises serious questions about the wisdom of this investment.

Akwa Ibom, like many Nigerian states, is heavily reliant on federal allocations, particularly from oil revenue. According to data from the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the oil-rich state got N380.1 billion from the federal account in 2023, behind Delta's N483.57 billion and Rivers' N426.84 billion.

While there is a commendable push to diversify revenue sources, the state's investment arm, Akwa Ibom Investment Corporation (AKICORP), has a checkered financial history. Despite managing the state's investments, AKICORP reported losses in 2021 and 2022, with a meagre income of N110 million in the latter year.

A broader analysis of the state's revenue profile reveals a troubling picture. While total investment income for

2022 was recorded at N308 million, this pales in comparison to the N28 billion generated from taxes.

Moreover, a staggering 76.7percent of this tax revenue comes from Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE), primarily from the oil and gas sector.

Given these figures, the question arises: Is investing in a high-rise building in Lagos the most effective way to boost IGR in Akwa Ibom?

Critics have argued that the state's economic foundation is fragile, and a significant portion of its tax revenue is derived from a relatively small pool of formal sector employees. They emphasised that diversifying the economy and expanding the tax base should be the primary focus.

"PAYE is the largest driver of IGR receipts, and the government should look to improve PAYE receipts by attracting more formal jobs to the state," Ikpeme Neto, a medical doctor and an entrepreneur from the oil-rich state, told BusinessDay.

"Taking precious state funds to invest in the Lagos real estate market with uncertain returns will not create the multiplier effect in Akwa

Ibom that helping to create local jobs would," he added.

Neto, who runs a global venture capital backed health technology business with an office in the state, urged the Akwa Ibom government to increase investment in agriculture in order to provide job opportunities. He noted that "cassava, cocoa, and oil palm are our natural strengths."

To increase the state's IGR, the entrepreneur also urged the government to help small businesses thrive, attract high-value work and workers to the state, and invest in knowledge, research, and development.

On the state's moribund properties in Lagos and other locations, Neto urged partnership with the private sector.

"I think the state should look to partner developers who can finance a business case while the state takes an equity position with minimal cash injection.

"Akwa Ibom's current problem is not more money; it has had budget surpluses for the last 2 years at least. The state's problem is finding ways to invest within the state to create jobs," he said.



Umo Eno

Analysis

Moniepoint's SMEs empowerment

... Processes 72 million cards monthly
 ... Will formalise 30m SMEs in five years

CHIDO NWAKANMA

Microfinance and fintech firm Moniepoint MFB has identified four areas where it suggests that SMEs should improve to scale their businesses and remain stable in these difficult times. It is willing to lead the charge.

Moniepoint enrolled two million businesses in five years (2019-2024) through intensive research and continuous interrogation of the data it gathered. Tosin Eniolorunda, CEO of Moniepoint MFB, said, "To us, the informal economy represents an opportunity to make the kind of impact that people can feel daily regardless of their income level or social status."

Eniolorunda added, "By quantifying the informal economy's impacts and nuances, we can better shape policies and programs to empower and uplift the entrepreneurs driving it forward. Their success is inextricably linked to Nigeria's continued growth and development."

What are the key learnings and Moniepoint's route to success for itself and small-scale businesses?

1. **Local presence.** Moniepoint has grown by being available where its customers do their business. It has provided them access to banking systems, enabling them to enter the national financial system and database. Many SMEs, thus enrolled, can now seek and access credit.

2. **Easier access to banking services that allowed SMEs to transition to more formalised systems.**

The report observed that "Banking systems provide leverage for many formalised businesses, from payment collection to the ability to perform business transactions at a larger scale. Many of the businesses in the informal economy previously were locked out of these banking systems, so they have been unable to benefit from the advantages that come with being included. Without a bank account, for example, they are limited to transactions with only people they can physically interact with. This lack of access to banking also impacts them in other ways. Many programs and initiatives from development institutions, including the Nigerian government, exist to support businesses of all sizes in the country. However, with most of the businesses in the informal economy invisible, access to them remains constrained. They also need the requisite documentation to apply for these grants. This means that although opportunities exist, they often cannot access them



in ways that can help them grow meaningfully."

3. **Formalisation.** Building banking and payment services with these businesses in the focus has enabled us to provide them with tools that meet their specific needs. In line with existing regulations, providing banking services for these businesses can see many transitions to a more formalised system. This means increased access to systemic benefits typically available to their

more formalised counterparts.

4. **Access to credit.** Through insights into the financial history of SMEs, Moniepoint says it developed a credit assessment system built for them. It can thus provide credit that matches their needs and gives them a better chance at success.

5. **Collaboration with relevant government and private agencies.**

Moniepoint states: "By partnering with government agencies, we've

made it easier for businesses to obtain the necessary documentation to become formal. Our ongoing partnership with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) allows business owners to register their business names with the CAC directly on our platform. We've also collaborated with the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) to enable these businesses to quickly obtain their Tax Identification Number. Collaborations like this will formalise about 30 million businesses in the next five years."

The counsel comes through Moniepoint's The Informal Economy Report 2024. Highlights of the report include the following:

- N9b (Nine Billion Naira) is available to SMEs as single-digit interest loans.
- SMEs contribute about 37 per cent of GDP in emerging markets.
- Experts use various terms for the economy of SMEs, including "underground," cash-in-hand, and shadow economy.

"By transaction value in Naira, Retail and general Trade, alongside Food and drinks, accounted for over half of Nigeria's informal economy at 53.6%". The constituents are neighbourhood shops, restaurants, supermarkets, and those that sell daily necessities.

Characteristics of Nigerian SMES as identified by Moniepoint include:

1. Average monthly income of less than N250000.
2. Owners are predominantly aged 25-34 years.
3. Unemployment is a primary trigger for stepping out.
4. Eighty-nine (89) per cent pay some form of taxes.
5. Retail and general trade predominate.
6. The lifespan of the businesses is usually under five years.
7. Seventy per cent of SMEs borrow money.
8. They spend their incomes on feeding and family expenses.
9. Half of the business owners multitask.
10. Women own 37.1 per cent of SMEs, and men own 62.9 per cent.
11. Nigerian SMEs are located in the South-South 19.9%; North-Central 16.8%; South-West 15.6%; South-East 13.2%; North-West 12.8%; North-East 6.6%.

Moniepoint MFB prepared the report with the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investments and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN).

Charles Odili, SMEDAN's CEO, affirmed that "small businesses are the engine of the Nigerian economy, and the informal sector serves as the piston that provides momentum." He

added, "The numbers support this reality, as reaffirmed by this report. Most of Nigeria's approximately 40 million small businesses reside in the informal sector. They are all around us, from the unregistered beauty shop that began with a simple stool under a tree for customers to sit while the stylist worked her magic to the fruit store that grew from a wheelbarrow."

Industry, Trade and Investment Minister Mrs Doris Uzoka-Anite itemised a long list of measures the Federal Government has implemented to ensure better access to finance for MSMEs. They include

- An N200 Billion Presidential Palliative Programme offers grants to nano businesses and low-interest loans to MSMEs.
- State Enterprise and Empowerment Program (SEEP) provides affordable credit to micro-enterprises.
- Rural Area Programme on Investment for Development (RAPID) supporting MSMEs in disadvantaged areas.
- One Local Government One Product (OLOP) program offering grants and interest-free loans.
- The "GROW NIGERIAN" initiative accelerates economic growth for key sector SMEs.

Fund management

Access to and management of finances is critical to small businesses.

Seventy per cent of MSMEs said they had accessed credit. "According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), 65 million businesses, or 40%

The report notes that formal micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in developing countries have an unmet financing need of \$5.2 trillion annually. "In the informal economy, where businesses often face bleak odds, access to credit remains crucial. 70.1% of these businesses say they have accessed some form of credit."

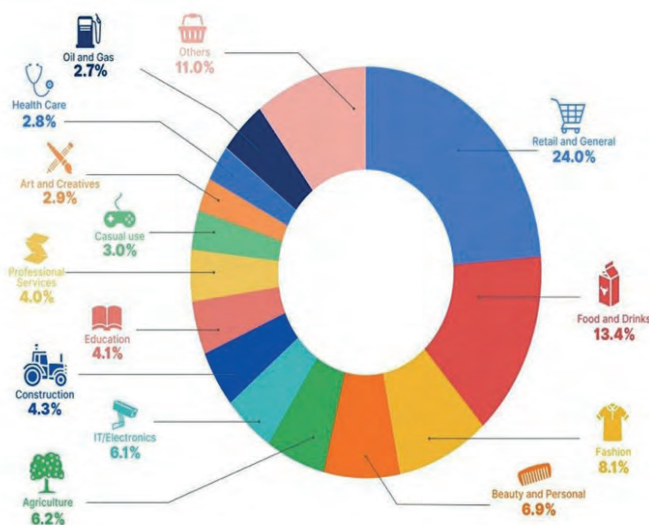
But where can SMEs source credit? "When businesses in the informal economy do get access to loans, their primary sources are from friends and family (70.7%). Other sources are from loan platforms (15.1%) and traditional banks (12.2%)."

What about payments? The data shows a paradox. "While various digital payment collection methods exist for business owners in the informal economy, Moniepoint's data shows that card payments are the most common way (80.2%) for these businesses to receive in-person payments."

Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria

Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria

Fig. 5. Informal economy by volume



State of the Nation

We are in economic distress – business owners in Kwara cry out

SIKIRAT SHEHU, Ilorin

Traders and business owners in Ilorin, the capital of Kwara State, have voiced their distress over the persistent economic downturn that is adversely affecting their businesses.

Speaking with BusinessdaySunday, some operators of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) highlighted the scarcity of funds and lack of patronage as the major challenges plaguing their businesses.

The surge in prices, they said, has made it challenging for them to cope with the prevailing economic crunch.

They also said that a significant number of operational shops are shutting down, while others are struggling to stay afloat in order to sustain themselves.

Nwoko Michael, whose business is located on Ibrahim Taiwo Road in Ilorin, who sells various brushes and home cleaning materials, lamented the exorbitant market prices.

He expressed concerns about the high increase in the cost of brushes, saying, "the market is too costly. The brushes I bought last two months for N285,000 are now N540,000. Can you imagine that; it is too high; in fact, we cannot cope with the way things are going.

"The current situation is seriously affecting my business even to sell becomes a problem. We are not meeting up with our targets and that is not helping us to grow.

"We are in serious discomfort, and dying of hunger. Our children are suffering because we cannot eat three square meals. See the next shop to me, the provision store was closed about three weeks ago because of financial constraints."

Adisa Mohammed, an Okada rider, equally shared his perspective by highlighting the escalating fuel prices, making it difficult for him to afford fuel for his motorcycle.

The surge in fuel prices has led to reduced patronage, forc-



ing him to operate on a smaller scale to avoid losses.

"We only thank God for life but the situation is not friendly. Ordinarily, N3000 fuel will full my tank but now it is N10,000. I cannot afford it because of low patronage; so, I decided to be buying small quantity of fuel so as not to run into loss.

"A liter of petrol that I bought this morning was N800," he said.

For Rebeka Olatunji, a provision seller with a cafe, lamented the severe impact of the economic situation on her business.

She emphasized the urgent need for government's intervention to address the economic challenges faced by businesses.

"Things have never been as tough for me as the way they are now. If not because of God that is sustaining me, it is not easy at all. No sales, no money, and no food.

"I am carrying a month-old hair style done by my grandchild. If other women are like

me; will hair dressers get patronage let alone make money to eat? This economic situation in Nigeria is killing so many people; several people are suffering and dying. So, government should see to this condition and act fast.

"If petrol price comes down, prices of food and goods will also come down. 10kg of Semovita is about N15,000 plus, 5kg is N9000 and even a milk can of Semo is sold for N220. You can imagine how much it will cost a family of four to eat semovita. All stakeholders, including the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should help the masses, may God bless Nigeria."

Similarly, Ayo Ismail, an attendant at Zeemah stores, Tanke Ilorin, acknowledged that the situation is not favourable.

He urged all Nigerians to assist one another no matter how little so as to prevent people from losing their lives.

"The serious problem for us as business owners that

sell people's daily needs is the issue of capital. We need to look for more money to purchase goods and remain in the business. What we used to buy before at 100,000 is now about N300,000.

"Based on the kind of products we transact in, we know

that as long as you have goods, you will make your money and that forces us to increase our capacity base.

"For instance, our investment of N30,000,000 for instance is now about N9.5 million capital base. Although, there is reduction in profit because of shabby economy but we just have to remain in the business.

"If the government can improve in diversifying the economy through other means, provide free entrepreneurship training to the teeming youths, our economy will grow and the issues of crime and insecurity will be reduced," he said.

Taiye Olanrewaju, who deals in chemicals, oils, containers, and oper-



ates a PoS business, expressed his worries about the changing business landscape due to the economic crisis.

He noted the significant increase in the cost of goods, making it challenging for businesses to operate profitably.

"What we used to buy and sell is no longer business as usual. For instance, what we used to buy for N50,000 before is now between N90,000 and N100,000.

"Also, market is very dry as there is no money in circulation in Nigeria. We need to be wise and be prayerful because we don't know where we are heading to," Olanrewaju said.

Aminat Ibrahim, a dealer in clothing items, shared her struggles with the deteriorating economic conditions, which have led to decreased sales and profitability.

She said: "I am just coming to shop not to stay at home and develop depression. For about two weeks, I didn't open even yesterday; I didn't sell anything and today I have not seen a buyer."

The economy has been bastardised. Now, if we buy a product at a particular price and sold it; by the time we go back to replace it the price would have increased; so, one must add more money or buy less than what one intended to purchase. Honestly, the situation we found ourselves is not friendly, you can see how scanty my shop is."

In the same vein, Afusat Ramon, soft drinks seller at Surulere area Ilorin, highlighted the drastic decline in sales and patronage, leading to financial strains on her business.

She narrated the challenges of unsold stock and diminishing profits, even as she illustrated the widespread impact of the economic crisis on businesses in the region.

"The table water you are seeing in my shop has been there since March this year. I can't even buy more because people don't care for it. I had to dash out my bottle dinks during Sallah celebration for

it not to expire. The problem is everywhere; the man who owned the depot I used to buy in bulk has closed his shop.

"Before now, I used to realise up to N40,000 or N30,000 in a day, but now, things have changed. At times, I may realise N2,000 and other days, there won't be market to the extent that I would borrow money for my transportation back home; you can imagine how terrible the situation has become," Afusat said.

Shafau Muhammed, a food vendor at Orisankoko/Oloru quarters, Popo Igbonna, Ilorin, recounted how the current harsh economic situation is impacting on food making, recounting

how the depressed economic environment collapsed her food business.

She said: "The journey of about 20 years of food business that I had been doing abruptly came to an end two months ago, owing to skyrocketing prices of food items and essential commodities in the market.

"Now, I am indebted to yam and rice dealers to the tune of 450,000. The huge debt, as well as the continued rising prices of food materials, made me to halt the business completely.

"I can no longer cope with the harsh economic situation, as the investment now lacks profit. Six women working for me were disengaged."

Bulky Adekunle, who runs a patent medicine store, said that despite the increasing health challenges in society occasioned by the harsh economy, people are not patronising pharmaceutical shops.

She explained that she has been forced to closed down her shop located at Oja Gboro, Ilorin.

"You can imagine ordinary paracetamol; people are no longer buying; it is not moving. It is very difficult for me now. Apart from not making progress in the business; I will still pay shop rent. So, it is better for me to hold on till the situation improves."

Harnessing National Wealth Funds for green investment...

Continued from page 32

integration of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations into its investment decisions, with a significant portion of its funds earmarked for climate action projects. Demonstrating its commitment to sustainability, the ISIF has invested in various renewable energy projects, such as wind farms, and in sustainable infrastructure, including energy-efficient buildings and advanced public transport systems. Moreover, ISIF actively supports the Irish government's Climate Action Plan through targeted investments aimed at reducing carbon emissions and fostering sustainable development across the nation.

Three. France's Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations (CDC)

Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations (CDC) is a public-sector financial institution that manages savings and invests in long-term projects in France. CDC has a clear mandate to support sustainable development and has allocated significant resources to a variety of green investments, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable urban development. In 2018, CDC expanded its efforts by launching La Banque des Territoires, an initiative specifically designed to support regional development with a strong emphasis on sustainable infrastructure and green investments. Further reinforcing its commitment to environmental sustainability, CDC has also been active in the green bond market, issuing bonds to finance various climate and environmental projects.

Four. Sweden's AP Funds (Public Pension Funds)

Sweden's public pension funds—AP1 through AP4—collectively manage the country's pension assets with a strong focus on sustainability. These Swedish AP funds have integrated environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria into their investment decisions to promote sustainable growth and responsible investing. A significant portion of their portfolios is dedicated to green bonds, which support projects related to renewable energy, clean water, and sustainable infrastructure. Moreover, the funds demonstrate a commitment to transparency in climate reporting, having adopted the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) recommendations to ensure comprehensive disclosure of climate-related financial risks and opportunities.

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investments that yield both financial returns and positive environmental impact. In 2020, Temasek announced a bold commitment to halve the carbon emissions of its portfolio by 2030, underscoring its strategy to tackle climate change and promote sustainable development. This ambitious plan involves substantial investments in green technologies, renewable energy projects, and sustainable agriculture. Furthermore, Temasek actively supports venture capital funds and startups pioneering innovative climate solutions, including electric mobility, carbon capture technologies, and smart grid systems. Through these initiatives, Temasek not only bolsters its own sustainability efforts but also significantly contributes to the global transition towards a low-carbon economy.

Essentially, there are lessons for the Global South nations centres around a robust sustainability and green investment strategy. This should encompass several key elements: Policy Framework - Establish clear policies and ethical guidelines that underscore a commitment to sustainability and green investment; Diversified Portfolios - Develop and maintain a diversified portfolio of green projects, including those focused on renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, and innovative technology solutions; Transparency - Ensure transparency and accountability through the application of rigorous ESG criteria and regular, detailed reporting; Public-Private Partnerships - Leverage public-private partnerships to mobilize additional capital and expertise, thereby amplifying the impact of green investments; Climate Goals - Align all investments with both national and international climate goals to support a coherent and unified approach to combating climate change. These elements collectively form a comprehensive approach to fostering sustainable development and meeting evolving global climate challenges.

By studying these examples, Global South nations can glean valuable insights and strategies for leveraging their own sovereign wealth funds and investment strategies to achieve sustainable economic growth.

In conclusion, the integration of National Wealth Funds into green investment strategies offers a significant opportunity for Global South nations to pursue sustainable economic growth amid the pressing challenges of climate change and environmental degradation. Insights from Global North nations like Norway, Ireland, France, Sweden, and Singapore demonstrate that robust policy frameworks, ethical investment guidelines, and diversified green portfolios can successfully drive sustainable development. As these countries have shown, transparency, accountability, and alignment with climate goals are critical components for ensuring the success of green investment initiatives. By adopting similar strategies and leveraging public-private partnerships, Global South nations can tap into their NWFs to finance projects that yield both economic and environmental benefits. This approach holds the promise of fostering resilient and sustainable economies that are equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

City File

Insecurity: Nigerian Army engages stakeholders to tackle criminality in Plateau

NATHANIEL GBAORON, Jos

The Headquarters 3 Division Nigerian Army and Operation SAFE HAVEN (OPSH) Friday held a stakeholders' meeting with community leaders from Fann District, Barkin Ladi Local Government Area, Plateau State.

The meeting aimed to address the spate of criminalities, including arms proliferation and cattle rustling, in the area.

Abdusalam Abubakar, a Major General, Commander, Operation SAFE HAVEN/General Officer Commanding 3 Division, expressed displeasure over the continuous acts of violence and criminalities in Fann District, despite efforts to checkmate the trend.

He emphasised that the criminals perpetrating the violence and criminalities hibernated within the communities and are well-known to community members.

The Commander implored all to learn to forgive one another and avoid rancour, advising them to always seek peaceful resolution to crises.



Participant raising some points

The GOC further said "there is the negative impact of criminal activities on the stability and security of the district. These criminals were perpetrating these acts for their personal interest and not for

the interest of the community. The criminals attempt to give ethno-religious colorations to security situation in the area to incite people to create a favourable condition for their selfish agenda to thrive".

I implore all to learn to forgive one another of real or perceived grievances, avoid rancour and also advise your wards to always seek peaceful resolution to crisis and follow established procedure to ad-



A cross section of participants at the event

dress your grievances".

Gwom Rwei of Gwol and the Gwom Rwei of Fan traditional leaders acknowledged that the communities have not done enough to guide their children with good morals and

promised to intensify efforts in combating the criminal elements responsible for perpetrating violence in the area. Solomon Dalyop, a loyal and President of the Berom Youth Moulder Association, appreciated the efforts of the military and promised to work with

youths to support the efforts of troops and other security agencies. The meeting was a significant step towards addressing the security concerns in Fann District and promoting lasting peace in the area.

Solomon Dalyop, a loyal and President of the Berom Youth Moulder Association, appreciated the efforts of the military and promised to work with

Kogi school children escape death as heavy containers fall on cars

...We will prosecute the truck driver, Kogi govt says

VICTORIA NNAKAIKE

It was all celebration and thanks to God in Lokoja recently, as eight pupils who were coming back from the graduation ceremony in one of the private schools in part of the city escaped death. A fully-loaded container fell on two vehicles conveying the pupils.

Eye witness account had it that the truck had a brake failure and was rolling backwards but luck smiled on the children when another car Corolla with registration number Kogi LMA 190 AA parked in front of Adama Shop blocked the reversing truck from climbing the car occupied by the children, and the container fell on both cars.

It was gathered that all the eight children were successfully rescued out of the car without injury.

The school children were returning from their school graduation ceremony and were travelling in a Mitsubishi Car with registration number Abuja RSH 242 FH and made a stopover for some shopping by their minders, while the children were in the car.

Following the accident, the Kogi State government has said that it would prosecute the driver of the truck for failing to latch the container onto the truck.

The Secretary to the Kogi State government, Folashde Arike Ayoade dropped the hint when she visited the scene of the accident alongside other government officials, including Kingsley Fanwo, the Information commissioner, and Jerry Omadara, the State Security adviser. "The driver will be made to account for his actions for failing to do the right thing," Ayoade said.

The SGS, who was full of praise to God and the people who helped to rescue the children, said that the driver of the truck would be prosecuted for

violating the law on latching the container onto the truck to prevent it from falling.

"I want to thank God most sincerely for sparing the lives of the children, these are children coming from their graduation ceremony and looking forward to starting their long holiday.

"I also want to, on behalf of the state government, thank everyone who was involved in the rescue operation; it shows that Kogites are kind people, and the state government really appreciate everyone for this," she said. The state Security Adviser, Jerry Omadara echoed

SGS's position that the driver would not go unpunished for not doing the right thing against the law of the state.

"We have warned repeatedly that every container should be latched onto the back of the truck carrying them, just like the SGS has said, he will be prosecuted," he said.

The Sector Commander of the state Federal Road Safety Corp, Sunday Samuel Oyediji attributed the accident to brake failure. He warned drivers to always do proper checking of their vehicles before hitting the road to prevent accidents.



Jos: PSJ throws weight behind nationwide protest

NATHANIEL GBAORON, Jos

The international Organisation for Peace Building and Social Justice (PSJ) has thrown its weight behind the planned nationwide protest scheduled to hold from August 1 to 10.

Ishaya Inuwa Durkwa, executive director, of the organisation said the protest is a justifiable response to the suffering of Nigerians due to poor governance.

Durkwa emphasised that peaceful protest is a constitutional right and a vital tool for strengthening governance and ensuring accountability. He urged the government to address the hardships faced by Nigerians instead of demonising the protesters.

"It is a democratic instrument that underscores the will of the people and calls for responsive and responsible governance. In this context, the PSJ firmly advocate for a non-violent protest.

Let it be a peaceful demonstration of the people's col-

lective voice against poor governance and the resultant suffering.

"We urge the government to stop demonising the protesters and instead focus on alleviating the hardships that

have driven the people to the streets," he noted.

The PSJ boss noted that protests have historically played a significant role in shaping societies for the better. He called on the govern-

ment to protect the rights of citizens, including the right to protest, and on security agencies to ensure the safety of protesters.

Durkwa also warned against plans by certain indi-

viduals to hijack the protest and turn it violent. He demanded that those responsible be apprehended and brought to justice.

The PSJ executive director urged protesters to remain

vigilant and organised to prevent hoodlums from disrupting the peaceful nature of the protest. He emphasised that the purpose of the protest is to demand a better Nigeria for all citizens.

Durkwa criticised politicians, elites, and religious leaders for manipulating the people by exploiting religion, ethnicity, and regional sentiments. He called on them to address the needs of the masses genuinely and promptly.

The PSJ boss warned that the longer the systemic problems are delayed, the more perilous the situation becomes. He urged stakeholders to act now to address grievances and foster unity.

Durkwa concluded by praying for a peaceful protest that reflects the true spirit of democracy and the will of the Nigerian people. He called on Nigerians to stand together, united in their quest for a better Nigeria.

The planned protest has generated widespread interest and concern, with many Nigerians eager to express their dissatisfaction with the government's performance. As the protest approaches, all eyes are on the government and security agencies to ensure a peaceful and successful event.



Hardship: COCIN Church warns members to shun planned protest to avert bloodshed

AYUBA MAFFI, Bauchi

The Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN) has warned its members to shun joining the forthcoming planned nationwide protest by youths.

The leadership of the COCIN argued that the protest would only worsen the current hardship affecting Nigerians.

COCIN President, Rev. Amos Musa Mohzo and General Secretary, Rev. Benjamin Pokol, made this known in a statement signed and issued to newsmen in Bauchi State.

Mohzo, however, stressed that the current socio-economic challenges in the country is enough violence to struggle with.

The statement reads in part: "COCIN position concerning the planned protest is that no church member should participate in it, because of the multi-dimensional motives driving it. COCIN believes that God is dealing with the situation in his own way and we should be still and know that he is God." (Psalm

46:10).

Mohzo noted that the above position of the church is with the particular reference to "the Nigeria context where peaceful protest, usually leads to bloodshed, knowing that we had too much bloodshed in the land, should we assume that this one will be bloodless?"

"As followers of Jesus Christ, we have been called not to just tread the path of peace, but to promote peace in the world (Matthew 5:9).

"Common sense usually tells us that when we are pushed to the wall and are angry, decision-making ought to be carefully thought through in order not to worsen the situation. Anger in the hearts of Nigerians is justifiable because they have right to be cared for and treated better, but anger has to be constructive to breed something better than death.

"COCIN is also conscious of the much bloodshed and

destruction of properties affecting its members in the recent past which has potential to choose protest, but as if this is not enough, the prevailing socio-economic hardship has exacerbated our suffering..."

According to the statement, "As citizens of Nigeria, COCIN members are aware that peaceful protest is deeply enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, not just as a democratic right, but as a fundamental human right of every citizen which means it's constitutionally right for citizens to protest peacefully, voicing out their grievances when those in authority fail in their God-given mandate.

"As citizens and victims of this hardship, it's incumbent on the leadership of our church to make our position clear in order to guide our teaming numbers in approaching the protest."

Oyo First Lady distributes 50,000 free renewed hope exercise books to students

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan

Taminominin Makinde, the Oyo State First Lady, has reaffirmed the state government's commitment to education as foundation for sustainable development and better tomorrow.

Makinde gave the assurance at the flag-off ceremony for the distribution of 50,000 free exercise books to public secondary schools across the state.

The free exercise book is one of the intervention programmes from the office of the First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in collaboration with the office of Oyo State First Lady.

The first lady, who was represented by Toyin Balogun, Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Inclusion, explained that the intervention is done in the best interest of the state and students with a view to assisting parents to meet the writing materials requirements of their wards.

She admonished students to take their studies seriously by utilizing the materials given to them judiciously.

"This programme was conceptualized and brought into

being by the first lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to ensure that the quality of life lived by our people, especially the women and the children is improved considerably.

The programme comes in different segments. The agricultural and educational elements are what we are reinstating today. About 15 schools are represented today and everyone will go home with part of the book packs of the renewed hope initiative.

"This intervention today is a complement to the free education policy of Governor Seyi Makinde and will relieve the burden on parents. I advise you to go to higher institutions or places of vocational learning and become distinguished members of the society."

At the end of the next decade or so, we will be excited for you seeing us on the street of Oyo State, Nigeria or outside the country and saying I faced my studies and benefited from the renewed hope initiative, I faced my studies, and today I am now a doctor, an engineer, a lawyer, a nurse and an internationally recognised fashion designer. This

would be what will happen to you all in the mighty name of God," she said.

Salihu Adelabu, a professor and Commissioner of Education, in his welcome address, acknowledged the outstanding records of the Oyo State governor in the education sector. The commissioner, who spoke through Akanji Olayinka, director of Secondary Schools, hinted that the gesture would enhance the academic performance of the state students.

In their goodwill messages, Oyepeju Kazeem, principal, Iseyin District Grammar School, and Abokede Taiwo, principal, Fiditi Grammar School, lauded the government at the federal and state levels for the gesture, adding that it will in turn assist parents in no small measures in the area of provision of writing materials to the wards.

Also, speaking on behalf of the students, Olaosebikan Raheem, senior girl, Iseyin District, appreciated the first lady for the gesture, saying that today's programme will serve as a morale booster to all of them and will help them to prepare for the next academic session.

Focus

How Olukoyede-led EFCC is refocusing anti-graft battle

INIOMBONG IWOK

Since President Bola Ahmed Tinubu assumed office last year, he has never hidden his resolve to tackle graft which is a cardinal priority of his campaign agenda.

Perhaps, such necessitated the renewed vigour seen in the anti-graft agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), under the leadership of Olanipekun Olukoyede.

In recent months, the agency under the new chairman has brought in new vision and impetus into the battle against sleaze.

In a country where corruption is always fighting back, the agency believes that determination is required in sustaining the crusade.

Much is expected from the lawyer, regulatory compliance consultant and specialist in fraud management and corporate intelligence, who had served the commission as Chief of Staff to the Chairman (2016-2018) and Secretary to the Commission (2018-2023).

Addressing officers of the Lagos Zonal Command of the EFCC in November last year, Olukoyede, who took over from Abdulrasheed Bawa, spoke about his vision and target.

He said: "There is need to re-direct our focus towards what we were set up to do in Nigeria, which is to drive economic development. We will tilt our focus towards that area.

"We will work to drive economic development, create wealth and employment."

Consequently, since charity begins at home, he charged the officers and men to declare their assets. Leading by example, Olukoyede declared his assets.

In Nigeria, the fight against corruption is not new. It has been on for decades. How to curb theft and graft has been a major concern from the sixties. It was a major reason the first and second republics crumbled like cookies. But corruption has lingered till today for obvious reasons.

The cankerworm would not have survived, if previous governments had tackled it with all seriousness and with appropriate strategies.

The starting point under Olukoyede was the reform of the anti-graft body to purge it of the peculiar societal vices. The revelation by the chairman was mind-boggling. In lamentation, Olukoyede, who visited President Bola Tinubu in Aso Villa, Abuja recently, disclosed that EFCC investigators were prone to gratification and bribery, thereby casting doubt on their capacity for thoroughness, probity and efficiency. It is ironic. But with that background knowledge, Olukoyede kicked off the battle from the agen-



cy. The reasons are not far-fetched. A bribe taker is not less vicious and dubious than a giver because they are both enveloped by greed. It is a paradox, an anathema.

If those saddled with the investigation of financial crimes are fraudulent, the process and the outcome are laced with lies, prevarications, compromise, and hypocrisy.

Olukoyede has not spared the rod to save dishonest investigators who have failed the test of integrity. He has intensified efforts to fish out the culprits and sent them packing, thereby preventing the few bad eggs from damaging the time-tested reputation of the agency beyond panel-beating.

The result is that bribe-taking investigators are not permitted to act as willing tools for frustrating

investigations.

Also, the commission has asserted its independence. It is not strictly tied to the apron strings of the federal Attorney-General. Nigerians, particularly opposition elements, do not perceive it as an outfit of oppression and witch-hunting in the hands of the power that be.

In trying to maintain a clean break from the past, Olukoyede has rekindled public confidence.

Corruption is the bane of development in Nigeria.

It has taken its toll on the various sectors; it permeates all strata of society and made Nigeria a laughing stock in the comity of nations. Ironically, the proceeds of corruption are lodged in bank accounts in the Western countries.

According to observers, corruption manifests in various ways.

From the culture of 10 per cent bribes in the sixties, successive governments have become big contracts for grabs.

Contracts are awarded to undeserving, shadow companies that cannot be traced in the past. Perpetrators later graduated into outright embezzlement, money laundering, a guarantee of salaries for ghost workers, and pension fraud. In high places, allegations of forex abuse, round-tripping and dubious acquisition of banks are still being investigated.

More damaging is the growing humanitarian fraud. It was claimed that the school feeding programme was more effective during holidays when pupils were in their parents' homes.

Also, reports of police corruption stare the public in the face.

Some policemen openly ask for bribes on highways. They aid and abet crime, thereby sending their victims into agony.

In some states, governance has become business as usual, a peculiar tea party. Former governors, ministers, and top government functionaries are answering charges in court many years after leaving office.

They are in a vantage position to use looted funds to undermine investigation, prosecution, and the entire judicial process. Trials of suspects last a decade and a re-trial is ordered. The prosecutor is fatigued. The case is abandoned. It pales into a waste of time, energy, and public resources.

A Right Activist, Lanre Suraj said the key driver of corruption is greed. The corollary is kleptocracy, underscoring, the collapse of morality, growing indiscipline and the motivation for sabotage and subversion by custodian of public resources.

Many are those accumulating money for their offspring who would most likely mismanage the stolen wealth in the future. Also, the children of the poor who bear the brunt of corruption are now taking their pounds of flesh as troublemakers of the same society.

Their activities include armed robbery, banditry, kidnapping, and ritual murders. The corrupt gangs are not insulated from the threats to public order and peace.

There is a correlation between corruption and underdevelopment, particularly in Africa. As funds are diverted, project implementation suffers. It is a huge cost to welfare.

The repercussions are also grave. After their reckless looting, the leaders later forfeit blissful retirement and begin to attend courts, some of them at the twilight of life. Lack of contentment made them steal while in office.

In their old age, they do not have peace of mind. Their wealth becomes vanity. Those who have passed on left behind a legacy their children cannot be proud of.

"Is a good name not better than wealth acquired in a dubious way at the expense of society?" asked Suraj.

If looted funds are still being recovered from a deceased military Head of State to the tune of billions, almost 30 years after his demise, it is an indication of how soldiers of fortune have silently ruined Nigeria.

A novel form of corruption between 2003 and 2011 was election rigging, including alteration of results and declaration of losers as winners. The sanctity of the ballot box was violated. The scenario was a prelude to legitimacy crises in some states in the Southwest, the old Midwest, and the Southeast.

The impact of corruption on



Focus



“
The three focal areas are: focus on the mandate of the EFCC, pursuit of transparency and accountability and building the image of Nigeria
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the image of the country is also serious. Foreign investors are wary of corrupt countries, which they perceive as a threat to business. In their opinion, an atmosphere devoid of bribery, misappropriation, or embezzlement contributes to the ease of doing business.

Many years after the setting up of the EFCC and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), corruption has continued to grow in leaps and bounds. Yet, observers have contended that the situation would have been worse without the anti-graft agencies.

Beneficiaries of corruption are eager to jump at the opportunity provided by plea bargaining, which makes a thief who has stolen billions to redeem himself in court by paying pittance as fine, thereby escaping jail to continue to enjoy his loot in freedom.

According to a report titled: ‘Corruption in Nigeria: Patterns and Trends,’ by the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS), government officials received N721 billion bribe in 2023. The figure amounted to about 0.35 percent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product, GDP.

The report which was based on a survey conducted with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, stated that the average cash received by public office holders last year was N8, 284, an increase from an average of N5,754 in 2019.

The report added: “According to the 2023 survey, the average cash bribe paid was 8,284 Nigerian Naira. “While the nominal average cash bribe size increased since 2019 (from NGN 5,754), this does not account for inflation. The inflation-adjusted average cash bribe in 2023 was 29 per cent smaller than in 2019 in terms of what could be bought with the money.

“Overall, it is estimated that a total of roughly N721 billion (US\$1.26 billion) was paid in cash bribes to public officials in Nigeria in 2023, corresponding to 0.35 per cent of the entire Gross Domestic Product of Nigeria.”

For Olukoyede, corruption is the next deadliest affliction tormenting humanity, apart from terrorism.

He lamented that most of the former governors being prosecuted today were those who could not pay minimum wage. To expose more corrupt officials, he urged Nigerians to embrace whistle-blowing, adding that it should be backed by consistent commitment.

The EFCC chairman elaborated on his anti-corruption crusade at the stakeholders’ meeting held at the Unity Fountain in Abuja to commemorate this year’s African Anti-Corruption Day.

The highlight of the event was the ‘Road Walk’ by employees of the EFCC and other stakeholders in the anti-corruption corridor.

Olukoyede led the walk from

the Wuse two, Zonal Office of the commission, through the streets of Maitama, before terminating at the Unity Fountain.

Speakers at the meeting also included, the representative of the Chief of Defence Staff, Air Vice Marshal Etim Markus; Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) Director-General, Controller of Nigerian Correctional Service, and Director-General of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC).

Painting an awful picture of gloom, he said urgent and concerted steps should be taken to kill corruption, adding: “Aside terrorism, corruption ranks as the next deadliest affliction of humanity in every region of the world.”

To stem the tide, the EFCC chairman said the battle should be embraced by all Nigerians as a collective responsibility. Olukoyede emphasised that the battle cannot be won through lip service, emotional outburst or mere mob campaigns.

He stressed: “There is a need for

commitment, passion, consistence and credibility of intelligence. Every whistle blown must point towards truth and evidential proofs.”

The chairman said in view of the danger and threat to existence which corruption represents, it is imperative that individuals, communities and corporate bodies should join hands to tackle it frontally. He emphasised that the fight against corruption required absolute commitment to integrity and unfaltering focus.

Olukoyede enjoined the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and civil society organisations to be part of the anti-graft war, saying that most of the governors being prosecuted today were those who denied workers their reward for labour.

Many stakeholders agreed that a successful battle against corruption can only be waged through joint efforts. NLC President Joe Ajearo said the union will fully support the EFCC in its fight.

The Chairperson, Conference of Civil Society and Coordinator Civil Military Co-operation (CIMCO), Adams Otakwu, commended the agency for galvanising Nigerians to stand against the menace.

He said: “It may interest us to know that upon all the threats to national security, inclusive of terrorism, insurgency, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the most insidious of them is corruption and that is why the fight against corruption must be tackled head on.”

Apart from the challenges of the economy and security, many are of the view that President Bola Tinubu has to reinvigorate the anti-graft war in the national interest.

His administration has promised Nigerians many developmental and poverty-reducing programmes.

To analysts, the recovered looted public funds can be deployed to the implementation people-oriented programmes without recourse

to borrowing.

Also, security experts believe that instead of looking forward to the arrest of corrupt officials, institutional frameworks for preventing sleaze should be strengthened in the public service. Loopholes should be effectively plugged, those who have stolen should not be allowed to go scot-free to mock Nigeria and what has been taken illegally should be retrieved from them.

Physical contact with cash should be discouraged in favour of automated processes and systems.

The step taken by the President in suspending his Humanitarian Affairs Minister, Beta Edu, over allegations of corruption is laudable. The anti-corruption battle should not be a respecter of persons, big or small.

It would serve as a deterrent to others to be more careful and imbibe the right values. Ministers, special advisers, other aides, and top civil servants are likely to adjust to the body language of the President, particularly his inclination towards tough measures against reckless financial activities.

Speedy prosecution of suspects in special courts or tribunals, and adequate punitive measures, including recovery of the looted funds, long jail terms, and a ban from politics, may be more effective.

But, media trial of suspects should be discouraged. The commission should uphold the core values of the EFCC, which include integrity, courage and professionalism. There is a need to reduce corruption to the barest minimum because national survival and global reputation rest squarely on how far the country can go in the fight against graft.

Between October 2023, when Olukoyede was confirmed, and January this year, EFCC has recovered N70, 556,658,370.5.

In a document titled: ‘Operations and Recoveries,’ the recovery is as follows: N60,969,047,634.25, \$10,522,778.57, £150,002.10, €4,119.90; bringing it to N70.5 billion within the first 100 days.

Within the same period, 3, 325 petitions were received, and 2,657 accepted; 747 persons were convicted for money laundering and internet fraud.

Olukoyede said that there would be no hiding place for economic saboteurs. Remarkably, EFCC has tried to crack down on businesses and others transacting in dollars. The chairman had also taken his sensitisation and enlightenment programmes to schools, urging students to shun cybercrimes.

A commentator, Ayodeji Seriki, believes Olukoyede will succeed, if he does not deviate from his vision and mission.

He said: “The three focal areas are: focus on the mandate of the EFCC, pursuit of transparency and accountability and building the image of Nigeria.

“To achieve these, he has dwelt on the need for collective responsibility, greater emphasis on preventive frameworks against graft and premium attention on transactional credits.”



Knowledge

Why Unity Schools old students are fighting for overhaul of education system - Alegeh

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

Former president of the Niger Bar Association (NBA), Augustine Alegeh, a senior advocate of Nigeria (SAN), has told those who preach that education was a waste or scam to be prepared to take responsibility of their opinion and decision.

The 1985 University of Benin Law graduate also disclosed why old students of the Unity Secondary Schools seem to be at the forefront in the fight to rebuild Nigerian schools.

Alegeh spoke at an interview at the recently concluded 41st plenary of the Unity Schools Old Students Association (USOSA) where he reacted to growing notion by young people against education.

The 1981 graduand of the Federal Government College, Warri, (FGC-Warri) advised young people to find the type of education that suited them instead of writing off the entire education process as a waste.

The keynote speaker however, warned that people would bear responsibility for their opinions and decisions.

He said: "You know when we talk of education there are different sectors in education: formal and informal. You need to find what suits you, but formal education is not negotiable. Any youth believing that school is a waste of time is going to be responsible for his or her opinion or decision."

He further said that sometimes, such a mindset would come back to haunt them.

"You need education in whatsoever you do, so you need to find what works for you and that is still education. For example, the native medical system or the herbal system. This is the same herbs that are the raw materials used to make the drugs that people take, but it's just that our presentation of them without dosage and without preservation makes them unhealthy.

"Even the children of native doctors or herbalists decided to study how to extract the vital ingredients from these herbs and present them in a better and formal way. Some study medicine, some study pharmacy or other professions within the medical line," he said.

Highlighting the major points of the keynote, the Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) said it was all about education and legacy and national unity. "The key part of the address is that without education we are nothing. Education is everything. It's education that gives us the enabling mind to develop our country.

"It is education that gives the skills required to develop the country. Its education that gives us knowledge to make correct decisions to have unity. It's education that allows us to understand that we are better working together than working differently. So, education is important. That is the whole theme of our discussion that education is everything."

Why old students are fighting

Justifying the seemingly tireless fight by USOSA for education, the former NBA boss those of them who had the opportunity of attending the Unity Schools system were privileged to attend good schools. "We have the duty to give back to the system by fighting to restore the standard of education in Nigeria. The challenge is for us to ask ourselves as we are here today is to ask whether we are giving back enough?



USOSA president, Michael Magaji, addressing the plenary in Port Harcourt

Have we done enough to the system that had kept us where we are today?

"I think that is the essence of what we are doing today. I pray at the end of the day when we leave here, we have many more people interested in giving back personal contributions, putting their own quota to the development of education which enhances national development."

He rejected the notion of attitude or mentality of students of Unity

Schools, saying Unity Schools were not spared of the problems in the education system.

"The challenges that confront education in the land also confront all schools, either unity schools or not. They include overcrowding, insufficient funding. Most importantly, there is lack of access. At some times we would need to ask ourselves: what is the population of Nigeria; what is our land mass and how many unity

schools do we really have for us to make a meaningful impact?"

Alegeh had asked the audience how many of them that had their children in Nigerian schools or in Unity Schools. He explained in the interview that those that sent their children abroad didn't do so because they had too much money. "They did so because they want their children to have quality education like they had.

"Those that didn't send their kids abroad and took them to different schools in Nigeria, they did that because they want the same thing. So, it's evidence we need to get back to the basics. We need to ensure that our Unity Schools and our government schools are able to fit for purpose, that they are able to provide quality education."

If that was available, he insisted, people would take their kids back there. "There's nobody that wants to spend too much or more than they could afford in school but now people are taking loans to send their kids to good schools to overseas.

"So, we need to go back to the basics. Let the schools be well-equipped. If we take all these measures and correct the teaching methodology, our children should be able to pass out from these schools with good education that can guarantee employment. Then, people will stop sending their children abroad and you know what the impact will be.

"We are talking about dollars today at N1,500 and a lot of people are still having the dollars to pay for their kids' school fees. If we had good schools here and all the money we pay out as fees is invested back into the country, it will be better for the country and better for all of us."

The audience was told that former

students of Unity Schools now in the Diaspora were eager to help Nigeria, especially their former schools.

This was further disclosed by Michael Magaji, President-General of the Unity Schools Old Students Association (USOSA), in Port Harcourt where the 41st Plenary was held. The theme of the plenary was hinged on: 'Education is the Key Foundation for Building Legacies and Our United Future'.

Welcoming delegates, the President-General said ex-students around the world have shown interest in giving help back home. He described USOSA members as one of the keenest groups for the unity and transformation of Nigeria, especially its education system.

He said the essence of the annual meetings being taken round the country is to help in mobilising ex-students to build a strong force that can rescue and transform the education sector to how it was in the past.

He said the Unity Schools were so strong and famous around the world that it was training South Africans to prepare to manage the affairs of their country after apartheid.

He pointed to the resilience of USOSAns, saying despite the hardship in Nigeria, their Port Harcourt branch mounted such an exquisite plenary worthy of global acclaim. He said the association now has over one million members, larger than some countries.

On the theme for 2024, he said it helps to think deeply about rebuilding the foundation of the nation. "We have been preaching that if you don't get secondary school level of education right, the entire education and human capital development system will fall below mark, will be weak.

"This is because quality is key. Primary school certificate holders were strong enough to work efficiently in offices and companies. These days, even with university degrees, many can't write any piece well.

"Engagement on this will continue. The education summit we held in 2023 was also to achieve this."

He said the association is on solution mode such that USOSA brings in ex-students (alumni) of other schools to join and give their own perspectives on any topic of discussion and to also tell say what the issues are (concerning standard of education).

"We document them in implementable steps and send to the Ministry of Education. We have also created USOSA Education Desk to collate education problems and support policy options that will improve quality of Education."

Magaji said public sector education must be improved to help the system. "We have USOSAns in government from Senate President, deputy, army chiefs, ministers. We need more of this to produce those who can help to rebuild Education in Nigeria.

"We can contribute policy tips to run Education. At a time in the past, Nigeria's 'Unity Schools' trained South Africans (after Apartheid) to learn how to run segments of their country after apartheid. Who says Nigeria's education system won't improve so much that this kind of thing can happen again, and Nigeria can train people from other countries."

The plenary tried to recognise the oldest sets found at the event (1977) to the one from the youngest set, 2017.



VIPs at the plenary

Entertainment

LG Electronics unveils winners of K-POP talents competition

BRIGHT IMOH

LG Electronics has unveiled the winners of its K-POP talents competition as part of its commitment to nurture the “talents of tomorrow” and bring to life the bond between Korea and Nigeria.

The competition held in Lagos showcased a stellar lineup of 80 incredibly talented performers since April who left no stone unturned in their pursuit of glory.

The unique event marked a milestone starting from Ibadan, Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt where the hearts and souls of the passionate youths went into giving so much to display their innate talents.

At the end of the keenly contested competition, ‘Mamus’ of Port Harcourt won first place in the vocal category, while the dance category was won by the group ‘Limitless Supreme 6’ from Port Harcourt.

The finalists in the dance category included ‘Femmeforce’ from Lagos, 1st runner up, and ‘Move-matics’ from Lagos 2nd runner up.

“In the vocal category, the 1st runner and 2nd runner up included ‘Kcee’ from Port Harcourt and ‘Shammah’ from Port Harcourt.

Hyoung Sub Ji, managing director, LG Electronics West Africa said the LG K-POP Fiesta 2024 is a celebration of not only incredibly talented K-POP enthusiasts but also



L-R: Hyoung Sub Ji, managing director, LG Electronics West Africa, Hassan Fouani, head of Marketing, Fouani, and Limitless Supreme 6, 1st prize winners in the Dance category of the LG K-Pop 2024 grand finale held at Eko Hotel and Suites, Victoria Island, Lagos.

the rich tapestry of global culture.

He said that for LG Electronics, combining the love for cutting-edge technology with the immense popularity of K-POP music was the main gain.

According to him, building on LG brand identity, which transcends generations, the company would like to develop deeper relations with Gen Z by making their lives better through innova-

tive products like LG XBOOM for immersive sound experiences and meaningful integrated marketing campaigns.

Sub Ji said that K-POP brings a great multi-dimensional platform that combines the best of audio-visual entertainment and power-packed performances.

“We are immensely proud to have brought this exhilarating event to life. It was an incredible showcase

of talent, passion, and the harmonious blending of innovation and entertainment,” he said.

He said that N12 million was awarded to the winners. N3 million apiece was awarded to first place winner in singing and dance categories. The first and second runners-up in each category received N2 million and N1 million respectively.

Hari Elluru, head of corporate

marketing said LG is grateful to the youth and Gen-Z for making the event a grand success, adding that through the company’s recent global campaign of Life’s Good, it is encouraging customers to have a positive outlook on life and music which certainly plays a significant role in uplifting the human spirit.

According to Elluru, the electronics brand is deeply grateful for the tremendous interest and love shown by all the participants in the K-POP contest and the enthusiastic audience who attended.

“K-POP has transcended boundaries, becoming a powerful means of cultural exchange not only within Korea, but also with people around the world. We aspire to offer dreams and hope to the youth of Nigeria through the magic of K-POP.

V J Adams, an emcee with extensive experience, seamlessly hosted the event. It was graced by the esteemed presence of Nollywood actors Ruth Kadiri and Susan Peters and judging by Nigerian singer and songwriter Ric Hassani and renowned award-winning dancer Kaffy.

The LG K-POP will forever remain etched in the memories of those present, as a testament to the boundless creativity, talent, and technological excellence that LG Electronics consistently delivers.

Amo Farm Sieberer Hatchery celebrates, supports Alaawe of Awe’s coronation

Amo Farm Sieberer Hatchery Ltd, a leader in Nigeria’s agricultural sector, has commemorated and supported the coronation of the new Alaawe of Awe, Oba Cornelius Abiola Taiwo Oladokun III, reaffirming its commitment to the community. The coronation took place recently at St. Joseph Grammar School, Awe, Oyo State.

Awe, Oyo State, where approximately 70percent of Amo Farm’s - national operations are based, holds a special place in the company’s ethos. Over the years, Awe has not only been a pivotal location for operations but also a cherished home where the company has flourished. Amo Farm Sieberer Hatchery is the primary employer in Awe, making substantial contributions to local employment and economic vitality, and has consistently engaged in various Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, including establishing a computer school to empower local youths.

Prior to the coronation ceremony, Amo Farm demonstrated its enduring support by presenting gifts to the newly crowned Alaawe. The gesture symbolised the company’s appreciation and commitment to Awe’s prosperity



L-R: Dotun Odekeye, Aare of Awe; Ogunbode, Aro of Awe; Ayoola Oduntan, group managing director, Amo Farm Sieberer Hatchery Ltd; HRM Oba Cornelius Abiola Taiwo Oladokun III, Alaawe of Awe, and Olori Olujemisi Taiwo, Oloja of Ago-Oja, Isale Oyo.

under its new monarch. The presentation was led by key members of the company’s leadership team, including Anand Burra, managing director of Amo Farm Sieberer Hatchery; Agboola Belgore, managing director of Amo Byng; Emmanuel Oloruntoba, director of Supply Chain, and Victor Alabi,

HR and Admin Manager.

Additionally, Ayoola Oduntan, Group Managing Director of Amo Farm Sieberer Hatchery Limited, paid a congratulatory visit to the Alaawe, emphasising the significance of Awe to the company’s operations. “Awe holds a special place in our national operations,

and the support and partnership we share are deeply valued,” remarked Oduntan.

“I extend heartfelt congratulations to you, and I pray for a prosperous and harmonious reign ahead. I look forward to continuing our journey of mutual respect, growth, and development for the

benefit of all.”

In response, Oba Oladokun expressed gratitude for Dr. Oduntan’s visit and highlighted the positive impact of Amo Farm Sieberer Hatchery on Awe and its people. “Amo Farm has brought significant benefits and positive developments to Awe and its people, and for this, we are sincerely appreciative,” said the Alaawe, who extended prayers for the continued success and prosperity of Amo Farm.

On the day of the coronation, Amo Farm demonstrated its support by participating in the thanksgiving service at Christ Baptist Church, Awe. The company served the guests at the event with Chicken products from its subsidiary company natnudO Foods.

The highlight of the coronation ceremony was the presentation of the staff of office to Oba Oladokun by the Deputy Governor of Oyo State, Barrister Abdul-Raheem Adebayo Lawal, representing His Excellency, Governor Seyi Makinde.

Amo Farm remains steadfast in its commitment to Awe and looks forward to continuing its fruitful partnership with the Alaawe and the community at large. The company is dedicated to contributing positively to the growth and prosperity of Awe and its people.

Spotlight

'The Leading Woman Show' podcast debuts to promote gender-balanced leadership

IFEOMA OKEKE
-KORIEOCHA

WILAN Global, a pioneering organisation dedicated to promoting women in leadership, has announced the launch of 'The Leading Woman Show' podcast.

This is to provide a safe space for women in leadership Nigeria to discuss issues related to achieving gender-balanced leadership. The new format will be available on major podcast networks including on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Amazon Music, expanding its reach and impact far beyond previous boundaries.

By transitioning to this format, WILAN Global aims to make its crucial content more accessible and engaging for a global audience.

'The Leading Woman Show' has long been a cornerstone of WILAN Global's mission, providing a safe space for women in leadership Nigeria to discuss issues related to achieving gen-



der-balanced leadership.

The podcast format will facilitate the organization's need to offer listeners better access to the show's valuable insights and discussions. In this first season of the podcast series, listeners can expect to hear a diverse range of women leaders across various sectors. Each episode will feature in-depth interviews and conversations, delving into the experiences and challenges faced by women in leadership roles.

From exploring current leadership trends to offering actionable advice for aspiring leaders, the podcast will be a valuable resource for anyone looking to develop their leadership skills while learning

from real-life examples.

The inaugural season of 'The Leading Woman Show' podcast is now live and can be streamed on all major podcast platforms, including Spotify and Amazon Music.

This expansion reiterates WILAN Global's commitment to providing women with the resources and opportunities they need to succeed. The organisation is keen on dishing out versatile and accessible content to support women in leadership across the globe.

As part of this exciting launch, WILAN Global will continue to spotlight culture shapers from Nigeria and beyond, showcasing their stories and contributions to leader-

ship. The podcast aims to foster a global community of women leaders, offering inspiration and practical advice to help listeners navigate their own paths in leadership.

In a statement by WILAN Global, it stated that listeners can expect episodes that highlight success stories, address common leadership challenges, and discuss strategies for overcoming certain obstacles women face in leadership.

Each episode will be designed to engage and support women in leadership Nigeria and internationally, making it a vital resource for anyone passionate about advancing their leadership skills.

WILAN Global is committed to making 'The Leading Woman Show' a production that will inspire and guide countless of women around the globe, igniting within them the passion to do the extraordinary wherever they find themselves.

By leveraging the power of podcasting, the organisation aims to reach and inspire a wider audience, furthering its mission to promote gender-balanced leadership in every facet of society.

Mbah commends Enugu PDP Ward Congresses

Governor of Enugu State, Peter Mbah, has lauded the People's Democratic Party (PDP) ward congresses in the state as a huge success, noting that the process was peaceful, free, fair, and credible.

The Chairman of the five-man PDP Ward Congresses Electoral Committee for Enugu State, Toni Iyoha, who monitored the exercise across the 260 electoral wards of the state, also commended party faithful for the peaceful and transparent exercise, saying the strength of the party was at the grassroots.

Governor Mbah, who was elated at the huge turnout at the congresses across the state, said it was a confirmation that the few setbacks suffered by the PDP in the last general election were an exception and not the norm, assuring that the party would continue to consolidate on the successes recorded so far.

The governor stated this while fielding questions from newsmen at his Owo Ward, in Nkanu East LGA, where he participated in the congress.

He said, "We are truly delighted not just because of the

outcome and turnout of what we witnessed here today, but also the way and manner the people conducted themselves, especially as they acknowledged that this is a family affair.

"This is what we represent as a party. We believe in entrenching democracy at the grassroots level because the strength of our party is determined by our visibility at the grassroots; and the number of people that came out attests to it.

"We are equally not surprised that we have a lot of people, who are thronging into the PDP family to become members. Since the advent of the Fourth Republic, Enugu has been a PDP state. We have enjoyed over the last 25 years the leadership of the state and we know that we have been better for it as people."

Also speaking to newsmen after monitoring the exercise at Owo Ward, Chairman of the PDP Ward Congress Electoral Committee, Iyoha, said what he saw during his monitoring of the exercise with his team across the state was a testimony that the people of the state were happy with the PDP and the Mbah administration.

Foundation institutes scholarship for Auchi Polytechnic students

MODESTUS ANAESORONYE

Dr. Kerobo & Mrs. Gloria Foundation has instituted a scholarship award for students of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State.

This is in recognition of the challenges faced by young Nigerians in accessing higher ed-

ucation, and the potential they hold for driving positive change in the society.

Sunny Kerobo, a PhD holder and alumnus of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, said the 'Dr Kerobo Luminary Scholar Award' was an initiative of his Foundation aimed at curbing the financial challenges faced by students of higher institution in the payment of their school

fees, thereby enabling beneficiary students to further their education.

The target, he said, is to ensure that 14 best deserving male and female students are given scholarship annually through the foundation as part of his contribution to education development in the country.

Sunny Kerobo, who is the MD/CEO, Kero Global Lendas Ltd, was represented at the inauguration ceremony by O'tega Samuel Emorwodia, his executive assistant and Idowu Kerobo, general business administrator, Kero Global Lendas Ltd.

He further said that basically, for the whole school, "we have been able to reach out to 12 physically challenged students, another 16 students from each of the departments in the polytechnics and another 10 students from the Office Technology Management Department (OTM) where Sunny Kerobo graduated from.



Environment, Niger Delta ministers in Ogoni over clean up, others

PIUS DUKOR

The Minister of Environment Balarabe Abbas Lawal and Minister of Niger Delta AbubaKar Momoh stormed Ogoniland weekend to commission water project and inspect on-going HYPREP projects. The in Gokana and Tai Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

In his address at Bomu Community in Gokana Local

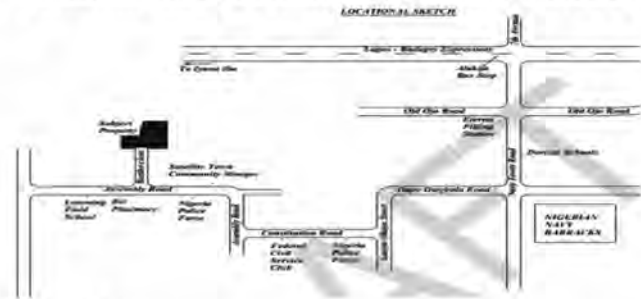
Government Area, the Minister of Environment, Balarabe Lawal while responding to the request by Ogoni people to consider more Ogoni contractors both men and women in the award of cleanup project, said that he would consider indigenous contractors from Ogoni but maintained that they must be qualified because he would not compromise quality.

"I want your support, commitment and buy-in. We must consider our youths and our

mothers in contracts, but we cannot compromise quality," he said. Lawal explained that the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) has achieved a lot from the last time he visited Ogoniland. He commended HYPREP for drastic adjustment, noting that they are now better than ever before.

The Minister of Environment further said that the project was significant and that the importance of Clean up cannot be overstressed.

PRIME LAND PARCEL LOCATED ALONG BARTHO CLOSE, OFF ASSEMBLY ROAD, SATELLITE TOWN, AMUWO ODOFIN, LAGOS STATE



NEIGHBOURHOOD

The immediate neighbourhood is predominantly residential. Notable landmarks available within the vicinity include: Learning Field School, Zef Pharmacy, Nigeria Police Force, Satellite Town Community Mosque, Federal Civil Service Club, Nigerian Navy Barracks, Eterna Filling Station amongst others. Infrastructural facilities available within the neighbourhood include: mains electricity, telecommunication services and a network of motorable access roads.

SITE

The site is on Longitude E003015'53.6" and Latitude N06027'01.7" on WGS 84 Datum. The irregular shaped site appears firm, level and well drained, covering an approximate area of 7,412.53 square metres (based on linear measurement taken on site). It is delineated along its perimeter line with sandcrete blockwalls rendered smooth and partly finished with texcote paint atop with metal spikes. Access to the premises is through a vehicular metal gate and a separate pedestrian wicket. The unbuilt portion is paved with reinforced massconcrete



Ownership is through a deed of assignment done with the original owner who had statutory right of occupancy.

Serious buyers contact for site visit.

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Environment

Climate governance crucial for climate action, says Environment Minister

LADI PATRICK-OKWOLI

Balarabe Lawal, minister of Environment, has emphasised the critical importance of climate governance at the sub-national level.

Lawal, stated this at the unveiling of the Sub-National Climate Governance Performance Ranking and report for Nigeria's 36 states, held in Abuja recently.

"This event marks a pivotal moment in our collective efforts to addressing the impacts of climate change which has become a challenge that transcends borders and requires concerted effort of government at all levels.

"This ranking not only serves as an acknowledgment of their achievements



but also as a beacon of encouragement for others to emulate.

"We will highlight the pivotal role that sub-national entities play in driving sustainable environmental practices," Lawal said.

He commended the collaborative effort of the Society for Planet and Prosperity, the Department of Climate Change of the Federal Ministry of Environment, and the Nigeria Governor's Forum (NGE).

"It provided us with an understanding of the status of climate challenges and opportunities within the sub-national level to mitigate the challenges. It also gave an insight on the impacts of climate change, the

policies enacted to mitigate these impacts and actions taken across various sectors," the minister said.

Chukwumerije Okereke, chairman, Board of Trustees, Society for Planet and Prosperity, said that Climate governance was essential to tackle climate change.

Okereke also said that climate change was not only environmental but also an economic problem and urged stakeholders to tackle it at the state and sub-national levels.

The important highlight of the event was the presentation of prizes to some states according to their performances.

Lagos, Gombe, and Ebonyi are first, second and third respectively while Borno and Ekiti are both in fourth position.

NOSDRA, NEITI pledge continued commitment to eliminate gas flaring

LADI PATRICK-OKWOLI

The National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) and the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) have reiterated their commitment to reducing gas flaring in Nigeria.

Speaking during the National Extractives Dialogue 2024, held in Abuja Friday, Chukwumeka Woke, director-general of NOSDRA, underscored the agency's mission to combat gas flaring and methane emissions.

The event, themed 'Gas Flare Reduction: A Catalyst for Accelerating Nigeria's Path to Net-Zero Emissions and Sustainable Development,' brought together key stakeholders to address the critical issue of gas flaring and its environmental impacts.

"The reduction of gas flaring is integral to our mission, aligning with our broader mandate to safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of oil and gas activities," Woke stated.

"Today, we are not simply discussing an environmental issue; we are confronting



a fundamental challenge that profoundly impacts our national development and global commitments," he further said.

Woke highlighted the detrimental effects of persistent gas flaring on Nigeria's natural resources, stressing that addressing this issue could unlock new pathways for energy efficiency, economic diversification, and community resilience.

He added that reducing gas flaring would boost economic growth and job creation, in line with President Bola Tinubu's 8-point Agenda.

Orji Orji, executive secretary of NEITI, represented by Dieter Bassi, director of Policy Planning and Strategy, not-

ed that the dialogue provided a constructive platform for stakeholders to discuss strategies for reducing gas flaring, lowering carbon footprints, and promoting sustainable development.

"This dialogue is crucial for developing actionable plans to mitigate gas flaring and its associated environmental impacts," Orji said. "Through collaborative efforts, we can create a sustainable and prosperous future for Nigeria."

The commitment from NOSDRA and NEITI signifies a unified effort towards achieving net-zero emissions and enhancing sustainable development in Nigeria.

FG tasks stakeholders on need for action on Biodiversity

LADI PATRICK-OKWOLI

The Federal Government has called on stakeholders in the environmental sector to intensify their efforts to combat threats to biodiversity across the country.

Iziah Salako, minister of State for Environment, made this appeal during a workshop themed 'National Biodiversity for the Early Action Support Project to Implement the Kunming-Montreal Glob-

al Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF).'

"It is clear that we must use all available tools to mitigate the threats to biodiversity, with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework guiding our efforts," Salako said. He emphasised the critical role stakeholders play in preserving the nation's biodiversity and the natural resources essential for survival.

Salako highlighted the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) as the primary policy instrument for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the national level.

He further noted that the African continent was particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, species loss, and biodiversity destruction, underscoring the urgency of coordinated action.



Health and Living

Healthcare receives major boost as Eno approves medical residency fund

ANIEFIOK UDONQUAK

Governor Umo Eno has approved the payment of medical residency training fund of N1million each to resident doctors in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

The Medical Residency Training Fund is a programme designed to provide financial support to cover various expenses associated with medical residency training including costs for the multi-stages of examinations, update course fees, research projects, personal equipment and accoutrements.

This approval by the governor for the payment of the medical residency fund to the medical doctors is expected to facilitate the post-graduate training of doctors with specialist skills and qualifications while supporting their careers, Ekerette Udoh, chief press secretary to the governor, said.

According to Udoh, it will also help to produce specialists who will bridge the existing manpower gap, especially at the Consultant cadre, across the secondary healthcare facilities and mitigate brain-drain in the state.

In a statement made available to BusinessDay in Uyo, the state capital, it stated that it was in line with the Arise Agenda's emphasis on having a healthy and productive workforce to drive the many developmental initiatives of the state government.

It stated that it emphasizes the training of qualified specialists in the different fields of medicine



which it said remains a top priority of Government.

“Also, as the state gets ready to start the Akwa Ibom State University Teaching Hospital, these specialists will provide the needed manpower to the teaching hospital.

“Quality healthcare service delivery especially at the primary level, is a key component of the Arise Agenda. The Governor, has followed through on this, with the construction of, and commissioning of model primary health care centres in some Local Government Areas including others that will soon be commissioned.

“The inauguration of the Akwa Ibom State Health Insurance Agency Board with a clear mandate to start the journey towards ending out-of-pocket expenses for health

care, is another bold move by the Governor in the fulfillment of his campaign promise.

“Governor Eno, has also directed the recruitment of healthcare professionals to help drive his vision in healthcare delivery service.

“Several free medical outreach programmes have also been conducted across the three senatorial districts in the state, where people with various medical issues or underlying medical conditions were attended to, and surgeries and other medical procedures performed free.

“The Governor appreciates the robust collaboration that has existed between government and the leadership of the National Association of Government General Medical and Dental Practitioners (NAG-GMDP).”

PCN seals 571 pharmacies, medicine shops in Bauchi

AYUBA MAFFI

The Pharmacy Council of Nigeria (PCN) has said that it has sealed over five hundred and seventy-one (571) premises in Bauchi State.

The leadership of the association who made this known while briefing newsmen in Bauchi said that 37 pharmacists, 144 patent medicine shops and 390 illegal medicine shops were sealed.

The Director Enforcement Pharmacy Council of Nigeria, Stephen Esumobi, said that “PCN is the Federal government parastatals charged with the responsibility of regulating and controlling the education, training and practice of pharmacy in all its aspects and ramifications in line with the pharmacy council of Nigeria establishment act 2022.

“For medicine to deliver desired therapeutic outcomes, it is important that they remain safe, effective of good quality throughout their life.

“One of the factors that affects stability and therapeutic benefits of medicine is good storage facilities with appropriate temperature and humidity.”

He further said that poor-quality medicines have been shown in several studies to be responsible for a large percentage of cases of treatment failures and avoidable deaths.

“In 2022, the PCN enforcement team visited Bauchi State and some medicine outlets were sealed for operating in breach of our laws and regulations.

“Other breaches committed



by owners of pharmaceutical premises include operating without registration and non-renewal of premises certificates, poor documentation, patent medicine vendors stocking medicine outside the approved drug list and carrying out clinical services, wholesalers engaging in retail, pharmacist operating without a superintendent pharmacist,” he said.

According to Esumobi: “Illegal medicine dealers were also found to engage in the sale of large quantities of substances of abuse to members of the public, especially within the state capital thus aggravating the social and the security challenges emanating from the illicit use of these medicines.”

The Director Enforcement Pharmacy Council of Nigeria, Stephen Esumobi said that the state and zonal offices of the PCN have been directed to continue to monitor all the pharmaceutical premises within the state to ensure that they operate in line with the laws and regulations.

Health Coach emphasizes emotional wellness among victims of abuse

...Launches ‘Reinvent2Excel’ Foundation

A Certified Life and Trauma Recovery Coach, Jola-Grace Emmanuel, has emphasized the importance of emotional wellness among Nigerians.

The importance of wellness was highlighted during the launch of the Reinvent2Excel Foundation in Lagos.

Emmanuel said that the Foundation, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), was aimed at promoting emotional wellness among victims of abuse and domestic violence.

The launch coincided with the Reinvent2excel Summit held at Four Points By Sheraton Hotel in Victoria Island, Lagos.

The summit, which focused on Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being, featured workshops



and activities designed to promote mindfulness, aid stress management, build emotional resilience in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere.

The Convener also known as the ‘Soul Doctor,’ said that the event was to create awareness about emotional discourse.

“The summit essentially, among

other key areas, focused on fostering a supportive community where people feel comfortable discussing their emotions and seeking help,” she said.

The summit featured panels of discussion, interactive sessions where different segments of the society, leaders, clerics and Mental Health experts shared insights and strategies on how people can maintain emotional wellness in their everyday life.

Some of the guests that graced the occasion include Debola Deji-Kurunmi, Akin Akinpelu, David Dotun Adejumo, Mike Abdul and Damilola Oluwatoyinbo.

Others are Mayokun Oreofe, Grace Ofure, Omowunmi Dada, Gwendolyn Oshoniya and Babatunmise. Funke Felix-Adejumo, matron of the Foundation, was also present.



Health and Living

We want more women to be confident in their breasts - Salako

...launches Breast Health Fridays

ANTHONIA OBOKOH

In a significant move to combat breast cancer continuously, Sebecly Cancer Care has launched an extensive breast cancer awareness and screening programme, "Breast Health Fridays." This initiative aims to reduce the high number of late-stage breast cancer diagnoses among women.

"As a clinical oncologist, I see many women presenting with breast cancer at stages three and four. Our goal is to ensure early detection at stages one and two," said Omolola Salako, consultant, clinical oncologist and founder of Sebecly Cancer Care, during the launch event.

"We want more women to be confident in their breasts. We want them to know what's normal for them and understand the importance of breast screening."

Salako emphasized the need for women to be proactive about their breast health. "From age 20, women should perform self-examinations and see a doctor annually for a clinical breast examination as part of their medical checkup. Once they reach 40, a mammogram is essential."

The "Breast Health Fridays" programme provides discounted breast screening services to help women identify any abnormalities early.

"This initiative is crucial as it offers accessible screening, which can help detect breast cancer at an early stage," Salako explained.

"Today, abroad, they diagnose maybe 80,000 women with breast cancer because they adhere to pre-screening



L-R: Omolola Salako, Consultant Clinical Oncologist and Founder Sebecly Cancer Care; Omoye Oriaghan, Team Lead, Branding and Communication ACT Foundation, and Adaorah Enyi, director of Innovations, Pearl Oncology Specialist Hospital at the launch of the Breast Health Fridays programme in Lagos.

guidelines and undergo regular mammograms. In Nigeria, many women present with lumps, and it takes about six to 12 months before we know if it is cancer."

Salako stressed the importance of creating a culture where women are not afraid to undergo screening, noting that many avoid it due to fear and misinformation. "We want to reverse the stigma and misinformation surrounding breast cancer. Through the Best of

Fridays program, we aim to provide continuous advocacy and awareness."

The programme is set to run for the next five months, offering discounted services every Friday. These services include clinical breast examinations, ultrasounds, and mammograms, depending on the woman's age and findings.

"We want to ensure that any abnormalities are diagnosed promptly and accurately," said Salako. "Not every

breast abnormality is cancer, and early detection significantly increases the chances of successful treatment."

Sponsorship from various foundations has allowed the program to offer a 50percent discount on services, making them more accessible to women.

This initiative is part of a broader effort to screen more women and reduce the incidence of late-stage breast cancer diagnoses. "Our flagship program, Time to Screen, has reached over

30,000 women for breast and cervical screening," Salako noted. "No other NGO has screened as many women in Nigeria."

The Breast Health Fridays program is an expansion of this effort, dedicated exclusively to breast screening services. With centers offering mammograms on both the island and mainland, the program aims to cater to women across Lagos. "We have the infrastructure to provide these services and are scaling up to reach even more women," said Salako.

Representing the supporting foundation, Omoye Oriaghan, team lead for branding and communication, spoke on behalf of Osayi Alile, CEO of the ACT Foundation. She emphasized their commitment to addressing societal issues, including breast cancer.

"We partner with organisations to provide screenings and educate women on breast cancer. This year, we aim to screen 10,000 women and subsidize the cost for 1,000," she said. "Our goal is to make these services affordable for the average woman."

Omoye also highlighted the challenges in raising awareness about breast cancer in rural communities. "Many women are unaware of breast cancer symptoms or are too afraid to get screened. It is crucial to educate them that early detection can save lives."

By partnering and providing capacity building and funding, the foundation aims to support ongoing efforts to combat breast cancer in Nigeria. Through these collaborative efforts, the hope is to increase early detection rates and ultimately save more lives.

Experts advocate balanced reproductive technologies amid ethical, religious issues

ANTHONIA OBOKOH

While Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) offer promising solutions for couples facing infertility, experts emphasise that Nigeria must continuously navigate complex ethical and religious challenges to implement these advancements responsibly.

According to experts, a balanced approach is essential to harmonise medical progress with societal values, ensuring that ART not only provides hope but also aligns with the country's cultural and moral frameworks.

In an open house discussion on fertility treatment and surrogacy, commemorating World IVF Day and celebrating Clearview Hospital and Fertility Clinic 7th anniversary, participants stressed that this careful integration is crucial for advancing reproductive healthcare while respecting Nigeria's diverse beliefs.

"Many couples suffer in silence because they fear judgment. Stigma surrounding IVF and infertility treatments in some religious communities is a key issue," explained Busola Jegede, an apostle and convener of Daughter of Destiny Interdenominational.

"We need to create an environment where people feel comfortable seeking help and discussing their options," Jegede said.



L-R Busola Jegede, an apostle and convener of Daughter of Destiny Interdenominational, Ridwan Jamiu, Chief Imam of Lekki Central Mosque; Kunle Ajayi, managing director and CEO of Clearview Hospital and Fertility Clinic, Omolola Oke, Embryologist at Clearview Hospital and Fertility Clinic, La-Olu Osanyin, barrister and vice-president of the World Association of Medical Law.

She also said: "Waiting 15 or 20 years to address infertility is unnecessary when solutions are available. Early intervention can help couples start their families sooner and raise their children during their most active years."

Addressing denominational differences, Jegede highlighted the need for religious teachings to adapt to modern medical advancements. "We must respect our faith traditions while also embracing the medical options available to us," she said. "It's about finding a balance

and providing our congregations with the best possible support."

Ridwan Jamiu, Chief Imam of Lekki Central Mosque, emphasised the moral dimensions of fertility treatments and the importance of aligning medical interventions with religious teachings. "Assisted reproductive technologies should be within the confines of righteousness," Jamiu said. "While technology can help overcome infertility, it must not compromise the purity of lineage and family structures."

Jamiu pointed out that while ART is generally allowed and helps people have children, Islamic teachings generally prohibit practices such as surrogacy and sperm donation, considering them inconsistent with the sanctity of marriage and family lineage.

"The Islamic perspective is that such practices are haram (forbidden). Artificial insemination or surrogacy involves elements that are not permissible within the religion. It's essential to adhere to ethical and religious guidelines to pro-

tect the integrity of family and societal values."

He also warned of the potential exploitation of economically disadvantaged women who may resort to surrogacy out of financial desperation. "Many women might be exploited due to their financial situation," a participant cautioned. "We need to ensure that any practice of surrogacy is strictly regulated to prevent exploitation and ensure fair treatment."

From a legal perspective, La-Olu Osanyin, barrister and vice-president of the World Association of Medical Law, emphasised the necessity for robust regulations.

"Science often moves faster than the law. We need clear regulations to ensure ethical practices and protect all parties involved, especially the children," he said. Osanyin noted that while Lagos State has made strides with ethical guidelines for ART, national legislation remains fragmented and insufficient.

"We need a holistic approach that involves all stakeholders, including medical professionals, religious leaders, and legal experts," Osanyin argued.

He added that current regulations are piecemeal and often lack the necessary input from key participants, especially concerning the ethical complexities surrounding surrogacy.

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Monetary policy jumps 50 basis points: CBN's bold move amid stubborn inflation

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has recently taken centre stage amid surging inflation and economic challenges, positioning itself as a crucial player in the nation's financial climate.

With decisive actions aimed at curbing inflation and steering the economy towards stability, the CBN's policy manoeuvres are set to impact the financial well-being and growth prospects of Nigeria for years to come.

The apex bank on Tuesday increased the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) by 50 basis points, bringing it to 26.75 percent. This increment, part of a series of adjustments totaling 800 basis points in 2024, comes against the backdrop of a stubbornly high inflation rate, which rose from 33.95 percent in May to 34.19 percent in June.

This hike was a strategic effort to combat rising inflation, which had been steadily climbing. The MPR is crucial as it influences

borrowing costs, investment decisions, and overall economic activity. By raising the MPR, the CBN aimed to curb inflation and stabilise prices.

Regrettably, the inflation rate which reached 34.19 percent in June 2024, is the highest since March 1996. A significant factor driving this surge was food inflation, which hit a record high of 40.87 percent, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

Rising costs of transporting farm produce, infrastructure bottlenecks, security challenges in food-producing areas, and the exchange rate pass-through all contributed to this relentless surge. The CBN faces the difficult task of taming food inflation without stifling economic growth.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) employs an asymmetric corridor around the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR), which is currently set at +500/-100 basis points. This approach offers flexibility in policy adjustments while focusing on inflation control.

Specifically, the corridor allows for significant

This hike was a strategic effort to combat rising inflation, which had been steadily climbing. The MPR is crucial as it influences borrowing costs, investment decisions, and overall economic activity

adjustments in rates if necessary: the upper limit of 31.75 percent permits aggressive tightening if inflationary pressures escalate, making borrowing from the central bank expensive for banks.

This helps reduce the money supply. Conversely, the lower limit of 25.75 percent prevents the borrowing cost from falling too low, thereby supporting

savings and avoiding excessive monetary easing that could destabilise the economy.

However, this approach also carries risks, such as potentially slowing down investment and credit expansion, which might hinder economic recovery.

Despite economic headwinds, Nigeria's banking system remains resilient. Recent recapitalization efforts are also bolstering stability, and the CBN's regulatory oversight ensures the continued soundness of banks.

However, there is a delicate balance between maintaining prudential measures and ensuring credit availability to support economic revival.

As Nigeria enters the second half of 2024, the CBN faces critical choices. Should it continue tightening policy or pause to assess the impact of previous rate hikes?

The challenge lies in orchestrating a balance between inflation control, exchange rate stability, and economic growth. Achieving this balance is essential for creating a stable and resilient economy that benefits all Nigerians.



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Perspective



OJO EMMANUEL ADEMOLA

In a democracy, the right to protest and engage with government officials is a fundamental aspect of civic participation. However, such engagements must be carried out in a peaceful, objective, and constructive manner to foster positive change and progress. In the context of Nigeria, where protests have sometimes escalated into violence, there is a growing recognition of the need for a cohesive and respectful approach to engaging with leaders like President Tinubu. By adopting a holistic perspective that prioritises peaceful communication and collaboration, Nigerians can effectively voice their concerns and contribute to the economic and technological advancement of their country.

Protests in Nigeria are often seen as a way for citizens to voice their grievances and demand change from the government. However, they are rarely effective as a means to bring about lasting solutions to the country's problems. There are several reasons why protests are not an effective end to Nigerian problems.

Firstly, protests are often met with heavy-handed tactics by the government, including violence and arrests of protesters. This can lead to further unrest and division within the country, rather than bringing about the desired change. Additionally, protests can be hijacked by opportunistic individuals or groups who have their own agendas, further complicating the situation and making it difficult to achieve meaningful change.

Furthermore, protests are often focused on specific issues or events, rather than addressing the underlying systemic problems that contribute to Nigeria's challenges. For example, protests against police brutality may lead to some reforms within the police force, but they do not address the underlying corruption and lack of accountability that plague the entire system.

To bring about lasting change in Nigeria, there needs to be a focus on addressing the root causes of the country's problems. This includes tackling corruption, improving governance and accountability, and investing in education and infrastructure. Sustainable solutions will require a concerted effort from all sectors of society, including government, civil society, and the private sector.

Ultimately, protests alone are not enough to bring about sustainable change in Nigeria. While they can be a powerful tool for raising awareness and mobilising citizens, they need to be complemented by broader efforts to address the systemic issues that underlie the country's challenges. By working together towards long-term solutions, Nigeria can move towards a more stable and prosperous future in the national interest.

In light of the ongoing reforms spearheaded by the government of Bola Tinubu in Nigeria, it is imperative to

Promoting peaceful engagement for progress: Towards economic and technological advancement in Nigeria

consider whether protests of any kind should be deemed acceptable at this critical juncture. With an unwavering commitment to advancing the national interest and delivering the dividends of democracy, the Tinubu administration has embarked on numerous initiatives aimed at fostering economic and technological growth. It is therefore essential to afford Tinubu's administration the necessary time and support to ensure the successful fruition of these reforms, as they hold the potential to significantly contribute to the progress and development of the nation.

While it is true that the government of Bola Tinubu may be carrying out reforms in the national interest, it is important to recognize that there are still significant challenges facing Nigeria that need to be addressed. Protests can be a legitimate

Proactively, I have always seen a true protest, this way: "If it is a protest, it should be properly channelled, and remain open to feedback and constructive criticism for all Nigerians to win. It should never entail violence of any kind." A true Nigerian like me must completely agree with this sentiment. Agreeably, true protests should be properly channelled and peaceful in nature. Violence undermines the legitimacy of the protest and can detract from the message and goals of the protesters. Peaceful protests allow for open dialogue, constructive criticism, and a more effective means of communication between the government and its citizens.

By remaining peaceful and focused on constructive dialogue, protests can serve as a powerful tool for holding the government accountable, bringing

more prosperous and equitable society for all Nigerians. Similarly, protests that focus on technological advancement can underscore the importance of investing in innovation, digital infrastructure, and skills development to drive sustainable development and enhance Nigeria's global competitiveness.

Protesters need to maintain objectivity and focus on concrete goals that align with the national interest. By advocating for policies that foster economic and technological advancement, protesters can contribute to building a more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future for Nigeria. Through peaceful and objective protests, Nigerians can collectively drive positive change and shape a brighter future for their country.

Let us set aside the shadow of violence that has plagued protests in Nigeria's past and embrace a new era of united and peaceful activism. By adopting a cohesive approach and engaging with the receptive government led by President Tinubu, we can pave the way for meaningful dialogue and sustainable change. Let our voices be heard through constructive means, aiming to build bridges rather than walls in our quest for progress and justice. Together, we can shape a future where peaceful protest is a powerful tool for positive transformation in our nation.

Absolutely, violence should have no place in protests, and it is crucial to adopt a cohesive and constructive approach when engaging with President Tinubu or any government official. Peaceful and respectful communication is essential in fostering dialogue and understanding between citizens and their leaders.

By taking a cohesive and collaborative approach, Nigerians can effectively convey their grievances, suggestions, and aspirations to the government. Engaging in meaningful conversations with President Tinubu and other leaders can lead to productive dialogue, policy improvements, and ultimately, the advancement of the nation.

It's important to remember that mutual respect, empathy, and open communication are key components of any successful engagement with government officials. By adopting a positive and constructive attitude, Nigerians can work together with President Tinubu towards building a stronger and more prosperous Nigeria for all its citizens. Violence and confrontation only hinder progress and prevent the achievement of common goals.

In conclusion, the importance of peaceful and constructive engagement with government officials cannot be overstated, particularly in a diverse and dynamic country like Nigeria. As citizens strive to express their opinions and advocate for change, it is crucial to maintain mutual respect, open dialogue, and a cohesive approach to communication. By working together with leaders like President Tinubu respectfully and objectively, Nigerians can contribute to the progress and development of their nation. Let us leave behind the spectre of violence and embrace a culture of productive dialogue and collaboration for the betterment of all Nigerians and the advancement of the nation as a whole.



way for citizens to express their concerns and push for further reforms, even amid ongoing efforts by the government.

It is also important to note that protests can serve as a form of feedback for the government, helping to ensure that the reforms being implemented are in line with the needs and desires of the people. By allowing for peaceful protest and dialogue, the government can better understand the concerns of citizens and make adjustments to policies and programmes accordingly.

While the efforts of the Tinubu administration may be commendable, it is essential to recognize that sustainable change takes time. Reforming complex systems and addressing deeply ingrained issues such as corruption and governance will not happen overnight. The government needs to have the support and patience of the people as they work towards long-term solutions.

Ultimately, protests should be seen as a way for citizens to hold the government accountable and push for continued progress and improvement. While the efforts of the Tinubu administration should be acknowledged, the government needs to remain open to feedback and constructive criticism as it seeks to address the challenges facing Nigeria.

attention to important issues, and pushing for positive change. Protesters need to respect the rule of law, adhere to non-violence principles, and engage in civil discourse to effectively convey their concerns and advocate for progress.

In essence, peaceful protests that are open to feedback and constructive criticism can create a more inclusive and participatory environment where all Nigerians have a voice in the decision-making process. Protesters must uphold these principles to foster positive change and ensure a more democratic and equitable society for all.

Essentially, peaceful protests that engage the right audiences and maintain objectivity can be a powerful tool for advocating for the economic and technological advancement of Nigeria. By focusing on specific objectives and engaging with relevant stakeholders, protesters can effectively communicate their concerns and push for meaningful change in these critical areas.

Protests that address economic issues can highlight the need for policies that promote inclusive growth, job creation, and poverty reduction. By advocating for reforms that stimulate economic development, protesters can help create a

Perspective



CHARLES UGBEGUA

In the world today, there is constant pressure on governments and large corporates around the world to take the issue of energy transition more seriously, pushing many of these countries and organisations to set respective decarbonisation targets and develop the road map to achieve these goals. At the core of this push is the need to 'green-up' power generation through the deployment of renewables and other sustainable energy solutions. Both Government and Financial Institutions are critical players necessary for the development of the renewables sector, and are catalysts for the adoption of clean energy technologies and energy transition as a whole.

Government is the primary change driver, and should dutifully set the tone for this development through solid policy support, which is a critical factor in sizing the addressable market, subsidies and other financing incentives, and a nuanced regulatory framework tailored to fit the unique needs of the nation and encourage investors. In Europe, the drive for renewables is championed by European Union (EU), through its Renewable Energy Directive (RED), and all countries within the EU are required to align

Government and financial institutions: Catalysts for financing renewables development in Africa

their respective national clean energy goals to the EU's targets.

Respective governments in the EU develop their strategy on the back of the RED, which includes identifying and pulling the different levers within their respective nations to ensure that the EU goals are met.

To achieve this, each country typically focuses on specific technological expertise or/and renewable resources that it has most in abundance, and seek to develop those technologies and resources through subsidies, government loans, credit guarantees, etc.

For instance, Energy companies in the Nordics typically prefer to focus on offshore wind due to their world class expertise in developing offshore oil and gas assets, e.g. Equinor, which is Norway's National Oil Company (NOC) currently invests heavily in offshore wind, and is the only large oil and gas company that has offshore wind as its core energy transition strategy.

Another example is Ørsted. The Danish government has been pivotal to the success of Ørsted, which is a remarkable global leader in renewable energy innovation, focused on offshore wind.

The Danish government is the majority shareholder in Ørsted. The country has made significant investments in wind energy, both onshore and offshore, and has developed one of the most advanced and efficient wind power industries in the world.

Ørsted, formerly known as DONG Energy, has been at the forefront of this transformation. Ørsted successfully transitioned from a fossil fuel-based energy company to a green energy leader, with a significant portion of its energy production now coming from

renewable source, primarily offshore wind.

Ørsted is the largest developer of offshore wind in the world, with an operating capacity of ~9GW. This shift not only highlights the importance of strong government support but also an understanding of comparative expertise advantage.

Governments in Africa need to identify their cheapest and most accessible renewables technologies and resource that can be developed at the desired level of scale, and provide some form of subsidies or financing structure to encourage investments for the development of these sources of renewable power.

It is also important to consider if these resources can be developed close to an existing or proposed network infrastructure. As governments provide the necessary enabling environment for the development of the sector, financial institutions also play a pivotal role either as financing conduits or direct investors.

Financial institutions, including banks, plain vanilla and alternative investment firms, insurance companies, etc., are not passive players in the global economy, and have been at the centre of core infrastructural development in the world by providing the necessary capital, financial expertise, and strategic guidance, as well as acting as capital conduits.

These institutions have the capacity to enable the development and deployment of sustainable energy in Africa. They are powerful catalysts capable of driving significant change. Hence, government must carry stakeholders of key financial institutions along in thinking through support and financing schemes for the development of renewables.

For instance, a significant portion of

renewables financing in the U.S. comes from 'Tax Equity', which is a complex structure of acquiring some quasi-equity interest in a renewables asset in return for tax attributes. Financial institutions are the primary investors in this structure, as a result, they provide a significant portion of the capital deployed in the sector.

Agreeably, the transition to sustainable energy is a complex, multifaceted challenge that requires the concerted efforts of various stakeholders. Government is the most important player, while financial institutions, with their vast resources and expertise, are uniquely positioned to co-lead this charge.

Through policy support, appropriate financing structure, strategic advisory, risk management, and support for innovation, government and financial institutions can collaboratively drive the development and adoption of renewable energy solutions.

In conclusion, as someone who has dedicated a significant portion of my career to the financial and energy sectors, I have seen the critical role that financial institutions play in advancing sustainable energy. As the world continues to navigate the challenges of climate change and energy security, the insights and expertise of professionals in this field are invaluable in shaping a sustainable future.

Ugbegua is an expert in providing financial and capital advisory to companies in the power & renewables sector, with experience across the major markets of the world, particularly Europe and North America. He is a Chartered Accountant and a CFA Charterholder

SAMSON OLUGA

Is it not hilarious that a nation that is blessed with myriad linguistic and literary intelligentsia has just approved an oxymoronic new old national anthem that harbours elements of linguistic sexism alienating or disparaging the feminine gender contrary to the spirit of the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)?

Does a national anthem that is not linguistically impeccable befit a country regarded as the most populous black nation cum giant of Africa? Is it not pertinent for governmental authorities to be responsive to the following fundamental interrogative submissions?

Why should a national decision bordering on the choice of a national anthem be hastily taken and somehow unilaterally or undemocratically just by few privileged people in power? Is a tactically delayed decision not better than a hasty decision taken without the sine qua non of a sound, timely and collectively taken decision?

Won't proper planning preventing poor positions and permitting perfect performance have facilitated good decisions in respect of how, when and why the former national anthem was suddenly ousted or dethroned and the present national anthem was reinstated or enthroned?

Couldn't the myriad language experts, literary geniuses and communication gurus we have be contacted or consulted to help to linguistically re-examine and overhaul the new old national anthem before its re-adoption?

Wouldn't they have discovered and discouraged the utilisation or retention of the

Why the linguistic sexism of the new old national anthem?

sexist lexemes of the reintroduced national anthem viz 'brotherhood', 'motherland' and 'no man'? Wouldn't they have stressed the unsuitability and unacceptability of the gender-biased lexemes or expressions and recommended suitable and acceptable alternatives without negative lyrical, poetic or semantic implications?

Wouldn't the re-introduced national anthem be linguistically synonymous to an old wine in an old wine skin since the present anthem is guilty of gender-biased language use just as the former anthem based on the generic use of 'fatherland' and 'hero'?

Is the retention of the linguistic sexism of the former anthem in the present anthem in tandem with the principle of linguistic dynamism which justifies positive changes in language use based on contemporary realities? Is it not obvious that a linguistically defective anthem can't be replaced with an equally linguistically defective anthem when expecting a better linguistic evaluation or positive impression of the masses?

Are the powerful forces behind the sudden re-introduction of the present national anthem not aware of the global condemnation of gender-based discrimination including sexist communication which mostly denigrates the feminine gender and sometimes disparages the masculine gender? Are they not conscious of the fact those linguistically alienated in the national anthem that epitomises the country's history, philosophy and ideology will always feel discriminated against and highly disturbed? Don't the agents of the sudden change of the national anthem know that linguistic sexism is a form of linguistic violence that can inflict emotional wounds or injuries on the affected people?

Can't the sexist cum ambiguous 'brotherhood' of the present national anthem

be replaced with equally tri-syllabic lexemes like 'unity' and 'unison' with semantic similitude or 'nationhood' which is another tri-syllabic word?

Can't the expressions 'In unity we stand', 'In unison we stand' or 'For nationhood we stand' which all have similar rhythmic patterns and hexa-syllabic lines, lyrically and musically replace the sexist 'In brotherhood we stand'?

Won't the stanza still maintain its musicality with the replacement of the semantically complex 'brotherhood' just as the flower called rose will smell equally good when called another name as posited by William Shakespeare?

Can't the gender-neutral word 'nativeland' used initially on line two of stanza one of the recent national anthem replace the gender-specific 'motherland' on line six of the same stanza one of the national anthem to eliminate the second linguistic element of sexism or sexist communication? Won't it just simply look like a stylistic foregrounding or repetition for emphasis of the word 'nativeland' as the terminal lexeme of the second and sixth lines of the first stanza of the anthem?

Is the repetition of the tri-syllabic word 'nativeland' not lyrically or musically better than the use of the bi-syllabic 'homeland' which will affect the syllabic cum rhythmic pattern of the final line of the first stanza of the national anthem?

Can't the androgynous bi-syllabic indefinite pronoun 'no one' also serve as the gender-neutral linguistic alternative of the misogynistic 'no man' on line four of stanza three of the present new old national anthem somehow imposed on the citizens?

Can't the replacement of 'no man' with 'no one' even go unnoticed if silently done before

reintroducing the present anthem since both words are di-syllabic and partly homophonic as they start with 'no' which is phonemically articulated and transcribed as /n /? Won't it amount to what Chinua Achebe described as sitting beside the river and washing the hands with spittle to use the sexist 'no man' where there is a non-sexist 'no one' that depicts language flexibility?

Shouldn't the decision to replace the national anthem have been done democratically and not somehow autocratically considering the fact that this is a democratic dispensation? Wouldn't it have been more appropriate for a referendum to have been conducted prior to the approval and re-introduction of the former national anthem to be sure the idea is acceptable to the people? Who would have challenged the legality or otherwise of the procedure employed if the idea had emanated from the masses or patriotic citizens of this great nation?

Why are the people in authority sometimes not taking the right steps at the right time in the right ways to get the right results that are commensurate with people's expectation? Why are some powers that be still putting the horse before the cart as if steady progress can be made by not doing things rightly or correctly especially in ways that can guarantee sustainable development? Hope the issues quizzically presented in respect of the linguistic sexism of the new old anthem will be positively considered since the medium is the message according to Marshall McLuhan's postulation?

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Perspective



KUNLE SOMORIN

As Guyanese opposition leader, Norton, visits Nigeria



As Aubrey Norton, the esteemed leader of Guyana's opposition, arrives in Lagos, Nigeria, a profound opportunity for cross-cultural exchange and political enrichment presents itself. Under the auspices of the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library Foundation, Norton's visit facilitates a confluence of ideas with Nigeria's luminaries in governance, commerce, and civil society. Notably, he has been in politics from the age of 15. He is now 67. His ascension to leadership contrasts with the prevailing gerontocratic landscape in Nigeria.

Norton's distinguished background as a political scientist and international relations scholar, and champion of social justice renders his perspective uniquely valuable. His emotional affinity for Africa, particularly Nigeria, underscores the complex intersections between the Caribbean and African diasporic experiences.

While acknowledging the historical and cultural nuances that distinguish the two regions, Norton's visit offers a chance for Nigerian politicians, business leaders, and academics to engage in a rich exchange of ideas. By embracing the complexities of their shared heritage, they may foster a deeper understanding of their place within the global African diaspora.

The visit also presents an opportunity for comparative analysis of opposition politics in Nigeria and Guyana, revealing intriguing parallels and divergences shaped by distinct historical, cultural, and political contexts. Both nations grapple with challenges in holding power, electoral irregularities, and polarisation along ethnic or regional lines.

Norton's leadership style, commitment to social justice, and coalition-building acumen offer valuable lessons for opposition elements in Nigeria, including Peter Obi, Atiku Abubakar, and Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso. It also serves as a lesson for those in power since the ruling People's Progressive Party (PPP) in Guyana was also in opposition between 2015 and 2020, like Nigeria's People's Democratic Party (PDP) that also lost power to the present ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in Nigeria also in 2015.

As Nigeria leaders navigate their democratic odyssey, they may draw inspiration from Norton's experiences and the insights gleaned from this visit. It is instructive that Obasanjo played the role expected of a statesman, choosing leaders to meet across party lines, the business community and the academia. They include,

Vice President Kashim Shettima, Senate President Godswill Akpabio, Labour Party's Peter Obi and PDP governors Seyi Makinde (Oyo) and Peter Mbah, as well as APC's Dapo Abiodun (Ogun) and Babajide Sanwo-Olu (Lagos); Africa's richest man Aliko Dangote and Nuhu Yakubu, other statesmen like Emeka Anyaoku and some select traditional rulers.

Norton, a powerful voice in Guyanese politics, galvanising movements to combat social and economic injustices faced by Afro-Guyanese and marginalised groups. His unwavering commitment to equality, human rights, and the rule of law offers a paradigm worthy of emulation by Nigerian leaders, both within and outside the government.

As a politician, Norton has witnessed firsthand the systemic inequalities that perpetuate poverty, inequality, and social exclusion, shaping his political ideology to emphasise empowerment, inclusivity, and social justice. His vocal criticism of the ruling PPP government has held them accountable for their actions, advocating for transparency and accountability. Norton has championed constitutional reform, electoral reform, and social justice, recognising these as essential for building a more equitable and just society.

Nigerian leaders would benefit from inquiring about Norton's navigation of complex political landscapes, his ability to connect with diverse groups, and his coalition-building with other political parties, civil society organisations, and trade unions. His charisma and conviction have inspired a new generation of Guyanese to become involved in politics and demand change, offering a valuable lesson for Nigerian opposition elements.

While contexts may differ, opposition leaders can draw inspiration from Norton's background and leadership style to enhance their own political journeys and address Nigeria's challenges in opposition politics. Prioritising engagement with constituents, listening to their concerns, and advocating for their welfare can help build trust and loyalty.

Norton's leadership style, characterised by conviction, courage, and resilience, offers a valuable model for Nigerian opposition politicians. His commitment to social justice, demonstrated through advocacy for marginalised communities and policies promoting equality and fairness, is particularly noteworthy. Additionally, his ability to build coalitions and collaborate with stakeholders is a valuable asset, demonstrating the importance of unity and cooperation in achieving common objectives.

However, Norton's journey has not been without challenges. His meteoric rise might have been hindered by various forces, especially those in power. The travails of Dr. Aubrey Norton under the ruling People's Progressive Party (PPP) offer a poignant paradigm for Nigerian leaders to ponder. Norton's significant contributions have been his unrelenting critique of government policies, ensuring accountability and fostering a culture of debate and discussion.

A steadfast advocate for constitutional reforms, championing changes to address issues like electoral deadlocks and ensure a seamless transfer of power, Norton has significantly strengthened Guyana's democratic institutions, promoting a more inclusive and representative political system. Furthermore, Norton has been a vocal

proponent of transparency and accountability in government, exposing corruption and mismanagement, and ensuring that those in power are held accountable for their actions. This has fostered trust in government and promoted a culture of good governance. If Nigeria must move forward this should be the bedrock of opposition politics in the any democracy.

Norton's pivotal role in fostering national unity, bridging ethnic and regional divides, and promoting reconciliation and inclusivity, should guide our leaders to build a more cohesive and harmonious society. However, his impact has not been without challenges. He has faced backlash from the government, including attempts to silence him and limit his ability to operate effectively.

The specter of political harassment, intimidation, arrest, and detention has been a significant hurdle for Norton, highlighting the imperative for Nigerian leaders to uphold the sacrosanct nature of dissenting voices in a democratic polity. The stifling of oppositional voices can only lead to a stifling of innovation, creativity, and progress.

Moreover, the ruling party's penchant for disseminating disinformation and propaganda through state-controlled media outlets has served to obfuscate the truth and malign Norton's character. This egregious abuse of state resources for partisan gain is a stark warning to Nigerian leaders of the dangers of exploiting state machinery for political expediency. In addition, Norton is leading the fight for a clear voters' list and biometrics. In this quest, he is surrounded by young, upcoming politicians that he is engaging, mentoring and training as he prepares his political party, the PNCR for the future

The electoral landscape in Guyana has been marred by allegations of manipulation and chicanery, serving as a cautionary tale for Nigerian leaders to ensure the integrity of their own electoral processes. The marginalisation of opposition parties has also highlighted the importance of treating all political parties with equanimity and providing equal access to resources.

And, the polarised and divisive nature of Guyanese politics serves as a stark reminder to Nigerian leaders of the imperative to promote national unity and inclusive governance. By embracing a more conciliatory approach, Nigerian leaders can foster a more harmonious and cohesive polity. These challenges faced by the 'youngish' Norton in Guyana offer a salutary lesson for Nigerian leaders. By heeding these cautionary tales, Nigerian leaders can strengthen their country's democratic foundations, promote political tolerance, and ensure a more inclusive and equitable governance structure for all citizens.

Somorin, former Chief Press Secretary to Governor Dapo Abiodun, writes from Ajala-Obafemi Village in Abeokuta

Perspective



OJO EMMANUEL ADEMOLA

As the world grapples with the twin challenges of economic development and environmental sustainability, nations are increasingly exploring innovative financial mechanisms to foster green investments. One promising approach is leveraging National Wealth Funds (NWFs) to drive investments in renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, and other environmentally friendly initiatives. For nations in the Global South, which are often characterised by rapid population growth, urbanisation, and developmental needs, the linkage of NWFs to green investment presents a viable pathway for achieving sustainable economic growth. This paper examines successful case studies from the Global North, where countries have effectively integrated their sovereign wealth funds and public investment strategies with green initiatives. By drawing on these examples, Global South nations can chart a course towards a more sustainable and prosperous future.

The Global South, comprising primarily developing countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Oceania, faces unique challenges and opportunities when it comes to economic growth and sustainable development. One innovative approach to addressing these challenges is to link national wealth funds to green investments. This means leveraging Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWFs) to finance projects that not only yield economic returns but also promote environmental sustainability. Here's a roadmap for how Global South nations can effectively pursue this strategy:

One. Establishing or Reorienting National Wealth Funds

To effectively harness SWFs for driving sustainable development, countries must first engage in a comprehensive assessment and realignment of their existing SWF structures and investment portfolios. This involves critically evaluating the current mandates and performance of their SWFs to identify opportunities for integrating green investment objectives. For nations that lack a SWF, establishing one with a strong, clear mandate focused on promoting renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and green infrastructure should be prioritized. However, this shift towards sustainable investment is not solely a matter of financial strategy; it necessitates the development or amendment of legal frameworks to ensure sustainability is ingrained within the fund's core objectives. Legislative support is crucial, and it should include the establishment of specific sustainability targets that guide the SWF's investment decisions. By embedding these green investment criteria into the legal mandates governing SWFs, countries can create a stable and predictable environment that fosters long-term commitment to sustainable development.

Two. Creating a Green Investment Framework

To effectively integrate sustainability into national economic planning, countries should develop a robust green investment framework that aligns with national development goals, international commitments like the Paris Agreement, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This strategic planning initiative will serve as a guiding blueprint for directing financial resources towards sustainable practices and projects. It is essential to identify and focus on sectors with the highest potential for green growth, such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable farming, and eco-tourism. These sectors not only promise significant environmental benefits but also have the potential to drive economic growth, generate employment, and enhance national well-being. By targeting investments in these high-impact

Harnessing National Wealth Funds for green investment: A pathway to sustainable economic growth for global south nations

areas, countries can create a sustainable economic ecosystem that supports long-term prosperity while fulfilling their international obligations and safeguarding natural resources for future generations.

Three. Building Capacity and Expertise

Investing in human capital is essential for the successful integration of sustainability into national investment strategies, necessitating comprehensive training programs for policymakers, fund managers, and other stakeholders on sustainable finance and green technologies. Equipping these key players with the requisite knowledge and skills ensures informed decision-making and effective implementation of green investments. Furthermore, establishing collaborative partnerships with international organizations, financial institutions, and other countries is crucial for the exchange of knowledge, technical expertise, and best practices. Such alliances facilitate resource sharing and innovation, thereby accelerating the adoption and impact of sustainable investment



practices on a global scale. By focusing on human capital and fostering robust partnerships, nations can enhance their capacity to drive sustainable development and achieve their environmental and economic objectives.

Four. Mobilising Funds

International collaboration is vital to securing the necessary funding, technology transfer, and technical assistance from developed countries and international organizations. This can be achieved through various financial mechanisms such as climate funds, development banks, and other specialized channels dedicated to promoting sustainable development. Additionally, employing blended finance models is crucial for leveraging public sovereign wealth fund (SWF) resources with private capital. This approach de-risks investments, making them more attractive to private sector participants and thus catalyzing larger-scale involvement in green projects. Issuing green bonds specifically earmarked for sustainable initiatives can effectively raise essential funds, with the SWF serving as a guarantor to enhance these bonds' credibility and appeal. These integrated strategies pave the way for mobilising substantial financial and technological resources, accelerating the transition towards a sustainable and low-carbon economy.

Five. Ensuring Accountability and Transparency

Establishing rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the performance and impact of green investments is essential for maintaining transparency and accountability. This involves regular reporting to stakeholders, including the public, to ensure that all parties are informed about the progress and effectiveness of sustainable initiatives. Additionally, engaging independent auditors to periodically review and verify both the environmental and financial performance of these investments adds an extra layer of credibility. Third-party audits help to ensure that the reported outcomes are accurate and trustworthy, thereby reinforcing confidence among stakeholders and promoting continuous improvement in sustainable investment practices.

Six. Policy Integration and Cohesion

To maximise synergies and avoid conflicts, it is crucial to ensure that green investment strategies are harmonized with broader economic policies,

including those related to industry, energy, and agriculture. This integration facilitates a cohesive approach that leverages the strengths of various sectors towards a unified goal of sustainability. Additionally, implementing policies that incentivize green investments, such as offering tax breaks for renewable energy projects, can significantly enhance their appeal and feasibility. Simultaneously, introducing regulations that phase out subsidies for fossil fuels will help to shift financial support away from environmentally harmful practices, thereby fostering a more sustainable economic landscape.

Seven. Creating an Enabling Environment

Investing in green infrastructure—such as smart grids, public transportation systems, and advanced waste management facilities—is essential for supporting the transition to a sustainable economy. These investments not only facilitate the efficient use of resources but also reduce environmental impacts, paving the way for long-term economic and ecological benefits. Complementing these

efforts, it is imperative to strengthen legal and institutional frameworks to create a conducive environment for green investment. This includes enacting robust environmental regulations, effective land use planning, and comprehensive resource management policies. Together, these measures will ensure that governance structures support sustainable development goals, fostering a resilient and green economy.

Eight. Community Engagement and Social Inclusion

Engaging with local communities, businesses, and civil society organizations is essential to ensure that green investments are inclusive and deliver social as well as environmental benefits. By fostering active stakeholder participation, these investments can be tailored to address the unique needs and priorities of diverse groups, enhancing overall community support and effectiveness. Complementing this approach, it is crucial to promote education and awareness initiatives aimed at building a culture of sustainability and environmental stewardship. Through comprehensive educational programs and outreach efforts, we can empower individuals to make informed decisions and take meaningful actions that contribute to a sustainable future. Together, these strategies create a robust framework for integrating social inclusivity with environmental responsibility.

Nine. Leveraging Technology and Innovation

Investing in research and development (R&D) for green technologies and innovation is crucial for creating homegrown solutions that are tailored to local contexts and conditions. By fostering a robust R&D environment, we can drive the development of sustainable technologies that not only meet local needs but also contribute to global environmental goals. Complementing this focus on innovation, the integration of digital tools and platforms—such as blockchain and artificial intelligence—can significantly enhance the transparency, efficiency, and overall impact of green investments. These cutting-edge technologies offer powerful mechanisms for monitoring progress, ensuring accountability, and optimizing resource allocation, thereby maximizing the benefits of green initiatives. Together, these efforts create a dynamic ecosystem that supports sustainable development through both technological advancement and digital innovation.

Ten. Long-term Vision and Adaptability

Adaptive management and visionary leadership are crucial for achieving sustainable green growth. Adaptive management emphasizes the importance of remaining flexible and responsive, adjusting strategies based on outcomes, feedback, and evolving global conditions to maintain resilience and effectiveness. This approach ensures that policies and actions remain relevant and impactful amid changing circumstances. Visionary leadership, on the other hand, involves crafting and communicating a clear, long-term vision for green growth that inspires and mobilizes all sectors of society. By providing a compelling roadmap for the future, visionary leaders can galvanize collective efforts towards sustainable goals, fostering a unified commitment across communities, businesses, and civil society organizations. Together, these elements create a dynamic framework that supports continuous improvement and widespread engagement in the pursuit of environmental sustainability.

Surmising, by linking national wealth funds to green investments, Global South nations can not only stimulate economic growth but also ensure that growth is sustainable and inclusive. This strategy can help bridge financial gaps, foster innovation, and build resilience against climate change, ultimately paving the way for a more prosperous and sustainable future.

Let's explore a few examples from Global North nations illustrate the successful implementation of integrated approaches to sustainability. For instance, countries like Germany and Sweden have pioneered adaptive management strategies by continuously refining their renewable energy policies in response to technological advances and market feedback, creating resilient and adaptable energy systems. Additionally, nations such as Denmark have demonstrated visionary leadership by setting ambitious long-term goals for carbon neutrality, articulating clear visions that have mobilized both the public and private sectors towards a sustainable future. These countries harness digital tools and platforms to enhance transparency and efficiency in green investments, employing blockchain and artificial intelligence to optimize resource allocation and track environmental outcomes. Collectively, these examples showcase how adaptability, innovation, and visionary leadership can synergize to foster sustainable development on a large scale, providing valuable blueprints for other regions to follow.

Nonetheless, several Global North nations have successfully linked their SWFs and national investment strategies to green investments. These examples provide valuable lessons for Global South nations aiming to implement similar approaches. Here are a few notable cases:

One. Norway's Government Pension Fund Global (GPF)

Often referred to as the Norwegian Oil Fund, the Government Pension Fund Global (GPF) is one of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds. Since 2004, GPF has operated under ethical guidelines encompassing environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria, which mandate the exclusion of companies that severely harm the environment. Demonstrating a growing commitment to sustainability, GPF has significantly increased its investments in renewable energy infrastructure, including wind and solar power projects. In a notable move towards green investment, Norway established a specific mandate in 2020, allowing the GPF to allocate up to 2% of its assets in unlisted renewable energy infrastructure.

Two. Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF)

Established in 2014, the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) focuses on investments that boost economic activity and employment in Ireland. A key aspect of ISIF's strategy is the

Book Review

Transit

Originally published: September 29, 2016

Author: Rachel Cusk

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Hardcover: 272 pages

Reviewer: Athekame Kenneth

In the wake of family collapse, a writer and her two young sons move to London. The process of upheaval is the catalyst for a number of transitions—personal, moral, artistic, practical—as she endeavours to construct a new reality for herself and her children. In the city she is made to confront aspects of living she has, until now, avoided, and to consider questions of vulnerability and power, death and renewal, in what becomes her struggle to reattach herself to, and believe in, life.

Filtered through the impersonal gaze of its keenly intelligent protagonist, *Transit* sees Rachel Cusk delve deeper into the themes first raised in her critically acclaimed *Outline*, and offers up a penetrating and moving reflection on childhood and fate, the value of suffering, the moral problems of personal responsibility, and the mystery of change. In this precise, short, and yet epic cycle of novels, Cusk manages to describe the most elemental experiences, the liminal qualities of life, through a narrative near-silence that draws language toward it. She captures with unsettling restraint and honesty the longing to both inhabit and flee one's life and the wrenching ambivalence animating our desire to feel real.

In *Transit*, for instance, we hear from an ex-boyfriend (he lost a dog and got into a relationship); from a writer who reads with Faye at a festival (he was tormented by his cruel stepfather); from a student who comes to her for tutorials (she is obsessed with the life of an American painter); and from her builder (his father mocked him when he built a beautiful house in the woods at home in Poland). It sounds as if I'm describing a succession of linked short stories, but that isn't quite how it reads. The different stories somehow don't exist in separate compartments, and they don't offer, at the point when they're dropped, any neat lift of completion. Faye's own underlying story – a divorce, a move back to London, the purchase of a flat, building work, conflict with nightmare neighbours downstairs – remains the core of the book, the thread on which the rest is strung. Chapters are punctuated by more or less desperate calls from her younger son, who is staying at his father's while the building work is done. Towards the end of the novel, touched in with great deli-

cacy, there's an emerging love story.

This way of sequencing narrative feels like an elegant formal solution to the problem of the sheer force of personality in Cusk's writing. It's a striking gesture of relinquishment. Faye's story contends for space against all these others, and the novel's meaning is devolved out from its centre in her to a succession of characters. It's a radically different way of imagining a self, too – Faye's self. She's never merged inside the others' stories, she doesn't give herself over to them; on the contrary, there is as much antagonism as there is sympathy in her relations to all these others; and many of them misread her, or criticise her. Faye is fairly guarded, too; she often receives their stories in silence, or her questioning only elicits more narration. And yet there she is, crowded in among them all on the page – not one with them, but immersed among them. As a way of representing the involuntary immersion of our individual selves in a teeming, crowded world, it's rather brilliant.

Faye is helpless to resist these tales which bump up accidentally against her, which are delivered to her unsolicited and yet only come



into being through her listening. This novel feels like a very active form of listening: not a particularly kindly listening, but not a satirical one either. Either sympathy or mockery would feel more water-

tight, as listening positions, than what happens here. It's as if Faye's narrative is flooded with other stories, invaded by them; at times they almost override her own trajectory. Even when, at the end of the book, her own story suggests a closure of a kind, all those others' stories remain incomplete, still insisting on our attention.

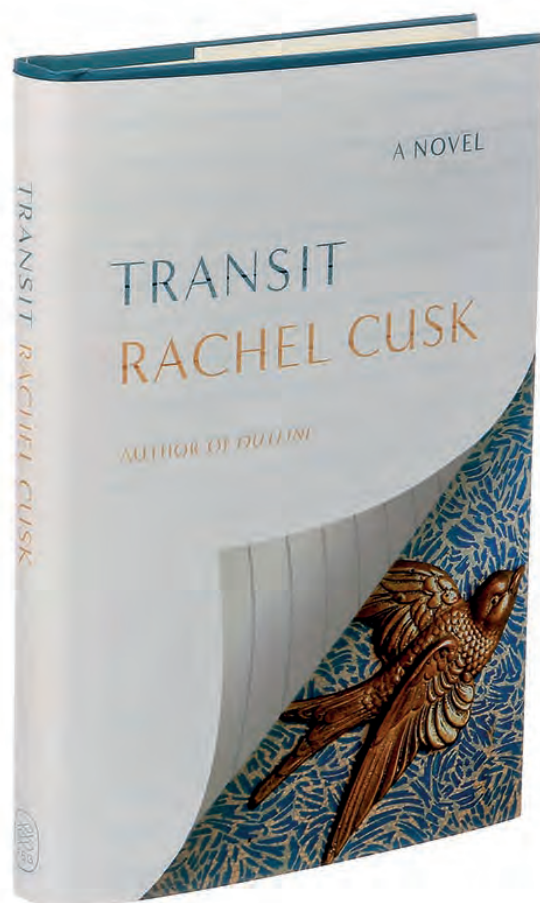
The novel's language is spare and vivid and exact, never inflated. There's no exaggerated effort to imi-

tate the accents or voices of the various storytellers, and yet the prose is scrupulously attentive to the gritty detail in what they tell. This is Pavel the builder: "He had come to England and worked for a few months building the new terminal at Heathrow, being routinely sacked on a Friday night and rehired on a Monday, because the building company never knew in advance how many labourers they'd need." All these stories count, they're urgent, it's important to get them down: not only the Polish builder's troubles but also the hairdresser realising he doesn't want to go out clubbing any more, and the friend who is late for a coffee because her sprinkler system just malfunctioned, drenching her house and all her clothes.

In Faye's strange phase of near-passivity, waiting for her new life to begin, she functions almost as a recording angel, giving herself over in her vulnerable openness to what they need to tell. Colouring everything, like dark ink in the clear water of this prose, is a pervasive mood of melancholy and controlled excitement which is very visual – Cusk is brilliant at interiors, capturing a city busy changing itself at feverish speed. Her austere, ruminative voice doesn't sound quite like any other writer's; she never gushes or confesses.

In the morning it was still dark when I got up. Downstairs the ruins of dinner remained on the table. The melted candles were hardened into sprawling shapes. Jake's book lay open on the chair ... Through the windows a strange subterranean light was rising, barely distinguishable from darkness. I felt change moving beneath me, moving deep beneath the surface of things, like the plates of earth blindly moving in their black traces.

All too often there is a trade-off between formal experiments in literature and reading pleasure, but the joy of *Transit* is that it's so eminently readable. One of Faye's fellow writers at the festival is disappointed that people have found his thousand-page novel tediously long; he was only trying to capture the "low-lying truth of his ordinary existence" where nothing eventful happened. And yet this writer admits himself that when he chooses a passage to read out, he too is drawn to those rare places where the point is concentrated and "life could be observed in a meaningful arrangement". *Transit* steers with stylishness and grace between the low-lying truths and the significant dramas we compose for ourselves out of the accidents which befall us. Offering no hostages to convention, it's somehow page-turning enthralling and charged with the power to move. Cusk has tuned in to our curiosity about the lives of others, and composed out of that curiosity something capacious and generous, making room for all the contradictory stories clamouring for space on her page.



He had come to England and worked for a few months building the new terminal at Heathrow, being routinely sacked on a Friday night and rehired on a Monday, because the building company never knew in advance how many labourers they'd need



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Digital Media & Social Movements in focus at inaugural PAU Press and CORA Book reading

The 2024 book *Digital Media & Social Movements* by Dr Nwachukwu Egbunike will be the first serving at the PAU Booklogue, organised by Pan Atlantic University Press and the Committee for Relevant Art (CORA). Discussants will include the author, a panel of lecturers from the School of Media & Communication, and two bibliophiles from CORA.

PAU Booklogue is a quarterly book reading and discussion series

initiated by Pan-Atlantic University (PAU) Press and the Committee for Relevant Arts (CORA).

Head of Pan-Atlantic University Press, Dr Nwachukwu Egbunike, said the "PAU Booklogue is a novel initiative that applies scholarship to society and features and spotlights books and authors published by PAU Press in a 'town-gown' setting."

Dr Egbunike added, "Since restructuring PAU Press in 2022, it has grown from modest origins into a full-fledged university unit, advancing

the scholarly conversation in many disciplines with a wide range of books. PAU books include *The Nature of Human Beings, Fundamentals of Business Ethics, Public Health in Africa: Sustainability Paradigm, Digital Youth and Social Movements, Structure of the Nigerian Economy, a Beginners Guide to Logic & Critical Thinking, and Issues in Media Ethics.*"

Egbunike, also a Senior Lecturer at the School of Media and Communication, Pan-Atlantic University, was

delighted about the development.

"The initiative is expected to generate robust conversations revolving around the thematic engagements of our publications while addressing critical social issues," he stated. "This also advances the idea of a dynamic press as conceived by the Vice Chancellor of Pan-Atlantic University, Professor Enase Okonedo, who is keen on the press meeting the University's strategic goals."

In a similar vein, the Programme Chair of CORA, Mr Jahman Anikul-

apo, said, "The idea of the Booklogue fits in well with CORA's mandate to deepen literacy in the society, especially through its literacy campaign project, the BOOKTREK, launched over a decade ago on the side of our prime project the Lagos Book & Art Festival, LABAF, which clocks 26 years this November."

The first edition of PAU Booklogue is slated for August 2024 and will culminate in a book discussion segment during the annual Lagos Book & Arts Festival in November.

The Open Education Database lists Things Fall Apart...

From creating characters and stories that have become foundational elements in cultures around the world to upsetting undesirable standards and inspiring the imagination of many, these works of literature have touched the world in significant ways. These are the most influential books in literature.

11. *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. Written in the 14th century, this collection of tales brought to life characters and stories that remain popular today. *The Canterbury Tales* also provides a glimpse into the customs and practices within the society at the time of its writing. This work is one of the most-read books and most studied worldwide. Many scholars suggest that Chaucer's magnum opus contributed significantly to popularising the English vernacular in literature.

12. *Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri. Considered one of the most important pieces of world literature, the *Divine Comedy* is an epic poem that details a journey through the realms of the afterlife and, allegorically, the soul's discovery of God. Long considered the most significant piece of Italian literature, the *Divine Comedy* also provides us with a closer view of medieval Christian theology and philosophy.

13. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare.* William Shakespeare is often considered the most excellent writer in the English language and the greatest dramatist in all of history. The characters, stories, and language have taken hold of readers for hundreds of years and significantly shaped modern culture. Shakespeare's complete works have been translated into every major language and are still enjoyed worldwide.

14. *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville. This now-famous book about a man's hunt for the great white is considered one of the greatest American novels ever written. *Moby Dick* is heavy on symbolism but is also famous for the detailing of the whaling industry in the 19th century and its many different narrative styles and structures.

15. *1984* by George Orwell is a dystopian novel that describes life in a totalitarian regime that has stripped the people of their rights. The themes in this novel have become a significant part of modern culture, creating terms and concepts that have been incorporated into our society. Surveillance, truth, and censorship take centre stage in this novel; no other book has contributed to our understanding of these themes like 1984.

16. *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley. Another dystopian novel, this one by Huxley is often considered one of the great novels of the 20th century. Huxley's novel looked unfavourably at the loss of an individual's identity through futuristic technological advancements. Huxley's fears of commercialism and the emerging youth culture are entirely on display in this novel.

17. *The Iliad and The Odyssey* by Homer. These two ancient Greek epic poems are the preeminent works in ancient Greek literature and incredibly influential texts for all forms of art, thought, and music in Western civilisation. The *Iliad* details a few weeks during the end of the Trojan War and the *Odyssey* describes Odysseus' ten-year journey home from the Trojan War. These two works are essential for their detail of Greek history and legend, the composition of the story, and the development of themes.

18. *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes. This Spanish novel, originally published as two books, is one of the world's most influential and popular novels and considered one of the best books ever written. The adventure, symbolism, and characterisation in *Don Quixote* have promoted the book to the incredible popularity it has today. *Don Quixote* became one of the earliest canonical texts and has inspired artists of all kinds for hundreds of years.

19. *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust. Daunting in length, the seven-volume *In Search of Lost Time* is one of the most prominent modern works of the early 20th century. The novel explores themes of memory, childhood, and meaning but avoids the

plot-driven model of 19th-century novels. The supporting cast is incredibly well drawn, and the events are moved forward by the differing perspectives that experience them, writing techniques that have been emulated endlessly since the novel's publication.

20. *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert. Flaubert's story of a woman who engages in adulterous affairs in an attempt to escape from a loveless marriage was subjected to heavy censorship when it was published, and Flaubert was taken to trial over the novel. After his acquittal, *Madame Bovary* became renowned as a masterpiece of the Realism movement.

21. *Arabian Nights*, translated by Andrew Lang. This English version of *One Thousand and One Nights* retells the ancient stories that have now become popularised around the world, including the plight of Scheherazade, the adventures of Aladdin, and the voyages of Sinbad.

22. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Considered one of the most significant novels in the Spanish literary canon, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* tells the story of the Buena family over several generations. The style and themes in the novel are seen to be representative of a unique Latin American literary movement of the 1960s: Magical Realism.

23. *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy. Though Tolstoy hesitated to call this a novel, *War and Peace* is often included in discussions of the best novels ever. Chronicling the French invasion of Russia in 1812, the book looks at the psychological effects of the war and the philosophical discourses it created.

24. *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu. Written at the beginning of the 11th century, *The Tale of Genji* is often called the first novel. While it does not have a plot by definition, the story does have many elements of a modern novel, including a main character, a supporting cast, and characterisation. Translation of this novel has proved difficult, but most still consider it the first and most outstanding work in Japanese literature.

25. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Written by a middle-aged white woman in 1851, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has been credited for changing the views of slavery in the North. It continues to serve as a reminder of the effects of slavery and other inhumane acts.

26. *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. While Fyodor Dostoyevsky has written several works that could be considered some of the most influential ever published, *Crime and Punishment* stands above the rest as one of the best books ever written. This novel explores the mind of an individualistic person from within, challenging the rules of crime and punishment as they apply to the main character and the people around him.

27. *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. This 1958 novel's theme of preserving cultural history in the face of Western domination gave voice to the oppressed people in Africa and caught the world's attention. It is still widely read and studied as an example of colonialism's damage.

28. *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Faust* is a tragic play but has long been considered the single most outstanding work in the German literature. The tale tells of Faust selling his soul to the devil for worldly knowledge and pleasures. This story has an immeasurable influence on art,

literature, music, and thought.

29. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. Written to honour the memory of African American slaves brought over during the slave trade, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is one of modern literature's most recognisable and influential texts. For giving voice to the African American experience and observing and recording the collective memory of the population, Morrison's novel won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988.

30. *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien. Not only is *The Lord of the Rings* one of the best-selling novels in the world, but it also helped form and shape the high fantasy genre. While many of the themes from the story were adapted from earlier mythologies, *The Lord of the Rings* became the foundational text for all fantasy readers and

authors.



Society

These are the most influential books impacting society, texts that helped change people's views on racism, feminism, consumption, and language.

31. *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank. This landmark book is built from the actual diary kept by Anne Frank, the young daughter of a Jewish family hiding during the Nazi takeover in the Netherlands. The innocence of this young girl, so full of hopes and dreams, is held in sharp contrast to the reality of her situation at the hands of the Nazis. This book has become a potent symbol and reminder of the impact of racial persecution.

32. *The Vindication of the Rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft. Considered the first great treatise on feminism, Wollstonecraft's text was written in response to those who felt that women should not be educated. She argued that women deserve an education proportionate to their societal position, that of educators and companions. Wollstonecraft demonstrated that inequality is not only morally and ethically wrong but is also economically and socially irresponsible.

33. *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir. The *Second Sex* examines why a woman's position in society is prohibitive and how it got to this point. Establishing herself as a fundamental figure in feminist philosophy, de Beauvoir was one of the first to explore gender as a social construct, distinguishing between the terms "sex" and "gender."

34. *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf. In *A Room of One's Own*, an extended essay that Woolf delivered to two women's colleges, the differences between male and female writers and how those differences result from the limitations and restrictions imposed on females are discussed. Without the freedom, the education, or the financial rewards of male authors, females are barred from creating a literary tradition of their own.

35. *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau. Walden is the textual reflection of Thoreau's social experiment of living isolated in a cabin next to Walden Pond to understand society better. Thoreau wrote the results of his experience with self-sufficiency and simplicity in Walden, which has subsequently become a source of inspiration for those seeking a life removed from the business of society.

36. *A Dictionary of the English Language* by Samuel Johnson. Considered the most influential dictionary of the English language, Johnson compiled this book over seven years by himself. Credited as the foundational text for studying the English language and lexicography, Johnson's dictionary was not the first of its kind but the most comprehensive and well-researched.

37. *Critique of Pure Reason* by Immanuel Kant. Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is primarily considered to be one of the most influential philosophical texts of all time. Kant's text is one of the most important books for all interested in philosophy, exploring human knowledge and reason, their extents and limitations, and the perception of space and time.

38. *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair. Even though Upton Sinclair set out to write a novel about the lives of immigrants in America in the early 20th century, *The Jungle* gained popularity because it highlighted the unsanitary practices in the meatpacking industry. By depicting countless health violations and stories of the unfair treatment and pay of migrant workers, Sinclair was a significant contributor to the reformation of the meat inspection laws in America. Over time, he gained more recognition for influencing standardised ways as well.

39. *Native Son* by Richard Wright. Often regarded as the father of Black American Literature, Richard Wright wrote *Native Son* to demonstrate the harsh realities of being a black person in white America. It was one of the earliest and most successful books to observe the racial divide in the country from the perspective of the minority, and it

highlighted black culture in a way that had not been done before.



Science, Math, and Geography

These works are some of the most influential books because they began or at least represent the beginning of entire movements and schools of thought in science, math, and geography.

40. *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* by Isaac Newton. Written while Cambridge was closed because of the plague, Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* details the principles of gravity, mechanics, calculus, and light and colour. This book set the stage for modern studies of both math and physics.

41. *The Meaning of Relativity* by Albert Einstein. *The Meaning of Relativity* is a collection of the Stafford Little Lectures of Albert Einstein in 1921 at Princeton University. Delivered five years after Einstein's groundbreaking paper on general relativity was published, these lectures sum up the man's work. While many of the ideas were presented in different forms before the publication of this book, *The Meaning of Relativity* remains one of the most important collections of ideas ever put together.

42. *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. This work by Darwin laid out the foundation for the theory of evolution. Since its publication, the book's theories and observations have helped make life sciences what they are today. Darwin's adaptation and evolutionary model still aid modern scientists as they build a better understanding of all Earth's species, including our own.

43. *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson. Carson wrote about environmental justice in this book, which inspired readers to think more seriously about their relationship to the Earth. *Silent Spring* helped the modern ecological movement get off the ground and led to the nationwide ban on DDT.

44. *Geographia* by Ptolemy. Ptolemy wrote and mapped the world according to the knowledge he had available in the 2nd century. His maps and methodologies were used for hundreds of years afterwards. Today's cartography directly descends from Ptolemy's work.

45. *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud. Freud included the basics of his theories on psychoanalysis in this landmark work that is still read and studied worldwide. In this work, Freud introduced the concept of the unconscious and demonstrated how his theories are used to interpret dreams. Freud's work popularised the science of psychology and helped build the foundation on which modern psychological discourse now stands.

Religion

These religious texts are some of the most influential books ever written. They serve as spiritual and lifestyle guides for countless people worldwide, some of whom are thousands of years old.

46. *The Bible.* This sacred text introduced Christianity to the world and has continued to inspire millions of people. It is the most translated and most frequently purchased book in the world.

47. *The Qur'an.* The sacred text of Islam, the Qur'an is believed to be the last word of God to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel over 23 years. This book is the cornerstone of the Islamic religion.

48. *The Torah.* The written laws and teachings in the Tanakh have offered a way of life for those of the Jewish faith. The text provides teaching and methods of practice for daily living and has influenced art and litera-

ture in countless ways.

49. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead.* Perhaps the most well-known Tibetan text, this book was written by a Tibetan monk and discusses what happens during death, the time between death and rebirth, and rebirth.

50. *The Analects by Confucius.* The *Analects* is a collection of sayings and ideas attributed to the Chinese philosopher Confucius. The text has been read and studied in China for the last 2,000 years, impacting Chinese culture, values, art, and thought.

THOUGHTS ON BOOKS

Books are a uniquely portable magic.
— Stephen King

No two persons ever read the same book.
— Edmund Wilson

Whenever you read a good book somewhere in the world, a door opens to allow more light.
— Vera Nazarian

If we encounter a man of rare intellect, we should ask him what books he reads.
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

I would never read a book if I could talk half an hour with the man who wrote it.
— Woodrow Wilson

BOOK REVIEW

A thrilling narrative of a life of courage

Olugbenga Ben Ogunmoyela (2023), Memoirs Of A Cow Without A Tail. Writables Creative Solutions. ISBN: 979-885-292-852-8

CHIDO NWAKANMA

The metaphoric title of "Memoirs of a Cow Without a Tail" by Olugbenga Ben Ogunmoyela invites readers to a rich narrative and provokes thought about the book's promise.

Ogunmoyela draws on his experiences and knowledge as a teacher and leader to explain complex ideas using a metaphor. At first glance, the reader imagines another poverty narrative in the mould of the shoeless former president. Not so, however, as his usage of the phrase is more profound.

Memoirs of a Cow Without a Tail is mostly a growing-up narrative. It tells of Ogunmoyela's journey into adulthood and is a tribute to Government College, Ibadan, his foundation. The GCI experience gets more play than his time at the University of Ibadan. The book harps on virtues Ogunmoyela fears the Nigerian society is losing.

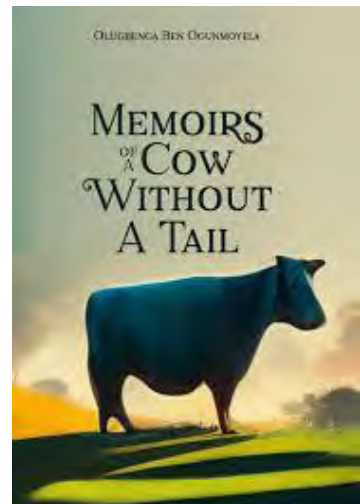
Ogunmoyela's industry experience is thrilling for its courage and detailing of intrigues during his long experience at Cadbury Nigerian and relatively short but impactful stay at Honeywell Flour Mills. His Cadbury experience with his GCI classmate as MD is bitter-sweet, but this is his account. Will it provoke the other side of the story?

A Cow Without A Tail is a 70th birthday marker by the author "to immortalise the phases and facets of my sojourn on this side of the divide". He affirms, "One thing that has stood out each time I go down memory lane is that while my life typifies the proverbial Cow Without A Tail who is vulnerable and often defenceless against the swarm of flies who perch on it from time to time, God has continued to be my *Helper and Defence*."

Over 400 pages, *Memoirs of a Cow Without A Tail* takes the reader through a prologue, foreword, six sections and an epilogue. The sections are *The Dreamer* (chapters 1 to 9), *The Explorer* (chapters 10-12), *The Builder* (13-19), *The Mentor* (chapter 20), *The Disciple* (21-23) and *Ten Life Lessons*.

We meet Ogunmoyela's paternal grandparents, parents, siblings, schoolmates, and children. Ogunmoyela was one of nine children of Elder Victor Babatunde Thomas Ogunmoyela, a civil servant who served as an Education Inspector. We feel the pain of the loss of his first wife and his joy in remarrying well.

His father made him repeat Standard Six despite his excellent results. The foresighted



Before turning to the Ten Life Lessons, a must-read, Ogunmoyela offers the reader many lessons throughout the book. Here are five:

1. "You are responsible for whatever changes you want in your environment and community."

2. Life will always offer you the opportunity to make a difference. It is up to you to seize it or let it pass.

3. Sometimes, you will suffer for being a voice of truth and change. Taking a stand for justice in matters of integrity will always come at a personal cost to you.

4. Everyone has a seed of leadership, and you are already a leader if you care to allow that seed to germinate.

5. I quickly learned that a leader must be exemplary in conduct, carriage, and every ramification."

Memoirs of a Cow Without A Tail is a profound book of reflections and deserves reading by young and old alike. It will guide young readers and cause older ones to pause

man thought Gbenga was too young to be in secondary school. A year later, he entered GCI and was better prepared physically and psychologically. At GCI, he learned adaptation, resilience, time management, focus, and discipline.

The author shares his educational and professional journey. The book addresses these two sides of his life while the religious seeps out of every page.

Ogunmoyela turns his experiences into reflections and insights on life. Underlying everything is the place of values, principles, and faith.

The title creates the impression of a life of struggle with the metaphor of a cow without a tail. It overwhelms the book with pathos rather than exuberant celebration. Yet he recounts a household that was a shelter for many from the storms of life. The author affirms, "God helped us along the way, and we were never lacking" (p.30). Or on his admission to Government College, Ibadan: "I was grateful because although this cow had no tail or special privileges, God secured a spot for me in the school. At the time Kayode, my older brother, and I were entering secondary school, our father did not have to seek any connections whatsoever."

Without a nuanced view, the reader would ask, pray, which cow had no tail? Ogunmoyela was born into a solid middle-class family. His father was upper middle by his status then. The author and his siblings maintained that socio-economic status.



and review.

Olugbenga Ben Ogunmoyela achieved renown as a food science and technology expert. His illustrious career spans 48 years in research, academics, industry and development. It includes work as Senior Research Officer and Head of the Crop Utilisation Division at the Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria, Lecturer at the University of Lagos, and professor at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta and in industry at Cadbury Nigeria Plc and Honeywell Flour Mills. He was a senior manager and department head in Cadbury. He was one of the consultants who supervised the building of Nigeria's first private airport terminal, MMA2, for Bi-Courtney Aviation Services Limited (BASL).

The Open Education Database lists Things Fall Apart among the 50 Most Influential Books of All Time

For many centuries, books have been one of humankind's central forms of entertainment. Readers worldwide invest countless hours escaping into new and unique worlds, losing themselves in the words and pages of books from various genres. While all books affect readers in different ways, history has shown that some books can reach and impact large groups of people so that they are forever changed. These books can share knowledge, inspiration, and discoveries in various fields. They teach, influence, and alter the way we think. Sometimes, these books are so important and enlightening that they help the world and its people evolve. The following books have done just that. Educating and informing readers in politics and government, creating new standards in literature, challenging societal norms, and advancing academic thought in the schools of science and religion are top 50 books that changed the world.

ain and push for an egalitarian government. Still today, Common Sense is one of the all-time best-selling American titles.

5. *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville. In what was initially meant to be an observation of the American prison system, *Democracy in America* is a look at American society and institutions overall and why American democratic equality exists and thrived at the time of the writing. Alexis de Tocqueville traced the historical evolution of equality and suggested that specific conditions, such as widespread economic opportunity and the abolition of primogeniture, led to the American democratic revolution.

6. *The Prince* by Niccolò Machiavelli. Considered one of the first works of modern political philosophy, *The Prince* is a political treatise from 1513 that offers advice on how aspiring leaders can survive and thrive in the contentious political landscape. While the book's intent is still debated, the result is one of the most unabashed meditations on political power and what is required to make it last.

7. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* by Frederick Douglass. Written by the famed orator and former slave Frederick Douglass, this narrative is considered the most famous of pieces written by former slaves and one of the most influential texts during the abolitionist movement in the United States. In the text, Douglass recounts his life as a slave on his way to freedom.

8. *On Liberty* by John Stewart Mill. This philosophical work is considered a foundational text for modern liberal political thought. The text applies ethical utilitarianism to society and state governance, arguing that more importance be placed on the consequences of actions as they relate to the interests of others than one's interests.

9. *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith. *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, describes how and what builds a nation's wealth. Primarily viewed as the foundational text for classical economics, *The Wealth of Nations* explores the economic system and suggests that a free market is able to automate and regulate itself. These functions are only limited by the privileges given to certain members within the economy.

10. *Orientalism* by Edward Said. Primarily a work of postcolonial cultural studies, *Orientalism* discusses how cultural representations of the Eastern world are bound to the structures and societies that create them. Since these patronising and exaggerated depictions of difference are designed in such a way that Western superiority is highlighted in comparison, *Orientalism* becomes a critique of Western politics and power.

11. *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust. Daunting in length, the seven-volume *In Search of Lost Time* is one of the most prominent modern works of the early 20th century. The novel explores themes of memory, childhood, and meaning but avoids the

literature, music, and thought.

29. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. Written to honour the memory of African American slaves brought over during the slave trade, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is one of modern literature's most recognisable and influential texts. For giving voice to the African American experience and observing and recording the collective memory of the population, Morrison's novel won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988.

30. *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien. Not only is *The Lord of the Rings* one of the best-selling novels in the world, but it also helped form and shape the high fantasy genre. While many of the themes from the story were adapted from earlier mythologies, *The Lord of the Rings* became the foundational text for all fantasy readers and

authors.

These works are some of the most influential books because they began or at least represent the beginning of entire movements and schools of thought in science, math, and geography.

40. *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* by Isaac Newton. Written while Cambridge was closed because of the plague, Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* details the principles of gravity, mechanics, calculus, and light and colour. This book set the stage for modern studies of both math and physics.

41. *The Meaning of Relativity* by Albert Einstein. *The Meaning of Relativity* is a collection of the Stafford Little Lectures of Albert Einstein in 1921 at Princeton University. Delivered five years after Einstein's groundbreaking paper on general relativity was published, these lectures sum up the man's work. While many of the ideas were presented in different forms before the publication of this book, *The Meaning of Relativity* remains one of the most important collections of ideas ever put together.

42. *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. This work by Darwin laid out the foundation for the theory of evolution. Since its publication, the book's theories and observations have helped make life sciences what they are today. Darwin's adaptation and evolutionary model still aid modern scientists as they build a better understanding of all Earth's species, including our own.

43. *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson. Carson wrote about environmental justice in this book, which inspired readers to think more seriously about their relationship to the Earth. *Silent Spring* helped the modern ecological movement get off the ground and led to the nationwide ban on DDT.

44. *Geographia* by Ptolemy. Ptolemy wrote and mapped the world according to the knowledge he had available in the 2nd century. His maps and methodologies were used for hundreds of years afterwards. Today's cartography directly descends from Ptolemy's work.

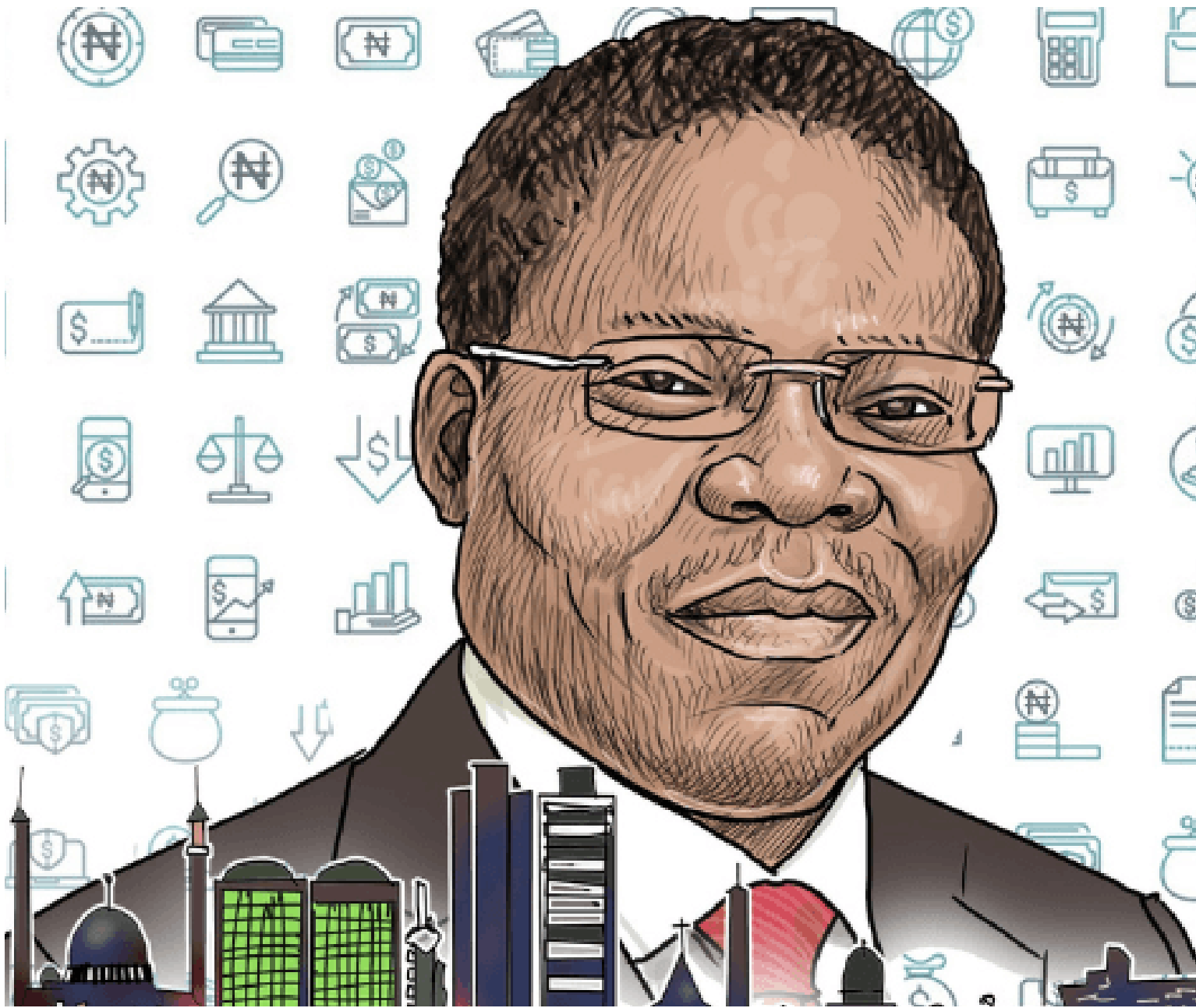
45. *The Interpretation of Dreams* by Sigmund Freud. Freud included the basics of his theories on psychoanalysis in this landmark work that is still read and studied worldwide. In this work, Freud introduced the concept of the unconscious and demonstrated how his theories are used to interpret dreams. Freud's work popularised the science of psychology and helped build the foundation on which modern psychological discourse now stands.

Religion

These religious texts are some of the most influential books ever written. They serve as spiritual and lifestyle guides for countless people worldwide, some of whom are thousands of years old.

46. *The Bible.* This sacred text introduced Christianity to the world and has continued to inspire millions of people. It is the most translated and most frequently purchased book in the world.

Man-in-the-News



“
We must realise that there are limits to what we can achieve as individuals, but endless possibilities lie ahead of us as a team
”

Gbeleyi arrives BPE with aplomb

BASSEY AKPAN

Ayodeji Ariyo Gbeleyi arrived the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) in the morning of Monday, June 24, 2024 and after the handover formalities with his predecessor, then acting Director General of BPE, Ignatius Ayrwoh, he set out for business.

Staff of the privatisation agency were surprised that he called the Enterprise Business Review Forum (EBRF) which holds every Monday. EBRF is a review platform to unveil, scrutinise and interrogate transactions and activities of the Bureau that is physically attended by Directors and Heads of key units and virtually by other management and senior staff of the Bureau. What changed was that instead of starting at 10am, the forum was shifted to the afternoon of that day.

I called a friend around 2.32pm and he messaged me thus: “The new DG is giving us fire in EBRF.” To which I responded, “Interesting. On Day One and he called EBRF?” And it was not a cosmetic meeting. From accounts of the attendees, it was not only fruitful but it was also an intellectual fest. The shock to the staff was Gbeleyi’s familiarity with the Bureau’s strategies and transac-

tions. Even transactions conducted over 15 years ago like the concession of the ports system into 26 port terminals operated by private companies. Even commercialisation is a topic he is comfortable with. The discourse lasted till 5pm. At the end of the meeting, my friend summarised their encounter with Gbeleyi thus: “Honestly, the guy was on fire. He has a wealth of experience in both private and public sectors. We have not had a DG with such knowledge of transactions on Day One as the new DG.”

The press statement from the Presidency that announced Gbeleyi’s appointment on June 15, 2024 described him as a renowned financial expert and award-winning chartered accountant. According to Chief Ajuri Ngelale, the Special Adviser to the President on Media & Publicity, the president “expects the new Director-General to bring his vast experience and competence to bear in this role to strengthen the agency as the national resource centre for capacity building and sustenance of reforms through the promotion of a competitive private sector-driven economy, ensuring social accountability and efficient deployment of public resources, as well as advancing effective corporate governance and fiduciary discipline in the public and private

sectors.”

A lawyer friend who knew Gbeleyi in the early 2000 when he was engaged with Lead Merchant Bank as Head of Treasury (when the bank was working on Lagos State Bond) described him as hard working and meticulous. He was in Oba Olashore’s bank between 1988 and 2000. He then moved to Guardian Express Bank where he held the position of Assistant General Manager.

Between 2002 and 2008, Gbeleyi was in the employ of Celtel Nigeria (now Airtel) where he held several positions culminating as General Manager.

In 2008, he moved to the public sector as Director General of Lagos State Public Private Partnership (PPP) Office. Between 2013 and 2015, he was Lagos State Commissioner of Finance. In 2022, he was named Chairman of the Board of Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN).

In 2016, he also became Chairman of Axa Mansard Health. Until being named to the headship of BPE, he was Managing Partner of GA Capital --a bespoke financial advisory firm. The firm provides advisory services in public finance management, project finance, regulatory and compliance matters, PPP projects structuring, negotiation,

financing, and implementation across both the private and public sectors.

A fellow of both the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) and the Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria (CITN), he is an alumnus of executive programmes of London Business School, Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and Lagos Business School. He holds an MBA from the University of Navarra (IESE), Spain.

He has broad skills-set and cross-functional expertise in Public Policy Making, Public Finance Management, Debt Sustainability Management, Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), Corporate Governance, Strategy Formulation, Project Finance, Treasury Operational Risks Management, Insurance Risk Management, Investment Banking, Asset Management, Financial Advisory, Multi-Stakeholders & Complex Project Management, Financial Reporting & Stewardship Accounting, Banking Operations and Auditing.

On Thursday, June 27, 2024, Gbeleyi held what insiders in the Bureau called a “town hall meeting” at Wells Carlton Hotel, Asokoro where staff ventilated their expectations of their new boss and he laid down his vision and plans for

the reform agency of the central government. He tasked the staff to work diligently as Nigerians look up to them to contribute their quota to pave the way for a more stable and prosperous economy.

Gbeleyi said the organisation has been entrusted with the reform of the nation’s public enterprises, which must be optimised for operational efficiency and excellence. He emphasised that the ultimate goal is to improve the standard of living for every Nigerian through the diligent implementation of the Bureau’s reform activities.

He urged the staff of the Bureau to be innovative and work as a team to meet the expectations of Nigerians. “We must realise that there are limits to what we can achieve as individuals, but endless possibilities lie ahead of us as a team,” he said.

According to him, there is need for the Bureau to fast-track the commercialisation and privatisation of some assets to add value to the nation’s economy. He highlighted the optimisation of the National Integrated Power Projects (NIPP) to provide much-needed electricity and the revitalisation of the Bank of Agriculture to ensure food security as two key pursuits of his administration.

•Akpan, a public policy analyst, writes from Lagos

FashionTalk

What Seinde Signature, Toke Makinwa's brand partnership would mean for niche perfume market

STOREIES BY
IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA

IN fragrance creation and distribution, the collaboration between fragrance houses, is not merely a transaction but a symphony of shared vision and mutual benefit.

This harmonious partnership begins with the alignment of ethos and objectives, where each entity brings its unique strengths to the table.

In what is obviously a match made in perfume heaven, the only all niche perfume stockists in Nigeria Seinde Signature announced her collaboration with Toke Makinwa Perfumes, recently with loads of fanfare.

In attendance at the event was the celeb herself and her team.

While the Seinde Signature Salon de Parfum brand is very well known by perfume lovers across the country for her large collection of exclusive Niche perfume range from across the globe and with a reputation for selling original fragrances at the best prices possible.

The eponymous Toke Makinwa Perfume collection is inspired by top Nigerian celebrity Omotoke Makinwa, who is well

known as one of Nigeria's most celebrated lifestyle queen, media personality & respected fashionista of high repute.

Seinde Signature by this announcement is the exclusive stockist of the Toke Makinwa Perfume range, which has 3 variants, the Vogue, the Dive & the Intense.

The Toke Makinwa Vogue comes in a distinctive red bottle and is extrait de Parfum with the top note of floral & jasmine blossom, just like the Toke Makinwa Intense which comes in a distinctive black bottle, and has the top notes of florals & cinnamon.

The lush Toke Makinwa Dive, which is the 3rd and last variant, is in a white bottle and the most subtle of the range with the top notes of pink pepper, black currant, and grapefruit. This comes as a eau de parfum unlike the other 2.

The 3 varieties were made to satisfy all types of olfactory cravings.

The perfumes are made in France, which is known for the very best perfumes in the world.

According to Toke Makinwa, the perfume brand took three years to come to fruition, as she had to make sure all i's were

dotted properly and t's crossed. And from the moment in May of 2024 that it was launched, it has always sold out!

The idea to collaborate with the Seinde Signature brand is so as to combine strengths: good reputation for selling the best, combined with an extraordinary aspirational fanbase.

In the pipeline there will be fragrance collaboration made by both Toke and Seinde Signature for this line to epitomize the luxury and exclusivity of the fragrances as well as the Seinde Signature branding.

All three perfumes in the Toke Makinwa luxury perfume range would be sold exclusively at all Seinde Signature Salon de Parfum branches across Nigeria. Both brands are planning many strategic promotions across Nigeria to announce the exclusive collaboration.

In an interview with Toke Makinwa, she said as a business woman, it is not really about being a star but about including people on the journey.

"I would talk to anyone about what they think about the perfume and what they think we can do better because I am open to criticism as long as it is con-

structive. I am a core business woman."

Makinwa said there were four customers she had in mind when creating the perfumes.

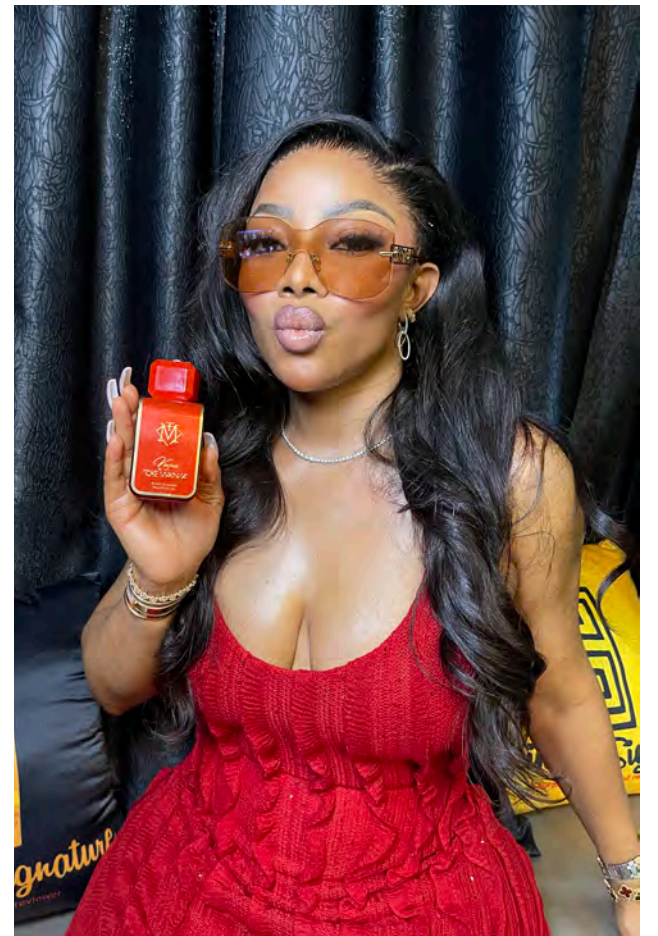
"These are people who love me, people who love the personality, those who would jump on anything I create. There are also those who are curious, who do not necessarily care about who made it.

"There are many perfumes I have in my wardrobe that I can't even pronounce their names and I don't know who made them but they smell good and I bought them. There are those who think you would fail and they are just buying it to prove their assumptions.

"So across board, I'm yet to see someone come out to say the product is bad. We have constructive criticism that we have taken onboard and feedbacks that would make us better.

She disclosed that she is always trying to get all her friends to love the culture of scent and so far, she has won about 80 percent of them over.

"Now they now care more about the perfumes they wear. They are eager to see those that have released new perfumes,



Mzkemzy Hair: Leading the Way in Nigeria's Hair Industry



Mzkemzy.co, also known as Mzkemzy Hair under the leadership of CEO Ameh Oluwakemi, is driving innovation in Nigeria's hair industry by redefining the perception and sales of premium hair products since its inception in 2020.

With a diverse range of top-quality hair extensions, Mzkemzy.co is elevating standards and encouraging Nigerian women to celebrate their natural beauty.

The Nigerian hair sector has experienced notable growth, with Mzkemzy.co playing a key role in this evolution. By offering a premium selection of meticulously crafted hair extensions, they have become a preferred choice for women seeking to enhance their appearance.

Mzkemzy.co distinguishes itself through its unwavering focus on quality. Each hairpiece undergoes thorough testing to ensure it meets the highest standards, earning them a devoted clientele who appreciate the durability and authentic look of their offerings.

Beyond selling hair extensions, Mzkemzy.co is committed to educating and empowering customers. Through online platforms and tutorials, they provide valuable insights on hair care, styling, and maintenance, setting them apart from competitors and establishing themselves as industry frontrunners.

Moreover, Mzkemzy.co's impact extends to the local economy. By sourcing hair extensions from Nigerian suppliers, they contribute to the growth of the domestic hair industry and support local artisans and businesses.

Under Ameh Oluwakemi's leadership, Mzkemzy.co continues to drive innovation and shape Nigeria's hair industry. Their dedication to quality, customer satisfaction, and economic development positions them as industry pioneers.

As the demand for premium hair products grows, Mzkemzy.co remains at the forefront, setting trends and empowering women to embrace their uniqueness. With their exceptional offerings and commitment to excellence, the future looks promising for Mzkemzy.co and the Nigerian hair industry.

Big Feet Shoe by Chichi: Celebrating Inclusivity in Footwears

Nwachukwu Chisom, the inspiring CEO of Big Feet Shoe by Chichi, entered the shoe business fueled by her personal experiences. Struggling to find stylish footwear in larger sizes highlighted a significant gap in the market. Driven by a passion for fashion and a commitment to inclusivity, Chisom set out to empower others facing similar challenges.

Nwachukwu Chisom says, "I was inspired to enter the big feet shoe market due to personal experiences, like struggling to find stylish options in larger sizes. I also noticed a gap in the market and wanted to empower others with similar needs. A passion for fashion and a desire to promote inclusivity drove me to create

a brand that celebrates all foot sizes."

Recognizing the need for fashionable options for those with big feet, she created a brand that celebrates diversity in foot sizes. Beyond shoes, Big Feet Shoe by Chichi also offers an array of jewelry and bags, ensuring that every customer can express their style. Chisom's dedication to inclusivity resonates deeply with her audience, making her brand a favorite among many.

Through her work, Chisom has transformed her personal struggles into a thriving business that prioritizes style and accessibility. Big Feet Shoe by Chichi stands as a testament to her vision of a fashion world where everyone feels represented and celebrated.



Interview

Why we are putting together Nigeria-Grenada Chamber of Commerce - Sonoiki

Honorary Consul Abidemi Oluwagbenga Sonoiki in this interview with journalists in Lagos, highlighted strategic initiatives for Nigeria-Grenada trade and investment, HOPE MOSES-ASHIKE brings the excerpts:

I would like you to share with us how you got to become the Honorary Consul of the Consulate of Grenada and what your role entails.

I went to Grenada and handed over my resume and personal profile for deliberation. All required paperwork and interviews were completed, including international security checks, as part of the due diligence and background check to ensure there were no criminal histories or records. It was an election period, two months after the new Government assumed power, I was contacted and invited to Grenada by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Trade and Investment for another thorough evaluation. The new Prime Minister was gracious and directed the confirmation of my appointment as The Honorary Consul effective immediately.

I received my letter of appointment afterward, then the journey began. Naturally, once you are appointed by a country to another country, you will need to align with your host country which includes involving the Presidency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The accreditation and processes took a while, it's been a journey of two years so far.

My duty and responsibility is to serve as the intermediary between Grenada and Nigeria. There is the need for us to harness all the talents and skills of the people of the two nations together. My topmost priority is to promote investment and trade, and to foster collaboration in areas such as education, health, tourism, culture, cross-cultural interactions, ideas and talent sharing, waste management and other critical areas. The consulate also delivers consular services to all Nigerians desiring traveling for business, education and leisure. Including Nigerians pursuing pathway for citizenship by enhancing seamless trade capacity and the abundance investment opportunities. We also provide firsthand information for enquires, so that they don't get defrauded by anyone or agency.

What are some of those key initiatives that are in place to strengthen the relationship between Nigeria and Grenada?

The first thing when you get such a mandate is to find like minds, identify skilled people, knowledgeable individuals in economy, investment and trade experts by bringing them together. We have been able to do that. Now, we are putting together the Nigeria-Grenada Chamber of Commerce. You know, because that is the engine that would help bring all the business people together from North, South, East and West. There was nothing like that before now.

We are also doing some exchange where our people will go there, some of them have been here. In April 2024, we hosted some investors from Grenada. They were in Abuja and Lagos. We spoke to them, and they took back some ideas that they are working on. We are also planning a direct flight for some Nigerian businessmen and women in October 2024. This exhibition would show case Nigerian small and medium enterprises and afford them collaborations in their various areas of interest.

In the next five years, how do you see the relationship between Nigeria and Grenada?

I want to witness a successful partnership. A partnership that will enable or afford Nigerians to make Grenada their second home and for Grenadians to make Nigeria their second home. The world has become a global market space and Nigerians who are doing business there can earn foreign Exchange (currency). We need all those foreign currencies to come to Nigeria.

Nigerians are exceptionally gifted, before my appointment, over 150 Nigerians used to travel to Grenada to study medicine. Grenada has an excellent medical college. The numbers have increased to more than 250 in the last two years. We are considering the potential of increasing it to 500 because the medical systems in America and Canada absolve roughly 1000 doctors from this college. Isn't that one lovely? to witness Nigerians handling matters and returning money to their country. I see huge opportunities in the areas from travel and tourism to real estate investment and renewable energy. This synergy can earn us remarkable amount of foreign exchange yield

One of the major challenges in getting to Grenada from Nigeria is a lack of an air transport system.

Honestly, if you take a one-week holiday there, you won't want to come back though they need our collaboration given our business ideas and skills



Abidemi Oluwagbenga Sonoiki

What are the plans to solve this issue?

Two airlines' opportunities are currently in the works. One of the biggest airlines in Nigeria is almost concluding with one the Caricom State. We are also working on a wet lease arrangement for a direct flight from Nigeria to Grenada. This will enable Nigerians and Africans to fly directly from here to Grenada under 10 hours once everything is ready. The norm is that you will either need to travel to the United Kingdom for six or seven hours, then a layover another four hours or three hours before traveling for finally for eight or more to the destination in Grenada. Similarly, if you choose to travel via the USA as well, you will need to travel Alanta or New York then to Miami, which will take 16 to 21 hours to the Island of Grenada.

We're bringing in financial partners (investors) to resolve this challenge, because I've witnessed all these obstacles. We are very definite of the possibilities of direct flight in the next 6 to 9 months.

Can you please speak on the opportunities in the finance sector that you think Nigerians can benefit?

Currently, we are in conversation with a Finnish firm that is prepared to provide Nigerians and Grenadians capital to enable

them to make investments there. There are numerous small and medium size business opportunities. Ranging from service delivery like GO-kada service delivery system. Nigerians can afford themselves of franchises of some global fast-food outlets and take them there through a business visa instead of the popular "Japa". The first mover advantage can possibly earn us some foreign investment yield. It will afford young enterprising Nigerian and Grenadians the synergy and symbiotic relationship.

Can you tell us more about the strategic importance of Grenada in the Caribbean region and its global influence?

Grenada is the pride of the Caribbean. That's not because I am representing them. Honestly, if you take a one-week holiday there, you won't want to come back though they need our collaboration given our business ideas and skills.

Grenada serves as a gateway to both North and South America including countries such as the United States and Canada. Grenadians have direct access to the United Kingdom are treated as citizens there. The island is an active member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and plays a pivotal role in regional economic and security initiatives. The current

Young talented and enterprising Nigerians can take advantage of the small business opportunities, creating sustainable wealth and preserving same for their effort and sweat

Prime Minister of Grenada is the one championing the development that's going on in the Caribbean. Globally, Grenada has established strong diplomatic and trade partnerships, contributing to its growing influence on the international stage. It's a very peaceful country that just needs more of the fintech and banking investments and things will improve the more.

In the next five years. The Prime Minister of Grenada and the Nigerian President will be the people will be globally applauded for championing development across the globe. The opportunities for Investment and trade in Grenada are in abundance beyond

human eyes.

Grenada is known for Tourism and a rich culture. What is your plan to build tourism relations between Grenada and Nigeria?

Nigerians are wealthy individuals in their own right. Tourism plays a crucial role in defining leisure time! I have visited a lot of time, and each time I have found that there is not enough housing. Short lets (Airbnb), hotels, and other accommodations are in short supply. There are huge opportunities for wealth creation in the real estate space. Reservations must be made in advance. Thus, if Nigerians can diversify their risks and see the potential in earn a lot of money. You can conduct your business in Nigeria and also expand it to Grenada. We know places in Grenada where you can develop a real estate, which is one of the major industries there.

Nigerians can make a ton of foreign exchange via real estate. Medical tourism is another area is also another cash cow. Nigerian physicians are excellent and renowned, we can forge collaboration and partnership between both countries. Waste management and renewal energy are among the few interests we can also explore.

What are the benefits of obtaining a Grenadian citizenship? And then in this age of Japa, why do you think Nigerian youths should ditch countries like the UK, and Canada and opt for Grenada?

Speaking to citizenship, if you want to be a citizen of America or Canada, you may need to be there physically for next three to five years to acquire such privilege. You

don't need to do that with Grenada which affords you access and visa free to about 150 destinations. You can become a global Citizen through Grenada in less than 6months, though through a very thorough international checks and processes.

Your access to London, Paris, Switzerland, Russia and China will become a delight and pride. You may also enjoy as much as 10 years visa access each to both America and Canada. Why would you want to be subjected to humiliation and unwarranted hardship in another country when you can enjoy the privileges in Grenada, the Pride of the Caribbean.

If you choose to visit Grenada, to explore and experience firsthand, we will be delighted to issue appropriate entry visas before determining your next step of action.

Young talented and enterprising Nigerians can take advantage of the small business opportunities, creating sustainable wealth and preserving same for their effort and sweat.

Can you pinpoint specific education opportunities?

The St. George's University in Grenada is a renowned medical college of repute where Canada and America select over 1,000 medical Doctors from year to year. You will agree with that this an opportunity

to become a Canadian or American through medical profession. We can assist willing Nigerian student who want to become a medical student at the St. George's University in Grenada. The Honorary Consulate of Grenada is always willing and ready to be of assistance to all Africans desirous of this journey. The opportunity to become an American or Canadian is there because given your profession as a medical doctor. You can stay, walk and live there and still find yourself in Nigeria, your home.

On trade, what's the trade relation between Nigeria and Grenada and can you put a value to it?

If you go on the internet, you will see level of trade between Nigeria and Grenada over the years. You will also see the paradigm shift in the trade volume in the two years. We are putting effort together to enhance collaboration in export between both countries and the rest of the world. I want a situation where an exporter of spices in Nigeria can increase their volume of trade to Canada, America and Europe through continuum and synergy of both countries there by making them aggregator for the sales and distribution commodities. You're not just a Nigerian exporter, you're also exporting from your partners in Grenada.

You mentioned some of the opportunities earlier, you mentioned education, tourism, and renewable energy. What are the other opportunities that you think Nigerian investors would be interested in?

Grenada doesn't have volatility in terms of its currency. Their economy has been very stable over the 3 decade (30 Years). So even if you take your money there you are assured that with time, the value of your money and your investment is not eroded which is a strong economic

We plan to announce the chamber and strengthen the partnership during a business summit that brings about 100 of Nigeria's leading businesses to Grenada in October 2024



factor Nigerians should consider. They are also very stable politically and their crime rate is less than 2 percent. I am definite you can forget or misplace your phone and go back to pick or retrieve it. Even if anything drops by, you'll be sure that they will trace you and give it back to you.

You mentioned the Nigerian-Grenada Chamber of Commerce. When can we expect that?

We plan to announce the chamber and strengthen the partnership during a business summit that brings about 100 of Nigeria's leading businesses to Grenada in October 2024. Additionally, an appointment with the Investment Migration Agency is scheduled simultaneously. They were in Nigeria in April to explore and exchange investment opportunities. We are definite this is the beginning of greater ties between the two countries. The world would be amazed at what we are about to do.

Did you foresee yourself attaining this role some ten years ago?

I never saw it coming. My aspiration and desire were to be the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria at some point in my life. Though I left Banking in Year 2016 owing to my personal believe and position, as Deputy General Manager and Group Treasurer of the Bank. I am still very relevant in the banking space, especially with Institute of Chartered Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN). I realised that I needed to reassess my strategy, so I gathered resources and began managing businesses, doing that afforded me a whole lot of travelling and meeting people which has brought me this significant milestone.

What's your vision for the bilateral relationship between Nigeria and Grenada?

We plan to intensify the synergy between both countries. You know, to ensure the growth of both economy (Nigeria and Grenada) Nigeria and Nigerians need rise to the occasion where Nigeria plays big brother to Grenada and the entire Caribbean.

I desire to see Grenada and the Caribbean to be the first-choice trade partner of Nigeria in the world. If we can have a good handshake we could take both countries to greater heights, I have no doubt.

You're the first Honorary Consul of Grenada in Nigeria. For clarity, what date and year did you assume office?

Yes, in Nigeria, the first of its kind. It was a long process. We were managing a smaller place until we got to this edifice. I assumed on the 24th of May 2022 and reconfirmation about a year ago.

We had to get credence with the Federal Government of Nigeria, and it took a while to get this done. Protocol and procedure had to be followed. You can't just come and establish in Nigeria. The Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria will ensure all the necessary processes and affirmation are granted and given in accordance with the rules and guidelines, including a thorough background check by National Security Adviser' office (NSA). A copy of my letter of credence is pasted on the left wall at my private lounge, which shows that we authorised and charged to assist any Grenadian in Nigeria, for any form of support and assistance as may require from time.

Lastly, do you have the number of Grenadians living in Nigeria?

About 1,000 Grenadians are registered and resident in Nigeria. It was about 200 two years ago but we are formalising a lot of things now and encouraging people to do business in Grenada.

Nobody needs to Japa again. There are abundant opportunities in the Caribbean. We can avail your appropriate visas to enable you explore the Caribbean through Grenadian business partnership. Becoming a Citizen of Grenada will also grant you greater access over 150 countries, including China, Russia, Europe, Schengen countries besides 10-year visas for both Canada and United of America.

Interview

Why there has been no appointment of judges in Abia since 2021 - Onuchukwu

Charles Onuchukwu, chairman, Aba branch of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), in this interview with GODFREY OFURUM, said that inadequate Judges, lack of court rooms were hampering quick dispensation of cases in the state. He also spoke on other issues. Excerpts:

There have been numerous complaints of abuse of human rights by security agents in Abia. Do you have a plan to stop the trend?

The current Commissioner for Police is a gentleman who is doing a lot on that aspect, so I wouldn't say he is not doing anything about it. However, I believe he needs to step up the efforts on that aspect to ensure that cases of harassment and molestation is reduced to the barest minimum. This issue of extortion is one of the issues we discussed with the Commander of the Army in Ohafia on July 1, 2024. He assured us that they were addressing the issue and called for the cooperation of the public in the area of useful information to help apprehend those involved in such acts.

Although we have not discussed with the Commissioner of Police (CP), we will soon do that. He is a polished gentleman and will help us to achieve a lot in that angle. In the area of the operational style of our police officers, I'll suggest to the CP that we should often have periodic seminars with police officers, to put them through on some legal issues for the purpose of some of them, who may not know the position of the law in certain issues.

When we have seminar with them, we would educate them properly. Even today, I can tell you that today, most of the criminal matters that failed are because of the nonchalant attitude of the police in doing thorough investigation. I have seen cases where an investigation police officer (IPO), handling a case messed the entire thing up with haphazard report.

So, we will do our best to ensure that issues of criminal justice are done properly, so that police will not use their errors to continue to let suspected criminals off the hook. Most of the problems associated with failures in prosecution comes when the police or the IPO, who is supposed to do a thorough investigation on a matter, by touching the necessary angles needed to close a case properly, ends up messing things up. I have seen some of them, who do thorough watertight investigations, but majority of them need to improve, so that they can be in control of cases.

When we meet the Commissioner of Police, we will talk. We are ready to have a seminar with them. When they invite us, we will come. Police is a law enforcement agency and all we want is for a society that is guided, by law, where those who commit crime should not be let off the hook and those who are innocent should be free to move. If we have a society, where those who commit crime are free to move about, because of the issues we are talking about, it will not go well in the society, because other people would see the law, as nothing and



Charles Onuchukwu

may be encouraged to go into crime.

What is NBA's stand on the recent spate of insecurity in Abia?

It is disheartening that insecurity is raising its head again in this city. We have seen the recent incidents and it's disturbing to see how our people are losing their lives. I want to say that the government is trying, but they need to step up their efforts.

"There is need to do a proper intelligence gathering from the angle of the police, because if they are still doing that, all these criminal activities will not be happening without arrest of the culprits. If you consider the gap between the attack on police officers at Opobo Junction and the recent one at Ngwa Road, by Mosque Street, you will notice that people may be living in fear with the belief that the whole city is unsecured.

So, government needs to step up their game, by voting more money into security. I have looked around and I can tell you that police here do not have functional operational vehicles. I know that police lack maintenance culture, but even at that, I don't think the government should sit and watch the police suffer lack on logistics needed to secure lives and property.

So, we should look away from their lack of maintenance culture and support them to secure us. Again, let me tell us this, as the current government is busy opening up the city, by reconstructing dilapidated roads, it will be used by both the good and the bad. The new routes could be used by criminals, as entrance and exist routes, as well in as much as it was done for the good of people here. The police need to have enough

functional vehicles and the necessary materials needed to end this situation. My appeal to Governor Alex Otti is that he should try and have a better synergy with all the law enforcement agencies in the state, know their needs, support them to make this place safe and combat the crimes that are spreading.

With the way and manner this criminal activities are spreading, it looks as if we're having a recreation of the Osisikankwu era between 2009-2010, when everybody was running out of town. However, I have the confidence that we have a governor that will not allow Aba to get back to such ugly era and I pray this city will remain peaceful and secured for all of us.

How active is the Aba NBA's Human Rights Committee?

By the virtue of the NBA constitution, the bylaw makes it automatic that the Vice Chairman of every NBA branch is automatically the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee of that branch. Our current Vice Chairman, Dim Oriaku Esther is the chairman of the human rights committee, although I've not constituted it, but that would be done in our next meeting. She has served in that committee for two terms and so, she's well experienced.

So, it will not be a difficult task for her to continue with what she's already used to. It'll be a smooth sail for the committee, hence handling of human rights violation is concerned. Even now at this early stage prior to the inauguration, human rights related calls have been coming and she has been going to police stations to handle issues like that and trying

to handle pro bono matters for the indigent people and secure the release of some other person's that are being held unlawfully.

They've been doing that. We intend to organise a town hall meeting before the end of this (2024) year, where we will invite certain persons to interact and educate the public on issues, as it concerns their rights. The essence of the town hall meeting will be to educate our people on their rights and when to invite a lawyer.

If our people are aware of their rights and abide according to the stipulations of the constitution, the police will not intimidate them. Nobody will carelessly go about intimidating a citizen that knows his rights, that's difficult to see. So, it's important that the citizens are properly educated just as the police are equally and properly educated.

What is NBA doing to reduce cases of awaiting trial?

Let me use Abia State as a case study here, although the situation may not be limited to Abia. I'm sure you are aware that since 2021 there has not been appointment of judges, because a certain person filed a suit against the appointment of judges.

The last screening exercise that took place in Abia State was in 2022. In fact, the National Judicial Council (NJC) was on the verge of announcing the appointment of Judges in Abia, before some persons filed a suit against the NJC, the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC), the Chief Judge, and the Attorney General of the State.

So, the NJC's policy is that hence there's any suit, it becomes a subjudice. They cannot do anything about it. Other states like Imo have had about two different appointments of judges, swearing in not less than 10 or 15 judges since our problem in the state started.

The judges that are retired in Abia, their spaces have not even been filled since their retirement. That case filled on the appointment of judges is on appeal right now and NJC insists that they must finish whatever matters in court before anything will take place.

There are proliferation of cases, many people have gone to file one suit or the other. What is even saving Abia State right now is because there was an extension in the retirement age of judges. If that extension was not done, it would have been embarrassing to hear that we have only about five or three judges in Abia State.

So, when you talk about the delay in criminal trials, one of the problems they're having is the court not sitting, due to one reason or the other. You go to the entire Obingwa today, they have only one high court. When you get to the course list of a judge, a judge will have over 30-40 cases. He'll not kill himself. We can only handle, but a few of those overstretched list.

The days they are giving now is December date. The judge will not kill himself. In places like Osisoma-Ngwa, where they are supposed to have more three courts, you have only two that cover Osioma combined with Ugwunagbo.

Since the other Judge retired in 2021, there has been no replacement. How can you have only two courts sitting in Osisoma-Ngwa and Ugwunagbo, handling matters from such a large area? We have the same problem in Ukwia East and Ukwia West Local Government Areas, where we have one court for the two local governments and one Judge handling cases there. So, if there are enough courts and Judges matters would be heard quickly and the fate of those involved can be decided fast.

In the case of the magistrate courts, their biggest challenge is that there are no enough court rooms to operate from. Some magistrate courts here sit in the afternoon. You'll come to court and they'll tell you that it is an afternoon court. Some courts now alternate- one will sit two days in a week, the other will take over or one sits in the morning.

So, we are going to meet the governor on this, although he has made some statements about it, I think when we had our annual general meeting (AGM) recently and the Attorney General spoke about it that this is the first time the judiciary is considered in the budget, where courts will be built.

However, we have not seen that yet and we are hopeful that it will be actualised. So, the challenge of our High Courts is not having enough Judges, while our Magistrate Courts lack court rooms. This is caused by the suits pending in different courts on the appointment of Judges.

Is there any move by NBA to end the delay?

I have had discussions with my co-chairmen over this matter, and what we are waiting for is for the Umuahia chapter of the NBA to conclude their election. After that, we will discuss and take a standpoint on what we can do- those to meet and even those involved in the matters that are preventing the appointment of Judges.

We can see how the courts in other States are functioning, but over here it is a different case, where people will file suits simply, because they were not favoured according to their expectations.

So, everybody is suffering it right now and it should not be so. If matters are not held expeditiously, you go to court, pay your lawyer, he takes date and such scenario continues until people get frustrated, as a result of adjustment of dates.

The situation has made many citizens see lawyers as trying to extort them, while the problem is because we lack Judges.

Interview

‘Nigeria’s midstream, downstream sectors need regulatory frameworks to boost growth’

The Society of Petroleum Engineers is concluding plans to host the 2024 Society of Petroleum Engineers Nigeria Annual International Conference and Exhibition (SPE-NAICE). In this interview with select journalists, Salahuddeen Tahir, chairman of the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE), Nigerian Council discusses the economic importance of the conference. He doubles as head of Assets & Investments Management at NNPC Gas & Power Investment Services (NGPIS) and oversees strategic investments in power, LNG, and gas-based industry initiatives. With dual degrees in Geology and Petroleum Engineering, Tahir has over 22 years of experience in the oil and gas sector. He spoke on pertinent issues affecting the midstream and downstream sectors. AMAKA ANAGOR-EWUZIE brings the excerpts:

The Society of Petroleum Engineers Nigeria Annual International Conference and Exhibition is in its 47th edition. In what ways has it grown or changed throughout its history?

The annual international conference and exhibition has significantly evolved since its first event in 1977. Now in its 47th edition, the conference has expanded its scope and become a major event in the oil and gas industry, attracting global professionals. It serves as a platform for knowledge sharing, networking, and showcasing industry advancements. Key milestones include introducing technical sessions and workshops to enhance skills, embracing digital platforms for accessibility, and focusing on sustainability and environmental responsibility. The conference continues to foster collaboration and innovation, with the upcoming edition expected to uphold this legacy.

Why is the Society of Petroleum Engineers Nigeria focusing on midstream and downstream development judging by the theme of this year’s event?

The theme ‘Petroleum Industry Value Chain Optimisation: The Inevitability of Midstream and Downstream Development,’ emphasises the critical role of midstream and downstream sectors in sustaining the upstream business. These sectors manage the transportation, storage, refining, and distribution of crude oil, essential for value chain efficiency. Optimising midstream and downstream operations enhances the petroleum industry’s efficiency, reliability, and profitability, boosting economic growth and development in Nigeria and Africa.

As global energy transitions toward alternatives and reducing carbon emissions, these sectors are pivotal in distributing natural gas and renewables. Investing in technology and infrastructure for transporting, storing, refining, and distributing crude oil, ensures energy security and reduces reliance on imports. This will make the focus of this year’s event timely and crucial for sustainable growth and resilience.

What are the main challenges faced by Nigeria’s petroleum industry in optimising midstream and downstream segments?

The Nigerian petroleum industry faces several challenges in optimising its midstream and downstream segments. Insufficient and outdated infrastructure, such as pipelines and refineries hampers efficient operations. Security issues including pipeline vandalism and oil theft, disrupt operations and cause revenue losses. Transparency issues deter investment while the regulatory framework needs improvement to attract capital and encourage innovation.

Access to finance is limited hinder-



Salahuddeen Tahir

ing infrastructure development. Environmental concerns about air and water quality require stricter regulations and sustainable practices. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration among the government, industry stakeholders, and regulatory bodies to create a more efficient and sustainable petroleum industry in Nigeria.

How can investment in midstream and downstream infrastructure lead to cost savings and increased revenue for petroleum companies?

Investment in midstream and downstream infrastructure can yield significant cost savings and increased revenue for petroleum companies. Upgrading infrastructure like pipelines and storage facilities reduces transportation costs and delays, enhancing efficiency and lowering operational expenses.

Improved refining and processing facilities elevate product quality, allowing companies to produce higher-value products that meet market demands, attracting more customers and boosting revenue. Expanding infrastructure enables better market access and diversification, reducing reliance on a single market and increasing profitability.

Strategic storage and distribution investments optimise supply chains, reducing costs and ensuring timely deliveries. Increased flexibility in processing various products allows companies to adapt to market changes, maximising revenue potential.

In the downstream segment, they cover quality standards for fuels, pricing, consumer protection, and competition policies. While these regulations promote fairness and public safety, excessive complexity can hinder innovation and increase compliance costs. Therefore, striking a balance is essential to ensure both safety and a favourable business environment, significantly influencing industry development.

How would the role of midstream and downstream segments evolve in the future of the petroleum industry?

The midstream and downstream segments of the petroleum industry are set to evolve significantly due to emerging trends. The energy transition towards cleaner sources will likely lead to investments in infrastructure for transporting and storing renewable fuels like hydrogen and biofuels.

Digitalisation and automation will enhance efficiency through advanced analytics, AI, and automation, optimising supply chain management and refining processes. Stricter environmental regulations will drive eco-friendly practices, such as carbon capture and emissions reduction. Product diversification will see companies exploring alternatives like petrochemicals and plastics. Additionally, energy security will focus on strengthening infrastructure to ensure reliable supply amidst these changes.

In what ways has the Executive Order on Oil and Gas Fiscal Terms influenced the operational landscape of Nigeria’s energy industry?

The Executive Order on Oil and Gas Fiscal Terms has significantly impacted Nigeria’s energy industry by creating a more transparent and attractive investment climate. It reduces fiscal burdens on companies through lower royalty rates and tax incentives, encouraging increased investment in exploration and production.

The order also promotes technological innovation, enhancing efficiency and productivity in the sector. It emphasises collaboration between government agencies and the private sector by establishing a coordination committee for stakeholder engagement. Overall, it aims to attract more investments, boost production, and foster growth in Nigeria’s oil and gas industry.

The Society of Petroleum Engineers Nigeria strongly advocated for the country to host the African Energy Bank. How do we ensure that this development benefits the country and Africa’s economy?

Hosting the African Energy Bank in Nigeria offers significant opportunities for the country’s petroleum industry and the broader African economy. We will be strengthening collaboration with other African nations through knowledge-sharing and joint investments to build an integrated energy market. Prioritising

infrastructure investment in pipelines, refineries, and storage facilities will enhance Nigeria’s production and export capacity.

Promoting local content can boost job creation and reduce foreign dependency. Investing in research and development for new technologies and renewable energy will drive innovation. Capacity building and training programmes are crucial for developing a skilled workforce. These steps will maximise the benefits and foster economic growth.

How do the recent government announcements on new oil bids and licensing rounds impact Nigeria’s position in the global energy market?

The new oil bids and licensing rounds could significantly impact Nigeria’s position in the global energy market. As one of Africa’s largest oil producers, Nigeria aims to attract competent oil producers to explore and extract hydrocarbons, potentially increasing its reserve base and production. This could lead to higher revenue and strengthen Nigeria’s role as a key energy supplier, meeting global energy demands. However, the impact will also depend on factors like global oil prices, geopolitical dynamics, and competition from other producers. It would attract investments and enhance Nigeria’s standing in the energy market.

In what ways can these new oil bids and licensing rounds drive investment and foster competitiveness within Nigeria’s oil sector?

Nigeria’s new oil bids and licensing rounds can significantly boost investment and competitiveness in the oil sector. They offer opportunities for domestic and international companies to invest in hydrocarbon exploration and production, leading to new field development and increased reserves.

The bidding process fosters competition among companies, promoting innovation and efficiency. It also allows the Nigerian government to implement policies that attract investment and ensure transparency, boosting investor confidence. Moreover, international companies can bring advanced technologies and expertise, benefiting local firms and enhancing sector capabilities. These rounds can drive growth, competition, and technological advancement in Nigeria’s oil industry.

How would the collaboration between industry, government, and security agencies ensure a steady feedstock supply to domestic refineries?

Collaboration between industry, government, and security agencies ensures a steady feedstock supply to domestic refineries. The industry identifies and procures feedstock, and by working with government and security agencies, it can access resources to maintain a reliable supply chain.

We will be strengthening collaboration with other African nations through knowledge-sharing and joint investments to build an integrated energy market. Prioritising infrastructure investment in pipelines, refineries, and storage facilities will enhance Nigeria’s production and export capacity

Interview

Retaining talent in IT sector is Nigeria's biggest challenge – Suvarna

Raptors West Africa Limited, the pioneer and largest franchise for Aptech Computer Education in Nigeria, with 10 locations, recently opened a new outlet in Lekki to deepen its market penetration. Sajan Rohan Suvarna, chief operating officer of Raptors, spoke on the company's trajectory in Nigeria and what learners stand to gain on the back of its IT training expertise. JOHN SALAU, who was there, brings the excerpts:

Advanced Diploma in Software Engineering is a flagship programme in Aptech; what advantage does it offer Nigerian learners?

Our flagship program is the ADSE program. That ADSE program is the route to the UK degree. It costs approximately 15,000 pounds per year to study in the UK (45,000 pounds for 3 years). With ADSE, you study two years in our Nigerian centres and then through credit transfer move to Middlesex UK and study for just one additional year to earn your degree in software engineering thereby saving substantial amounts of Naira and forex.

How does Aptech keep current with the growing IT trends?

We update our curriculum every year. So, today we even teach artificial intelligence, we teach machine learning, which no other computer training institute has. We provide a second-to-none cutting edge computer technology training to Nigerians, who have ambition to pursue both diploma and degree certificates.

How can Nigeria leverage IT for security; attract foreign investments?

We've got a very in-depth role in cyber security and cyber forensics. Again, you see most training which is done here is majorly on cyber security, which seems to be what everybody wants to do. But we are a step further. We also have cyber forensics. Cyber forensics is one step above cyber security, which informs you post, in the unfortunate event there is a security breach, how you can now identify where the breach came from, what happened



Sajan Rohan Suvarna

and drill down to where the breach came from. I think foreign investment is already coming. I think there is a lot of improvement. If you see the number of angel investors who are coming here, there are so many new companies. I mean, you have seen all the new apps which are coming, the cash apps which are coming or the banking apps, everything which is coming are all running on IT.

What is your view of the IT sector in Nigeria?

I think the IT sector is the fastest growing and highest paying sector, even as we speak now. That is why the demand on IT education is that high today. I would say Nigerians are one of the best in coding and programming right now with inherent talent and aptitude. I think the IT aspirants also have a lot of jobs abroad, which is what I

think Nigeria is fighting to retain. Retaining talent, I think, is our biggest challenge and I think more and more companies have the right training skills and I'm willing to give them the opportunity here. You'll see a lot more growth happening here. Also, with the right skills, they can bring down unemployment rates drastically. Our course curriculum is totally updated according to the latest market needs. These latest skills in relevant technologies help our students get jobs easier if they wish to work abroad. Huge opportunities open up even in Nigeria as remote work culture for hot skills is very common. Irrespective of your plans of either working abroad or in Nigeria, the chance of landing a higher paying job is higher with IT skills. This is the reason we call our courses 'Job accentuated programmes from Aptech' JAPA. Our skilled students escape from the hardships of finding jobs.

A lot of people easily point to cybercrime whenever they talk about ICT in Nigeria. On the back of your interaction with profes-

you know, bad news always travels the fastest and that's what it is. The bad news has travelled far and wide, whereas the good news is also there.

Aptech recently opened a new learning centre in Lekki. Can you tell us about this centre and what influenced your choice?

Yes, we commissioned our latest centre, the Chevron-Centre. This is the 10th centre for our group. We have got centres in Lagos, Port Harcourt and Abuja. Our first centre was opened in the year 2000 in Maryland. The Lagos Centres are: Maryland, Surulere, Victoria Island, Ajao Estate, Isheri and the latest centre Chevron. We also have Abuja Centres in Wuse2, Gwarinpa, Lokogoma and the Port-Harcourt Centre. Our choice of Lekki - Chevron, is the organisation's goal to bring opportunities close to the target youth of Nigeria keeping the demographics in mind.

Can you tell us more about Aptech and its offerings?

Aptech is a company which is headquartered in India. They have been in the computer business, IT training for the last 35 years. We are a franchise for Aptech.

While Aptech has a lot more tie-ups with different franchises in Nigeria other than ours, we are the largest and we are the only franchise to have the Aptech Learning License, which is the umbrella license comprising Aptech Computer Education, Aptech Retail and Aptech Hospitality. So, this year onwards with the new license we will be offering all the three verticals.

A lot of our students want to have cross functional skills (IT + Retail or IT+ Hospitality) and Aptech learning fulfills that requirement. We want to train people to have the knowledge & skills to give the best customer service in retail. It could be in fashion stores, could be any other industry in retail, malls etc. Hospitality focuses on upskilling and train for the Hotels & Resorts industry. It's an immense strength to have cross functional skills in providing IT solutions.

Finally, how affordable are the programmes?

So, we've got programs starting from about N150, 000 right up to N4 million or even N4.5 million. It depends on the course you want to take. We have one-month courses. We've three-month courses. We've six-month courses. We have one-year courses. We've two-year courses. Content and pricing would depend on the course you take.

A lot of our students want to have cross functional skills (IT + Retail or IT+ Hospitality) and Aptech learning fulfills that requirement. We want to train people to have the knowledge & skills to give the best customer service in retail

sionals in the sector; how can we change that narrative?

See, it is across the world. Unfortunately, Nigeria seems to be coming to limelight, but if you look at other countries too, it's still there. It happens in other countries too. It's just that being here, we hear so much about it and we talk a lot about it. Yes, it is there. We cannot get away from that. But we also have a huge population. Unfortunately,



L-R: Tony Sam Uje, director, Drip Ltd; Yeni Kekere-Ekun, manager, Lagos Signage and Advertisement Agency (LASAA); Sajan Rohan Suvarna, chief operating officer, Raptors West Africa Limited; Sumit Sharma, head of operation, Raptors West Africa Limited, and Andrew Edide, Parish Priest, representing Francis Ogunmodede, Very Reverend Msgr. SS Philip and James Catholic Church Parish Priest, Idodo-Lekki, Lagos State, during the recent launch of Aptech Computer Education Chevron-Centre in Lagos.

Interview

We want to empower 10,000 African youths to become self-reliant in three years – Ghani

Women Who Empower 2024 is a programme organised by Canon in collaboration with Women in Successful Careers (WISCAR). It is focused on empowering and developing professional women in the imaging and print industries to contribute to Nigeria's growth. Rashad Ghani, B2C Business Unit Director of Canon Central and North Africa, in this interview with Bright Imoh, shares the company's plans for the Nigerian and African markets in terms of talent development. He also spoke about how the company plans to empower and uplift over 10,000 youths in Africa by 2027 through transformative initiatives like the Miraisha programme. Excerpts:

As the manufacturer and distributor of a wide range of consumer and electronic products, tell us what makes your company stand out?

Canon is the pioneer in the consumer and electronic products portfolio space. Canon is a Fortune 500 company which dedicates up to 8 percent of its sales to research and development annually; earning the title of the most innovative manufacturer for over 37 years based on US patent registrations. All that we were able to achieve shows how much emphasis the company places on research and development when it comes to the products we manufacture.

When it comes to imaging and printing segment of the market, Canon is a leader because, over the years, we have always created products that satisfy the needs of customers based on feedback from them and based on market intelligence. This we have achieved because of how close the brand is to our customers in terms of all our deliverables.

What has the Canon brand's journey into Africa been like?

The African continent is full of potential. In terms of our push into the continent, we have representatives and sales offices in Nigeria, Kenya, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, and Ivory Coast. We have our sales team based in-country. This is a strategic step deployed to be closer to the market and customers and through this, we have shown our intention.

Nigeria has a big potential in terms of its population. As the sixth largest populous country in the world out of which 53 percent constitute youths, this is very good and gives a lot of insight in terms of what needs to be done. We have a lot of Corporate Social Responsibility and sustainability initiatives aside from the business which we carry out in Nigeria.

Kindly tell us about the Canon Women Who Empower programme. How would it aid the development of talents across Nigeria?

As a brand, we believe in equality. Canon has a corporate philosophy which is living and working together for the common good. The initiative aims to empower women in the print and imaging sectors and continues to uphold its guiding philosophy of Kyosei and contribution towards greater gender equality in the workplace and leadership positions.

As you are aware, women play a very important role in the life of any nation. So, the Women Who Empower 2024 programme in Nigeria



Rashad Ghani

organised in collaboration with Women in Successful Careers (WISCAR), is a programme that focuses on empowering and developing professional women to contribute to development and growth in Nigeria and Africa.

This collaboration exemplifies the company's unwavering commitment to leveraging resources for the greater good and fueling the progress of our society and driving our economy forward. Through these transformative initiatives, Canon has empowered and uplifted participants in imaging and printing through workshops and mentorship opportunities.

This initiative is happening first in Nigeria which goes to show the significant role the country plays in Africa. The programme may have kicked off in Nigeria, but Canon plans to take it to other African countries. We have not yet finalised where the next destination will be, but this programme will be carried to different African countries too.

Africa is seen as a very competitive market. As a brand, what has been your experience and attitude to competition in this market space?

I see competition as a very important aspect of any brand that wants to thrive. If there is no competition, that means we are not evolving and

we are not learning anything new. Healthy competition is important, and we see this competition as a very important part of any corporate growth.

These competitions definitely help us to learn and challenge ourselves so that we stay alert in terms of what needs to be done as we evolve.

In specific terms, tell us the economic impact of Canon's Business-to-Consumer (B2C) growth efforts.

The future holds great promise for Africa. The establishment of Canon Central and North Africa in 2016 is a step in the right direction because it was dedicated to Africa

Canon has a lot of traction when it comes to business-to-consumer activations. Part of our strategic partnership centres around customers. As a brand that is closer to its customers, we like to create new activations that cater for the needs of our end users.

In alignment with our dedication to introducing innovative and technology-led imaging solutions in Nigeria, we brought R-tour to Nigeria in 2022 where we introduced for the first time in Nigeria, our revolutionary mirrorless EOS R-system which is range of cameras namely - EOS R3, EOS R5 C, EOS R7 and EOS R10.

We did our Multicam Show in Nigeria last year and it was a great opportunity to get closer to our valued customers and provide them with a hands-on experience of Canon's promising multicamera technology. We engaged in not just product displays but also in solution-based events where relevant strategic partners were invited to experience what Canon products can do in their ecosystem.

Through these engagements, we have created a good relationship with our partners in terms of learning what the market needs and how we can work together to meet the requirements of the market.

You recently stepped into the B2C leadership role with Canon Central and North Africa. What are key areas that you want to prioritise to strengthen your identity and positioning in the consumer market?

Some of the interventions Canon is playing big in include the education sector. We have several Corporate Social Responsibility activities that we engage in.

An example of such a programme is the Miraisha programme. Miraisha programme fosters job opportunities in Africa among the youth by providing workshops for photographers, videographers, filmmakers, and print business owners.

The Miraisha programme is carried out in partnership with Non-Governmental Organisations as well as educational institutions in the various countries where we have presence. So, in the 10 years we have run this programme, we have trained and empowered more than 7,000 youths across Africa.

This programme has helped a lot of under privileged young individuals, train them to become professional photographers and through this, they earn a living. So, we have done quite a bit, and we intend to continue this initiative, we plan to train 10,000 youths by 2027.

We believe that the success of our

business is linked to the betterment of societies. The managing director of Canon wherever he travels makes it a habit to visit hospitals or NGOs and support children with special needs. Through these gestures, the brand ensures that it makes some difference in the lives of such individuals.

As a brand, we are not only about business; we identify and care about the people and communities where we operate.

In your operations as a business in Nigeria, what have been some of the challenges you faced and how did the brand surmount them?

Challenges are part of the life of any business; they are not peculiar to us. Nigerian businesses are facing challenges too. But then, as a brand we must work within the framework of the country's laws and regulations.

As a business, we try to evolve in the way we carry out our business. I don't see the challenges stopping us. We understand the peculiarity of the market. We have our team in the country, so we understand what is happening in the market and based on that, we create our policies and see how to blend them to suit how to do business.

Nigeria has a lot of resilient set of people who are always ready to face challenges no matter the situation. In the cause of interactions with customers in Computer Village, Ikeja, I saw a very determined set of business owners who are willing to continue doing business despite the economic challenges.

This is a positive sign for us as a brand. When we see such kind of attitude, it gives Canon a lot of confidence to continue to invest in the market. Canon is very confident that the Nigerian market will grow and bounce back to become stronger than it was before.

What does the future hold for Africa and what is Canon's commitment to Nigeria in the next five years?

The future holds great promise for Africa. The establishment of Canon Central and North Africa in 2016 is a step in the right direction because it was dedicated to Africa.

We wanted to give full justice to the continent and to grow along with the continent and in 10 years we have grown I think double folds. And we are very hopeful for another five years. It will be a very good success story for us and we have good plans. So, I would say as a brand that is customer-friendly and forward-thinking, we only have the best wishes for the African continent. We are through our various engagements ready to grow with Africa.

Interview

Govt must use windfall tax revenue for critical infrastructure projects - Ogunyemi

A Professor of Economic History at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife, Adetunji Ogunyemi, in this interview with Remi Feyisipo, spoke on the amendment of the Finance Act 2020 by the National Assembly to accommodate windfall levy on banks' profits on foreign exchange transactions. The lawyer and public finance expert submits that the policy is perfectly in order, asking banks to see it as contribution to national development. Excerpts:

The windfall levy generated some debate in the polity with government justifying it as the right thing to do in order to strike a balance in the key sectors of the economy. How justified is this levy on banks' foreign exchange gains?

Nigeria is currently in dire straits financially and generally speaking economically. It is within the power of the government of the Federation going by its stated exclusive jurisdiction in the First Schedule Part I of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to make such laws and to direct such policies and actions as to ensure peace, good order and good government in Nigeria. Therefore, if Nigeria is in dire straits and some Nigerians, whether persons or bodies or corporate organisations, that have been feeding fat on the system, especially when that feeding fat is not directly a function of their own productive energies, then it behoves the Federal Government to ensure a balancing of duties and responsibilities within the system such that a resource-deficient sector of the economy can benefit from the resource-surplus part through what is called economic stabilisation. So, to me, it is perfectly in order to amend the Finance Act 2020 in order to accommodate the collection of this one-off levy on the windfall that the banks in the financial system have benefited from on foreign exchange transactions in the last one year. To me, it is perfectly in order and it is part of the duties of the government to stabilise the economy and also redistribute wealth.

Part of the arguments of those kicking against the policy is that allowing the windfall levy on banks may create uncertainty about the future as government may come with another windfall tax in some other sectors. Is this fear justified?

A situation of paralysis needs a shock therapy to bring it to normalcy. In 1929 up to 1932, there were decisions made in the United States under Herbert Hoover to stabilise the economy by ensuring that government deliberately pumps into the economy huge expenditure financed under public-private partnership arrangement. Nigeria is in such a situation now as the United States was under Hoover. So, it is not out of place to request that that banks that have made unplanned, spontaneous, unpredicted, sudden income to donate to the system a portion of their profits. This levy is actually on their windfall which is not part of their projections in their respective budgets. So, there is nothing that is malicious about this levy. After all, the levy is not for the benefit of per-



Ogunyemi

sons. It is for the benefit of the public and it is in order.

Naturally, the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN) has risen in defence of the banks to say asking them to pay a windfall levy amounts to double taxation because banks have already paid Companies Income Tax. What do you make of this argument?

I disagree absolutely with such stance from CIBN. What of the progressive deductions that the banks have been making with respect to ATM withdrawals by both the depositors and the withdrawers? Banks charge N20 per transaction and at times N50. Many of these deductions are actually illegal and the CBN should have asked them to return the money to their customers. These deductions run into billions of naira. But it would seem that the CBN did not want to rock the boat and has allowed the banks to earn some income for their stabilisation so that when a request for re-capitalisation would come, they would have something to use for that purpose. So, the banks can't approbate and reprobate at the same time. They can't be placing unlimited charges on their customers and expect government not to come in with a decision to stabilise the system. The windfall levy is a patriotic call made on the banks to contribute to the system. The banks should not see it as a tax. After all, it

is a one-off levy. At any rate, why are the banks trying to shy away from their responsibility of contributing to the system? Their wealth comes from the commonwealth of Nigeria. Is that not? If your wealth comes from the commonwealth of a country and that country is in dire straits and it calls upon you to pay a levy on profits arising from your unpredicted income, I don't think that it is out of place for them to obey such call to help fatherland.

Are there special benefits from a windfall tax?

The windfall levy is a patriotic call made on the banks to contribute to the system. The banks should not see it as a tax. After all, it is a one-off levy

The benefits are many. One, insofar as the government will not pump the revenue arising from this windfall levy on banks into the general budget, then there is no problem. But if government puts the revenue into the general budget and uses it to fund recurrent expenditure, that is going to be unacceptable. However, if government pumps the money from the windfall tax specifically into certain projects, for example, the Sokoto-Badagry Highway, the coastal road, the Port Harcourt-Maiduguri railway, etc, it is going to be absolutely correct. It can also be used for industrial development through the Bank of Industry or specifically into some agricultural projects such as dam development and so on. These are the specific areas the money can be channelled into. But I would advise that the government uses the revenue to fund critical projects such as the Lagos-Calabar Coastal road, the Sokoto-Badagry Highway, Port Harcourt-Maiduguri rail line, expansion of the standard gauge from Ibadan to Abuja and then onward to Kaduna. These are the critical projects that will create a trickle-down effect on the economy to jumpstart it from its doldrums and provoke productive enterprises among business concerns.

The three tiers of government have been smiling to the banks every month on account of huge revenue collected by the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) for the Federation. Shouldn't focus shift to the other two tiers of government who have been getting more money since the removal of petrol subsidy by President Bola Tinubu?

That is what we call financial injustice in the system. Actually, many governors in Nigeria, maybe for political correctness, did not say much about the issue of workers conflicting with the Federal Government on the issue of minimum wage neither did they support the Federal Government to do at least some defence within the realm so that citizens will not be unnecessarily agitated and then begin disturbances. But the truth of the matter is that the respective governments of the states of the federation today are now earning at least 40 per cent more than what they were earning before. It behoves them to come forward to explain to Nigerians why some A, and B, C policies have been done in their favour by the Federal Government. For example, the removal of subsidy from petrol has helped states that were previously in debts like Osun State to begin to successfully and significantly exit those debts and be able to pay workers. But do they give the credit to the Federal Government? The an-

swer is No. The states have been giving the credit to themselves as if they conjured up the fat allocations they are now getting. Whereas, we know it is directly as a result of the fact that the FAAC has been to get more money through removal of subsidy and the efficient revenue collection by FIRS. This is why the states have now been financially strong to do their capital projects. Some of these states are even doing a kind of subtle blackmail to give a dog a bad name in order to hang it. Otherwise, if your income has increased as a result of government policy, why can't the states explain to their citizens and spend the money to make things better for the citizens in their respective states? They have put all the burden on the Federal Government. It is a shame.

Do you think the recent Supreme Court judgment which states that allocations should be paid directly into the accounts of local government areas will also help bring down tension and enhance development at the grassroots?

I support the Federal Government's view, position and policy on this and for the Attorney General of the Federation to approach the Supreme Court for interpretation of the constitution and to make declarative orders. This is perfectly in order. This is actually how to govern a country. Do not forget that the local government councils in Nigeria are 768 and not 774. This is provided in Section 3 subsection 6 of the 1999 Constitution as amended. There six area councils in Abuja and if you add this number, you will get 774. But the area councils in Abuja are not local government councils. The Supreme Court ruled on this in 2002 in the Attorney General of the Federation versus Attorney General of Abia State and 35 others. But let us not go there. The truth of the matter is that the 768 local government councils in Nigeria will now directly benefit from their allocations pursuant to Section 162 of the Constitution. The Supreme Court judgment is just half of the battle won. The other half of the battle to be won is to ensure that election into local government councils is not conducted by State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIECs). There should be an amendment to the Electoral Act for that purpose so that the same election will be conducted by INEC in order that there will be a level-playing field. The SIECs are actually not independent of the governors who appoint their officers. But it is a good thing that local governments are now going to get their allocations directly from FAAC beginning from this month, that is July.

Food&Beverage



Ayo Oyoze Bajé

Seyi Davids: Promoting sack farming with passion

available in backyard, courtyard and corridors could be used for the bags or containers.

The uniqueness of sack farming has to do with the advantages of saving space, allowing free flow of water down to the roots, as well as saving the energy spent on the manual cultivation of large spaces of land. It could also translate what is considered a hobby into a lucrative business. Interestingly, one distinguished Nigerian that is passionately promoting sack farming is none other than famous Farmer Seyi Davids, the CEO of the multiple award-winning Xtralarge Farms and Resorts Ltd.

It would be recalled that while celebrating the Workers Day on May 1, 2024 precisely in his media chat he highlighted the aforementioned benefits of sack farming. Emphasizing the fact that city dwellers who do not have access to vast acres of land could latch on sack farming to enhance food security, he urged Nigerians to key into it. Said he: "When you produce and eat healthy, organic food, other challenges are secondary". But there is more to his gospel of increased food safety and security than we

may care to admit. Such should be promoted in the public sphere.

For instance, as a pragmatic advocate of organic farming, he has emphasized the importance of using compost manure, cow dung and chicken's droppings as organic manure instead of chemical fertilizers. This, as it operates on a larger scale right there at Xtralarge Farms Agritech City, at Idi-Iroko boosts the production of organic food items that are safe for human consumption. These include yam, maize, cassava and radish to mention but a few.

Giving teeth to the bite on the production of organic food, Xtralarge Farms has in place training programs for those interested in organic farming to benefit from. Through these enlightening and empowerment programs, participants get to know more about the steps to take, the cost implications, the amounts of raw materials required and of course, the right time to plant what item.

With all these at the disposal of enlightened Nigerians the expectation is that most of us should get involved in sack farming. It is

good for dwarf crops, as well as the use of hybrid seedlings that mature early, that are also disease-resistant and have bumper harvest.

Of significance, is that the duo of Dr. Seyi Davids and his ever resourceful wife, Dr. Moji Davids have emerged as the game-changers in Nigeria's fertile agriculture landscape, promoting self-empowerment, entrepreneurship, tourism and healthy living. All these have materialised through the life-changing Xtralarge Farms and Resorts Ltd over the past enriching years.

With a moving mantra of "raising a generation of passionate farmers" and propelled by the unfailing value of integrity, which has become its watchword several lives have been transformed from the pitiable pit of poverty to the pinnacle of prosperity. These have been achieved by deploying the Food Network, and the Xtra Token which is the first - of - its - kind on the African continent.

Xtra Token comes up as a digital asset through savings and investments that yield daily returns! "Do you mean daily returns on investment"? An interested investor

once asked yours truly. And I responded with a vehement "yes". That is because the proposed allowable currency at the Agritech City kicks off with a startup of 50,000 units. Yet, that is not all there is to the money making opportunities available to investors. Next comes the Millionaires Club at the Agritech City through the members' introduction of people either to buy property or invite others for tourism. And interestingly, such visitors stand to gain more knowledge on the investment opportunities and healthy eating while they savour the peace and tranquility of the serene environment.

The empowerments are therefore, built on the state - of - the - art technologies that are second to none. It is therefore, advisable to connect with Xtralarge Farms to get the requisite knowledge on sack farming, and get actively involved in other investments that will empower every member to smile all the way to the bank.

Ayo Oyoze Bajé is Nigeria's first food technologist to practice as a journalist. ayobaje@yahoo.co.uk; 07068638066

Business News

Women urged to champion digital transformation, drive organisational change

JOHN SALAU

Nigerian women in business and other spheres of life have been urged to champion digital transformation and drive organisational change to help position their businesses to a global audience.

"By inculcating digital transformation in women's leadership, organisations can unlock new potential, drive innovation, and create a more equitable and prosperous future," Christiana Atako, president and chairman of council, Nigerian Institute of Management (NIM), stated at the opening ceremony of Women in Management and Leadership conference of the Institute held recently at the NECA house, Alausa Ikeja, Lagos.

According to her, the theme for the 2024 conference, 'Digital Transformation and Women Leadership', is appropriate as technology is key to today's women leaders who desire to distinguish themselves and be ahead of the rest of the pack.

She stated further that digital transformation and women's leadership are two crucial aspects of human development that can drive significant positive change in organisations and society. "Digital transformation can create new opportunities for women's leadership and empowerment, while inclusive leadership and diverse per-

spectives can enhance digital transformation strategies."

Atako stated further that to promote digital transformation in women's leadership, there is need to provide training and development programs focused on digital skills and leadership, foster a culture of inclusivity and support, and celebrate women's achievements and successes in digital transformation.

"While digital transformation entails leveraging technology to revolutionise business models, processes, and customer experiences; women's leadership on the other hand is all about empowering women to take on leadership roles and make strategic decisions," Atako stated.

Solape Akinpelu, CEO, HerVest and guest speaker, said that digital transformation is the integration of digital technology into all areas of a business, fundamentally changing how the business operates and deliver

value to stakeholders.

Speaking on 'Digital Transformation and Women Leadership', Akinpelu stated further that businesses can leverage technology to reduce costs. According to her, the right technology tools can help reduce overhead and minimize reliance on physical infrastructure. "Innovation is the spark, digital transformation is the flame."

On the opportunities available to women in tech, she stated that the growing field of digital transformation represents a fertile ground for increasing female representation in leadership roles, especially with only 28 percent of STEM leadership positions held by women, according to UNESCO. Akinpelu stated further that businesses can leverage tech to develop new products or services. According to her, digital business transformation can help companies collect and analyse data to identify new opportunities for innovation.



Kuda, SeerBit partner to drive safe, quick cardless payments

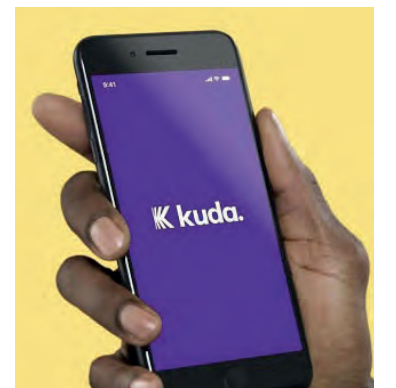
JOHN SALAU

Kuda has announced a partnership with SeerBit, a payment gateway, to give access and drive safe, quick and easy online cardless payment options for its over 7 million customers.

"Our partnership with SeerBit underscores our commitment to providing secure and user-friendly financial services. With their Kuda Pay ID, our customers can make online payments without the fear of exposing their debit card details, ensuring peace of mind in every transaction," Musty Mustapha, MD, Kuda Microfinance Bank, said in a statement.

He stated that with the partnership, Nigerian fintech's retail customers can now look out for the 'Pay With SeerBit' option on local websites and apps, which include an option to pay directly from their Kuda account with their secure Kuda Pay ID - a one-time code generated on their Kuda app.

Mustapha disclosed that by authorising online payments with their Kuda Pay ID through SeerBit, Kuda customers can be confident that their financial information is protected, thereby reducing the likelihood of fraud and unauthorised transac-



tions. "The quick and safe payment option removes the need for typing in debit card details when making online payments."

He stated further that SeerBit is a leading payment infrastructure provider, which offers comprehensive payment solutions that enable businesses to thrive in the digital economy. "Through this partnership, Kuda is reinforcing its commitment to providing secure and innovative financial services that address the evolving needs of its customers."

According to the 2023 Annual Fraud Landscape report by the Nigerian Inter-Bank Settlement System (NIBSS), N17.67bn was lost to fraud in 2023 which was a 23 percent increase compared to the amount lost in 2022, indicating that online fraud remains a significant concern in the digital payment landscape.

Cover

Nigeria under pressure as FG, governors, others hold countless meetings to avert protest

OBINNA EMELIKE

If the planned nationwide protest takes effect as planned, it means for 10 days, starting from August 1, 2024, there will be uncertainties as Nigeria may likely be grounded by the hungry and angry citizens, no matter how peaceful the protest goes.

The Federal Government and many other agencies of government have spared no energy to ensure that the impending protest does not materialise.

For some days now, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has been holding high-level meetings and consultations with some eminent Nigerians and stakeholders to avert the #EndBad-Governance protest.

The government fears that if not stopped, the protest will impact the country worse than the #EndSAARS protest.

In solidarity with the government, some groups have distanced themselves from the protest, describing it as untimely and politically-sponsored.

But the reality on ground, according to many concerned Nigerians, cannot be denied as the country bleeds from all angles and the citizens are just walking corpses due to the untold and increasing hardship under the present administration.

From sachet water, cheap noodles, and even 'garri', people now pay more to get less of these items.

"We bought bags of sachet water at N150 each to quench our thirst while on solidarity rally on Workers' Day last year in Abuja, but same is N400 per bag now and a paint bucket of garri is now N3500 from N1500 before May 29th presidential inauguration," Etinosa Eromosele, a consultant surgeon in a private hospital in Abuja, lamented.

Lamenting further, the medical consultant said, "So, what will the poor do if the cheapest things are now out of hand, especially food. Many are dying every day for lack of money to buy even the cheapest malaria drug. Please ask the government that said people should not protest when common 'pure water' is no longer affordable, yet it will do nothing to alleviate their suffering. They are boasting of N70,000 minimum wage that cannot solve any problem."

For Bideimi Balogun, a banker in Lagos, the high cost of living makes any salary increment meaningless.

"Even if you are being paid N5 million every month, the hardship will consume it because house rent, children school fees, home upkeep, car maintenance, security fees and even money dashed to people to run errands for you have more than doubled in the last one year," the banker said.

He commended some companies, like his, that have reviewed staff salaries and allowances with good percentages. But the reality, according to



him, is that prices are increasing every day to make the new salaries meaningless, while employers cannot afford to increase salaries every six months to match the soaring cost of living.

Also, the numbers are not giving hope to the poor masses.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Nigeria's inflation hit a new 28-year high of 34.19 percent in annual terms in June 2024, from 33.95 percent in May, signaling more trouble ahead.

As well, food inflation is soaring every day, leaving many families hungry. According to the NBS, on a month-on-month basis, food inflation rate in July 2023 was 3.45 percent, about 1.06 percent higher compared to the rate recorded in June 2023, which was 2.40 percent, but the rate of increase today, a year after, is unimaginably and the reason food is now out of the reach of many.

Considering the above, Mike Onyechere, an Abuja-based human right lawyer, is more concerned that the government is not sincere in handling the situation, rather always putting up defence and urging for patience and more time.

"For how long will the poor be patient while politicians live large. We see all of them enjoying and telling us to tight our belts. That is the height of injustice if I may say.

"If this government is cutting down on luxury spending, unnecessary foreign trips, high cost of refurbishing their living quarters, huge sums allocated to themselves through budget padding and preference of Dollars to Naira as cash gift to their cronies, Nigerians will understand, but they are very insensitive to the plight of the masses, who have every reason to protest the poor governance and cor-

ruption of this administration," Onyechere said.

Hannah Oni, an assistant director in a Federal Government parastatal, whose daughter schools in Atlanta, USA, decried that the medical student is at the mercy of the school because she has failed to meet her financial obligations twice due to the unimaginably exchange rate.

"The foreign students aid office is helping her for now. I have registered her immediate junior at the University of Abuja because I cannot afford to train two children abroad. My husband is polygamous and do not care about us," she cried out.

She also noted that some Nigerian students abroad, according to her daughter, are abandoning their education because of the inability of their parents or sponsors to fund them again.

Even in Nigeria, many parents who could not afford to send their children to foreign universities are now withdrawing them from private ones to public institutions due to the huge amount charged by the business, but not quality-minded operators of the private schools as most people believe.

With the increasing suffering in the land, no respite in sight, government's efforts not yielding expected results yet, and sadly, the luxurious lifestyle of government appointees in this time of lack, that seems to mock the poor, supporters of the #EndBadGovernanceProtest are insisting that the protest must hold.

The above are enough reasons to ask for better government and good life for the people of Nigeria, according to Northern Voices for Justice (NVJ), which has called on men, women and youths in the 19 northern states of Nigeria to join the protest.

of the citizens to protest is not only justified but are also protected by the Nigerian Constitution.

"The Section 40 of the Nigerian Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to assemble freely and protest.

"So, those who want to stop the protest are working against the interest of the constitution, democracy and freedom because the citizens have the right to exercise constitutional right, demand justice and accountability from those in power, by any means apart from violence," the lawyer explained.

For the Ayo Adebajo-led faction of Afenifere, pan-Yoruba socio-cultural group, which threw its weight behind the upcoming protest, the mass action is an organic reaction to the government's failed economic policies.

According to Justice Faloye, its publicity secretary, Afenifere had previously lamented the economic policies of the Tinubu administration.

"Afenifere is not planning to be a part of the protest, but we support anybody who wants to express their fundamental human rights. And because we, in Afenifere, have been warning about the economic policies - that if it continues, 'if you continue with the (removal of) subsidies and high inflation', there is no way you can stop people, you cannot tell a hungry man to wait," he explained.

From the government side, and referencing the #EndSAARSProtest, the fear is the hoodlums will take advantage of it to cause mayhem that will undermine the essence of the protest, hence the sustained call for boycott.

George Akume, Secretary to the Government of the Federation and Nuhu Ribadu, National Security Adviser, after a closed-door meeting with ministers regarding the protests, urged the youth to give the government more time to address economic concerns rather than proceeding with the protest.

Acknowledging the role of protests in a democracy, Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, who appealed to youth in Ni-

ger Delta region to remain calm and shun the planned protest against economic hardship in the country, warned against those who might exploit it for malicious purposes.

"Certain groups are looking to use this protest to incite violence and crime. We must not let non-state-actors disrupt our peace and stability," he cautioned.

Adejiran Onabule, a constitutional lawyer is also of the view that protest will not solve the problem.

"I know that to protest is your democratic right, but there are broader implications on our national stability and progress. I think that sponsors of the protest should consider dialogue and collaboration," the lawyer said.

He also noted that some government appointees and politicians, especially those who have never visited their constituencies after winning elections in 2023, are now calling on people to boycott the protests, some pundits have observed.

"I am from Sagbama in Bayelsa State, and so, a full-fledged Niger Deltan. Heineken Lokpobiri is calling for constructive engagement and dialogue, and that is what the government has done with Boko Haram, herdsmen, bandits and kidnappers, yet terrorists are on rampage. The dialogue has never worked. What Nigerians want now is solutions and not excuses after one year.

"Before Tinubu became president, he supported protests against the government, he should face the realities now in Aso Rock. What goes around, comes around.

There is no preaching than to fix the economy, and save the poor from dieing. The hardship is worse in Niger Delta now because our soil cannot produce crops, visitors are stealing our oil, government is pointing at us, and soldiers are intimidating our people," Preye Ibiwari, a University Port Harcourt lecturer, said.

Though the calls for boycotting the protest are increasing, with some socio-cultural groups, like the Arewa Youth Assembly, the Reuben Fasoranti-led Afenifere,

and others distancing themselves from it, even political groups like the South-East Governors' Forum, majority of the citizenry seem ready to hit the road on August 1, 2024 as long as there will be no violence.

For Faloye of the Adebajo-led faction of the Afenifere, there is no need to fear.

"We don't believe that people will come out and start burning. We have seen years and years of protests, and we realise that it becomes violent when the government tries to stop it," he said.

Meanwhile, many are calling on security operatives to maintain law and order during the protest to avert anarchy, which will warrant the government to use force.

They argued that a government that usually romance the electorates during election period, should also allow them to express their dissatisfaction with its policies or poor governance.

But most supporters of the protest have been assuring that it will be peaceful across the country, considering some measure being put in place to ensure that.

"To ensure the safety and integrity of our protests, we have arranged for bouncers who will be present across all 19 Northern States to prevent any form of infiltration by hoodlums or disruptive elements. This is a peaceful protest, and we will maintain the highest standards of conduct," the NVJ convener assured.

Faloye is of the view that the protest will be peaceful if the government did not hijack it.

"In most cases, it is not the protesters that usually stoke violence; it is the government or political thugs that make protests to turn violent," Faloye said.

Despite the warning, threats and appeal by the government, many citizens have said that they would not step out of their residences on August 1. Many are currently making plans to stockpile food to avoid "had I know."

But a big question remains if the government will be moved to take drastic action, whether the protest holds or not, considering its sustained call for more time and defensive approaches to its lapses.



Rising cost of malaria...

Continued from Page 1

drugs we were giving him. Do you know what? I spent N30,000 just like that! Although he became well, that amount, just to treat ordinary malaria is too much."

The drugs for treating diabetes are also becoming increasingly unaffordable for many patients. Diabetes, another major health issue in Nigeria, has seen a significant rise in treatment costs.

"The price of the drug I use has increased from N3,000 to N22,000 per bottle, and I need three bottles a month. On top of that, syringes now cost N600 each, up from N30 to N50," said Bernard Enyia, a Nigerian diabetic and vice president of the Diabetics Association of Nigeria.

"I've been diabetic since 2008, and to this day, all my tests and medications are paid out of pocket," he added.

Diabetic patients in Nigeria face skyrocketing costs for essential medications and supplies, such as insulin injections and glucose monitoring devices.

Enyia further said: "Health insurance doesn't cover diabetes drugs. Even when health facilities have the medication, they often claim it's out-of-stock due to high costs. My monthly expenses for diabetes treatment exceed N100,000, which is unsustainable for many Nigerians.

"There's a machine we use to check blood sugar that costs N30,000, and the strips are priced between N15,000 and N20,000 for just 50 pieces. For those of us who check our blood every day, visiting the hospital costs N2,000 daily. Treatment has become unaffordable, leading many patients to abandon their prescribed treatments.

"Private hospitals often aim to minimise spending and maximise profits. Consequently, any expensive diabetes drugs are not included in their list, leaving patients to purchase them independently."

Enyia further said that sometimes, these days, he forgoes buying the drugs in order to buy food for the family because of the high cost of food items.

"Although I need the drugs to manage the case, I sometimes prioritise between buying drugs and buying food for my family. The high cost of food is equally weighing down on me and complicating matters," he said.

The lack of affordable treatment forces patients to seek cheaper, less-effective alternatives, sometimes falling victim to fraudulent cure claims. The stigma surrounding diabetes further complicates the situation, hindering open discussion and early intervention.

Many patients with diabetes find it difficult to afford the necessary medications and supplies. This can lead to poor management of the disease and an increased risk of complications, such as cardiovascular diseases, kidney failure, and amputations.

"I have been living with diabetes for over ten years," said Chukwuma Anozie, also a diabetes patient.

"The cost of my medications has more than doubled in the past few years. Sometimes, I have to skip doses because I can't afford to buy my insulin."

Analysts say diabetes treatment in Nigeria presents a more challenging picture, noting that the rising incidence of diabetes, particularly Type 2 diabetes, has strained an already overburdened healthcare system.

They said that lack of awareness, inadequate access to medical facilities, and high costs of treatment contribute to the growing crisis.

An endocrinologist at Lagos University Teaching Hospital explains the gravity of the situation: "Diabetes is a silent epidemic in Nigeria. Many patients present with complications due to late diagnosis and poor management. The cost of insulin and other medications is prohibitive for many, leading to sub-optimal treatment outcomes."

Diabetes medications, prices are as follows: Glucophage 500mg costs N4,500, Glucophage 1,000mg is N9,500, Amaryl 2mg is N6,000, and Amaryl 4mg is N11,000.

"A major obstacle is the growing resistance of malaria parasites to common drugs," explained Olug-



The Nigerian healthcare system's limitations are exacerbated by socio-economic factors. Poverty and limited healthcare infrastructure in rural areas hinder effective diabetes management. Public health campaigns are less robust compared to malaria initiatives, resulting in a knowledge gap about the importance of early diagnosis and lifestyle modifications.

"The high cost of treating malaria and diabetes has had a profound impact on healthcare access and quality in Nigeria. Many people, especially those in rural areas, struggle to afford the necessary treatments. This has led to delayed or inadequate treatment, resulting in more severe health outcomes," Ojo Sikiru, a Lagos-based medical practitioner, said.

According to him, "The high cost of healthcare is a major barrier to accessing treatment. Many people cannot afford to pay for medications or hospital visits, which leads to poorer health outcomes and increased mortality rates.

"Average patronage for malaria, both complicated and uncomplicated per month, is what we see more in the facility and amount charged per patient for treating malaria in private hospitals varies depending on how complicated," said Sikiru.

Government investment in healthcare is crucial to reducing the financial burden on patients," said Sikiru. "Providing subsidies for essential medications and improving

access to healthcare facilities can make a significant difference."

In an investigation by BusinessDaySunday, the costs of various antimalarial drugs are as follows: Coartem 80/480 is sold for N3,500; Coartem 20/120, N1,600; Amatem softgel N3,000; Lonart DS N3,000, and Artequick at N2,000. Prices of most of the above-mentioned drugs were not up to N1,000 one year ago.

"The only antimalaria drugs that are still being sold cheap these days are the unbranded ones, which people cannot vouch on their efficacy," a pharmacist, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said.

For diabetes medications, prices are as follows: Glucophage 500mg costs N4,500, Glucophage 1,000mg is N9,500, Amaryl 2mg is N6,000, and Amaryl 4mg is N11,000.

"A major obstacle is the growing resistance of malaria parasites to common drugs," explained Olug-

benga Mokuolu, a pediatrician and strategic advisor to the Minister of Health. "Most of these drugs now face resistance. But the biggest problem we have is people not testing for malaria. It's not that effective malaria drugs do not exist, but rather that many patients aren't being properly diagnosed," Mokuolu said.

Emphasizing the importance of testing, Mokuolu said: "Anyone suspected of having malaria should be tested before treatment. Malaria is a severe condition, and untreated cases can lead to complication, which is life-threatening.

"Many Nigerians turn to traditional herbs due to economic hardships, but malaria is a scientifically-understood disease transmitted by mosquitoes. Public education has improved, but we still see people opting for unverified treatments.

"Malaria treatment in primary care facilities is either free or significantly subsidised," Mokuolu highlighted. "However, in the private sector, the cost can be substantial."

"Complicated malaria requires critical care, including oxygen supplementation and blood transfusions, which makes hospital admission a necessity."

Mokuolu reiterated the ongoing need for public education and proper healthcare infrastructure.

"Significant progress has been made, but continuous efforts are required to address misconceptions and improve access to effective malaria treatment."

Cover

How NASS shut governors in with passage ...

Continued from Page 1

Legislative List is seen as a big relief in the battle for workers' welfare, especially at the sub-national level.

The law contained far-reaching measures, including the three yearly reviews, as well as the retention of the Minimum Wage in the Exclusive Legislative List, despite attempts by some governors to pressure the lawmakers to move it to the Concurrent Legislative List.

The passage of the bill implies that the 36 states of the federation are duty-bound to pay the new minimum wage. It is not optional.

Chris Onyeka, top member of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), in an interview with BusinessDaySunday in Abuja, commended the lawmakers for "not caving in to the demands of the governors."

Onyeka said that the willingness to pay was the problem and not that the state governors did not have the money.

He reminded the governors that the states will not run successfully if the workforce are not properly motivated.

"You do not to muzzle the ox. Workers' salaries are not payments made to charity. They (governors) think we should clap for them when they pay workers' salaries; people should know that the machinery of governance will grind to a halt without the workers. Workers create the wealth, maintain the hospital, life blood of the nation.

"We have seen a governor in this country who claims he can't pay N30,000 as minimum wage, but ended up, paying about \$800,000 as school fees in advance for his children. Many spend money maintaining guest houses in Abuja and else-



where around the world, but when it comes to issues of workers' salaries, they develop cold feet. This is bad for our country's development."

The labour leader said that members of the organised labour accepted N70,000 minimum wage, on ground of sacrifice.

"We agreed on the figure just to stop the government from increasing the price of PMS," he said. Reacting to the argument by the organised Private Sector that they would not be able to pay N70,000, Onyeka expressed surprise, as the sector had earlier said that most of them pay as high as N78,000 to the least-paid worker in their establishments.

"We are at a loss that even the private sector which initially revealed at the tripartite committee meeting that the lowest paid in the sector was earning N78,000, could now turn around to say they can't pay

N70,000 as minimum wage.

"Our joy however, is that this is now a law and anyone who defaults will have the law to contend with."

Etim Okon, deputy president of the Trade Union Congress (TUC), while also speaking on the issue, welcomed the new minimum wage, warning that the organised labour would move to ensure that the governors implement the new wage as and when due at the states.

"We had proposed that states owing workers have the salaries deducted from their FAAC allocations and paid directly to workers, if that will solve the problems.

"There are no genuine reasons why these governors will be withholding workers' salaries while they engage in extravagant spending. They have forgotten that without the workers, the states will not

function," he said.

The Bill, which was sent by President Bola Tinubu, sought to amend the 2019 minimum wage to increase from N30,000 to N70,000 and reduce review interval from five years to three years.

Mike Ozekhome, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), in his assessment of the new Minimum Wage, noted that "Addressing the issue of poor take-home pay through minimum wage policies requires a nuanced approach that considers the economic, social, and labour market impacts, as well as potential policy solutions to support both workers and employers."

The lawyer wondered if these factors were considered by the Tinubu government before arriving at the N70,000 Minimum Wage

"A situation where workers can

neither fend for themselves, nor their families is deplorable and must be avoided. It can lead to chaos, anarchy and uncontrollable social unrest," he said.

He further said that the increase comes at a time Nigerians are asphyxiating under severe hardship amid exorbitantly high cost of living driven by spiraling inflation and dire economic challenges in an inclement environment of palpable government wastes, leakages and ostentatious living.

Ozekhome, citing an example with a bag of rice, said: "Nigerians have refused to indulge in any euphoria of jubilation as the N70,000 will not even be able to buy a bag of rice which now sells for between N75,000 and N100,000 per bag. They wonder how this meager enhancement of salary will positively affect the high cost of accommodation, transportation, electricity, healthcare services, living standards, etc."

For him, "The take-home pay of every worker ought to be a matter of public interest, especially to those minding the levers of power, because it is a critical issue affecting all workers, employers of labour and the entire economy. Poor compensation or remuneration breeds inequality and affects productivity and this can serve as a catalyst for social vices such as stealing, banditry, insurgency, kidnapping, suicide, homicide, armed robbery, prostitution, human and drug trafficking, etc."

He cited the global best practices under which the international organisations, governments and non-governmental organisations have coined terms such as "minimum wage," "living wage" and "reasonable wage" to describe the different types of wages every worker should be entitled to, with a view to addressing poor wages and its attendant consequences.

Nigerians resort to pieces of yam as...

Continued from Page 1

the food inflation rate in June 2024 rose 40.87 percent on a year-on-year basis, which was 15.62 percent points higher compared to 25.25 percent recorded in June 2023.

Yam, one of the major staples, seems to have gone out of the menu list of many families as a result of the high cost. Currently, a tuber of yam that can satisfy a family of five now costs N10,000 as against N3,000 or N3,500 this period last year.

The current cruel economic condition of the country has negatively altered the choice of many Nigerians in many ways. This is evident in what they eat as prices of food items have gone beyond their affordability.

The effect of the constant pressure on the prices of the common food has created holes in many pockets leaving a lot of Nigerians hungry, and malnourished.

The drastic surge in the price of yam, particularly, has made it less of an option in the food list of several families, making it almost impossible to satisfy the wants and cravings of both kids and adult individuals.



Local food vendors find it difficult to keep up the dishes that involve the use of yam. Likewise, yam traders, both wholesalers and retailers do not find it favourable either.

As a result of the decline on the part of both buyers and sellers, retailers have resorted to making it easier to not only retain customers but also keep the market running by selling yam in pieces in order to make it affordable to those who cannot buy a whole tuber.

In a brief interview with BusinessDaySunday, Mama Ogieva, a yam dealer at Ijesha market in Surulere, Lagos, revealed that "Many customers no longer buy yam as much, and as often as they bought last year.

"Not everyone who was used to buying a whole tuber of the big-sized yams can afford it now because it's now very expensive. I used to sell the big tubers for around 5000 naira last year but as I speak to you today, it is exactly double the price, N10,000.

"In the course of offloading and shading the goods, we often end up having lots of broken tubers which eventually brings satisfaction to some customers due to the price hike.

"That's the reason we now cut some tubers into smaller sizes, some into halves, some into smaller pieces depending on the amount the customers have. Besides doing that to clear out stock and avoid loss due to decay and waste, it also seems to be making a lot more sense than whole tubers nowadays." She further said that people are putting a lot of thinking in whatever they do now and how they spend their money. They do not want waste.

According to her, "Another reason why people buy the 'cut yam' is to avoid buying a whole tuber only to find out some parts are bad. But you know that this is a result of not having enough money. When people had money and could afford tubers of yam, they did not bother if the tubers were going to be bad inside of not. They could afford it then."

Speaking on the implication of the high cost for the sellers, she said: "Before now, two or three people could contribute to buy a full truckload of yam tubers comfortably, not anymore. Now, big yam stores buy a truckload of yams in pairs of 5s, 6s, and as many as 10s."

Nigeria's growing PoS agents' faces regulatory...

Continued from Page 1

past.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has introduced new guidelines requiring PoS agents to register with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and obtain a license from the CBN.

While the intention is to ensure accountability and stability, the requirements pose significant challenges for the majority of PoS agents who are micro businesses.

The mandatory CAC registration for PoS operators in Nigeria has significant implications for PoS operators, financial inclusion, and the economy as a whole.

For many of these agents, the cost implication of registration and licensing fees are prohibitively high, as many agents operate on thin margins.

While challenges exist, the benefits of registration according to some operators who spoke with BusinessDay Sunday outweigh the costs.

They are of the opinion that with proper education, support, and simplification of the registration process, Nigeria can enhance financial inclusion and economic stability.

"We have employed all our communication channels such as weekly phone calls, email, SMS, and videoconference platforms to sensitise, encourage, and guide on the registration process. At the top of the list is PalmPay which was able to integrate the CAC registration platform on the PalmPay business app to make it easier for agents to register for a token fee of N19,500," Enake-nok Emute, head, marketing and communications, PalmPay, told BDSunday.

He further said that the platform pushed out press releases in June to sensitise PoS agents on its platform. According to him, the platform has been reaching out to the different stakeholder groups in different states to sensitise their members on the need to register with CAC.

"Last month, we hosted the Lagos Chapter of the Association of Mobile Money and Bank Agents of Nigeria (AMMBAN) where we urged them to speak to their members. We have a dedicated 24/7 CS and BD team that has been available to attend to agents even during weekends," Emute said.

However, another agent told BusinessDay that she considered the cost to be high. She said that her PoS business was meant to support her hairdressing business.

"I only operate one PoS machine with Baxi; so, paying N19,500 for CAC registration will eat into my small capital," Baxi Kafayat said.

According to Kafayat, registering her business for CAC will affect the day-to-day operation of the business. She disclosed that many of the PoS agents around her area have a way of swapping money among themselves to meet customers' requests.

Enobong Wisdom of F-Class Ventures told BD Sunday that he did not have to register afresh because he had to upload the CAC certificate of his other business interest on the PoS portal.

"I uploaded the certificate for my music studio and it shows success. But my guy that they wanted to help in registering the PoS told me they will calculate all the taxes I have not been paying; that is my own fear now."

Similarly, another operator in Amuwo-Odofin, Lagos, told BD Sunday that he did not have to register his PoS business because he has an existing registered business



with the CAC. He said that his CAC certificate for Ifeanyi Communications was uploaded to cover for his PoS business.

Modupe Oni, Smold Ventures, disclosed to BD Sunday that she could not register her business name with PoS service provider because of the caveat attached on the registration portal. She said that all the requirements for the registration have been met on the Moniepoint portal but decided to disengage her registration because of the terms and condition: "Moniepoint will not be liable as a third party should anything happen to the registration."

Oni said that she decided to engage someone else for the registration because of the added benefit that came with it. "She offered to do my CAC for N25,000 and also added that she will also include my tax pin, which the other registration did not provide."

According to her, regulators and operators should provide support mechanisms for small-scale PoS operators who may struggle with registration fees and other requirements. She said that registration of PoS agents enhances economic stability of their various localities by reducing the risk of illegal activities. "Formalised PoS operators can create more jobs, contributing to economic growth."

However, speaking on the challenges faced by PoS agents, Ifeanyi said that many agents are unaware of the new requirements, leading to



non-compliance. According to him, inadequate infrastructure in some rural areas where PoS agents are most active, often lack the necessary infrastructure to support their registration process.

He said further that the removal of non-compliant agents will reduce access to financial services in underserved areas. According to him, PoS agent network contributes significantly to Nigeria's economy; hence a decline in the number of agents across the country will have far-reaching economic consequences on Nigeria and Nigerians.

AMMBAN decries mandatory CAC registration for PoS agents

The Association of Mobile Money and Bank Agents of Nigeria (AMMBAN) earlier in the year decried the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) directive mandating all Point of Sale (PoS) agents to register with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC).

AMMBAN stated then that the reason tendered by the regulator that the registration was to curb crime in the fintech space was not tenable, maintaining that it was purely a revenue-driven agenda. "AMMBAN strongly disagrees with the recent directive by the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) that all PoS agents must register with it, regardless of their status as individuals or non-individuals."

The body disclosed that it believed the directive was unnecessary,

...there is a need for the regulator and operators to deepen support for rural agents. According to him, providing infrastructure support and incentives for rural agents will help to ensure continued operation

contradictory to existing laws, and amounts to a mere revenue generation move to further tax hapless Nigerians. "We know the implications of most of these policies that are not well thought out and their impacts on the economy generally. We have lost over 1.5 million jobs in the last one year," Fasasi Sarafadeen Atanda, chairman, AMMBAN, stated.

According to him, Nigeria currently has over 3.7 million PoS in circulation. However, service providers were only able to deploy 2.7 million, leaving the gap of one million PoS amounting to a loss of about one million jobs in Nigeria.

AMMBAN stated that it had made and would still make spirited efforts in combating the issue of crimes within the Nigerian fintech ecosystem and condemned the insistence of CAC to deploy the police to execute the directive against those who fail to register their business before the speculated deadline.

Implications for PoS operators

Formalization of business registration with CAC provides a sense of legitimacy and credibility. It will also help micro, small and medium

enterprises (MSMEs) position for business grants by providing access to credit. Accordingly, registered businesses can access credit facilities from financial institutions, to enable them expand their business operations.

Similarly, business registration ensures tax compliance, which will reduce the risk of penalties and fines in the long run. Also, registration with CAC will help in protecting their business name, and prevent other businesses from using their business name.

Beyond the implication of business registration with CAC, there are other financial inclusion implications for PoS agents on the back of increased access to financial services. Furthermore, registered PoS agents can offer more financial services to enhance financial inclusion of their localities.

Similarly, the registration of their business with the CAC will help to ease the migration of the business from the informal to formal sector, which is also another way of positioning the business to access more capital.

Accordingly, registering with the CAC will lead to improved financial stability as registered PoS agents will be able to contribute to financial stability by operating within regulatory frameworks, which will also contribute to increased revenue for the government; because registered PoS agents will be able to pay taxes, and generate revenue for the government.

Way forward

Stakeholders said that there is a need for the regulator to simplify the registration process to accommodate PoS agents in rural areas by streamlining the registration process to reduce costs and complexity.

Ifeanyi said further that there is a need for the regulator and operators to deepen support for rural agents. According to him, providing infrastructure support and incentives for rural agents will help to ensure continued operation.

He also disclosed that the implementation can be phased to allow agents more time to comply with the CAC directive. He said further that regulators should conduct nationwide awareness campaigns to educate agents on the requirements and benefits of registering their business with CAC.

It is believed that Nigeria's growing PoS agent network faces a regulatory roadblock that threatens the progress made in financial inclusion. While the CBN's guidelines aim to ensure accountability, it is crucial to address the challenges faced by agents and find a balance between regulation and growth.

By simplifying the registration process, increasing awareness, supporting rural agents, and implementing the guidelines in phases, Nigeria can ensure the continued expansion of its PoS agent network and maintain momentum in financial inclusion.

The Worshipper

Catholic bishops launch Apostolate to care for migrants, refugees in Nigeria

Stories by JOHN SALAU

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) has launched the Apostolate of Pastoral Care of Migration, a new initiative aimed at providing spiritual and material support to migrants and refugees in Nigeria.

Themed, 'Fostering Collaborative Engagement of Church and State for Migrants and Refugees Assistance', the launch marked a significant step towards addressing the needs of displaced individuals across the country.

Yohanna Bulus, the episcopal chairman, Migrants and Refugees unit, CBCN, emphasised the unit's mission to provide pastoral care to



Yohanna Bulus, the episcopal chairman, Migrants and Refugees unit, CBCN

migrants of all categories.

He noted that the creation of the local office was a direct response to the Pope's injunction urging the universal church to provide care and dignity to migrants.

According to him, the launch marked the beginning of a new era of collaboration between the Church and state in addressing the needs of migrants and refugees in Nigeria.

He stated that with the participation of diocesan coordinators from across Nigeria and representatives of related agencies, the initiative is expected to make a significant impact in the lives of displaced individuals across Nigeria.

Kaigama, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, in his keynote speech, called for a more proactive and compassionate approach to

migration, aligning with the principles advocated by Pope Francis. He condemned the numerous challenges faced by migrants and refugees in Nigeria, particularly in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Augustine Akhogba, the Episcopal Secretary, Migrants and Refugees unit, CBCN, described the launch as a significant moment of compassion, solidarity, and advocacy for migrants and refugees.

He emphasised the importance of pastoral care in addressing the challenges faced by migrants and refugees.

The launch brought together stakeholders from the government, civil society, and international organisations to discuss ways of providing compassionate and inclusive support to migrants and refugees.

Jehovah's Witnesses set for 2024 regional conventions

...Highlights need to spread good news

Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) is set to hold its 2024 'Declare the Good News' convention series beginning the weekend of August 9-11, 2024.

The convention, which is free to participants is expected to draw over 3,000 attendees weekly to each of the Lekki, Badagry, and Daluwon for a total of 17 weekends.

"These conventions are a highlight of the year for thousands of people who need to experience some positivity in their lives, and we are happy to enjoy the programme once again in this welcoming and hospitable city," Ezekiel Bolaji, local spokesperson for Jehovah's Witnesses said in a statement.

Bolaji disclosed that the convention will be held at the Assembly Halls of Jehovah's Witnesses at Lekki, Lagos, Ota, Ogun and Daluwon, Mowe-Ofada Road, Ogun state. "Last year, nearly 13 million people attended more than 6,000 three-day conventions worldwide."

According to him, the convention will expectedly fuel the economy of the local cities hosting JW across the two states.

Bolaji stated further that the

three-day live event, which is open to the public, will deliver only good news in a world where bad news endlessly streams on social media, TV and radio.

"One of the largest convention organisations in the world returns to Lagos and Ogun states, Southwest Nigeria, with a much-anticipated motivational program to comfort and encourage the public."

He stated further that the 'Declare the Good News' convention will present Bible-based videos, discourses and interviews on topics such as: why do we need good news? What will you do for the sake of the good news; why we don't fear bad news, and hold

firmly to the good news — why and how? According to him, Saturday spotlights a baptism of candidates from surrounding communities, while a two-part video feature will captivate the audience on Friday and Saturday.

He disclosed that prior to each convention, local congregations will engage in a campaign to invite community members. "We are excited to work once again with city officials in Daluwon, to host our conventions," Bolaji stated.

The convention is free to attend starting on Fridays from 8:20 a.m. to 3:50 p.m.; Saturday from 8:20 a.m. to 3:50 p.m.; Sunday from 8:20 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Each day has a one-hour and 20-minute lunch break.



Cleric offers practical solution to avert nationwide protest

The General Superintendent of Holy Spirit Mission, also known as the Happy Family Church, Charles Ighele, has offered some practical suggestions to the Federal Government (FG) to avert the looming nationwide protest.

Ighele made this known while reacting to the nationwide protest scheduled to commence on August 1, 2024, urging the government to reduce the current pump price of premium motor spirit (fuel).

"Before he was sworn in as president, I cautioned in an interview I granted in the newspaper he owns about falling into the trap of fuel subsidy removal.

"Something Buhari was careful or scared to do. The president went ahead to make the same error Jonathan made when he increased the price of petrol early in his presidency," Ighele stated.

He stated that pump price reduction was the magic wand used by former President Goodluck Jonathan to quell protest during his tenure.

"This led to protests which seriously affected the popularity of Jonathan within a few months after he was elected.

"What Jonathan did was to reduce the pump price with the amount with which he increased it. That step stopped the protests. I will advise the president to effect the reduction of the pump price of petrol to a



Charles Ighele

bearable limit," Ighele stated.

He disclosed further that there is nothing wrong if the president should address the nation before the scheduled date of the protest.

He noted that the happenings in the country shows that the government is getting richer while the generality of the people are getting poorer, which is an aberration.

According to Ighele, great leaders are made during tough times. He however urged the government to explore other sources of revenue generation aside from fuel subsidy removal, increase taxes, among others.

He added that the president

should also be careful to know that revenue generating systems that worked in mostly urban Lagos might not work in other places; hence should not be implemented hook line and sinker in other parts of Nigeria.

"With my knowledge of political development in many nations of the world, governments that accept to reduce its share of the wealth of the nation and allow the people's welfare to be of greater importance survived more than those hawkish governments that insisted on having the wealth and to use the wealth to provide palliative and other social services for the people," Ighele stated.

Arts

George Edozie: Staying grounded amid rise to art fame

Considering the creative ingenuity that bears witness of how his art has grown in the last 25 years, you cannot tell the story of contemporary art in Nigeria without a mention of George Edozie, writes Obinna Emelike

If you have ever wondered what it means to be multi-discipline in one's career, George Edozie epitomizes that.

From sketches, drawings to paintings and to sculpture, mix-media and to other crafts, Edozie is a 'jack of all trades and master of all'.

No matter the material, whether with pencil, brush or bare hands, Edozie's creativity has never been in question as masterpieces always compensate for his creative efforts.

Those who follow his career progression will appreciate the incremental progress that has overtime resulted in unique techniques that have produced masterpieces and set Edozie among art masters of his time.

His impressionist paintings are very obvious as they feature angular characters and a rich array of textures, which are integral to his works. His art delves into themes that address social-cultural, political, and economic biases in society, evoking strong emotions such as love, belonging, strife, and joy.

Edozie is very bold with his works. The experimental artist also explores various media, including fabric and found materials, to create installation pieces.

In 2014, he showcased his boldness in his solo exhibition titled 'Shifting the Paradigm' at the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, Florida, where he challenged the narratives and biases of cultural art in relation to the artist's life.

The installation featured paintings and life-size pieces crafted from fabric, paint, feathers, and found materials, some of which bore a striking resemblance to the Igbo mmanwu, referencing Onitsha cultural background, knowledge, spirituality, and traditional art. The exhibition celebrated Edozie's culture and identity as an Igbo person and was listed among the top four best exhibitions during Art Basel Miami that year.

Edozie is also an art curator and art restoration expert. He has facilitated the conservation and restoration of artworks in various media for important collections and galleries, including SMO Contemporary Art, Hour Glass Gallery, Alexis Gallery, Arthouse Contemporary, AFA Framers, Thought Pyramid Gallery, the Alfred Nnaemeka Achebe Collection for the Chimezie Museum, the Mike Oduah Collection, the Frederick Udaka Collection, and many others. His restoration work on canvas includes valuable paintings by renowned artists such as



George Edozie

Ben Enwonwu, Uche Okeke, Nelson Cole, Oseloka Osadebe, Ablade Glover, Twin 77, Gani Odotokun, Ben Osaghae, and Abiodun Olaku.

He has conserved and restored works in a range of media, and in 2020, restored over a hundred works including fibreglass sculptures, wood carvings, ceramics, metal foils and paintings for a private collection in Lagos. Edozie has also worked extensively, overseeing commissions and restorations of artworks in stained glass, mosaic, brass and bronze for the Catholic Church in Nigeria, in churches across the country.

Edozie is also an internationally recognized artist, who has exhibited extensively in both solo and group exhibitions in Nigeria, the United States, and France. Some of which include; 'New Nigerian Conjunctions: The Art of George Edozie',

National Museum Lagos, Nigeria, (2018); 'Back to Black Art Africa', Art Basel Miami (2017); 'Afro Love', Alexis Gallery, Lagos (2015); 'African Way of Art, La Galerie Vendome. His works have found homes in both public and private collections and spaces like the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, the Indianapolis Museum, and the Studio Museum Harlem in New York, The Pan Atlantic University Museum, Lagos and the Chimezie Museum, each piece, serving as a unique educational resource for visitors. A writer, Edozie co-authored the book: 101 Contemporary Artists, A Celebration of Modern Nigerian Art and Nigerian Contemporary Art, which was published in 2010.

Edozie is the president of the Guild of Fine Artists GFA and a member of the Society of Nigerian Artists (SNA).



AGU, 2024, mixed media (Fabric Sculpture) by George Edozie

But most importantly, this year, the artist, who was born in 1972 in Enugu State, celebrated his 25 years successful career in visual art.

He marked the remarkable career and life mileage with a special solo exhibition titled 'Gatherings', which featured his recent works across paintings, drawings, and sculpture from March 25 to May 30, 2024 at

the Wheatbaker Hotel Ikoyi, Lagos.

In the anniversary exhibition curated by SMO Contemporary Art, Edozie delved into themes of unity and collaboration by depicting diverse micro and macro gatherings in his expansive canvases and powerful portraits. His exploration of family dynamics, and the complexities of human interactions on the communal, national and regional levels, provided a rich tapestry of meaning and



Chukwukadibia -2022 charcoal and pencil by George Edozie

conjecture in his work.

"As an experimentalist, I endeavor to transcend cultural barriers and foster a sense of global unity through my art. My paintings serve as reflections of the universal human experience, transcending racial and ethnic boundaries," Edozie explained at the 25th career anniversary.

Some industry stakeholders also commended the artist for his huge contributions in the 25 years of his career.

According to Sandra Mbanefo Obiagi, curator and creative director of SMO Contemporary Art, "In an era dominated by artificial intelligence, it becomes imperative to acknowledge and celebrate the authentic creativity and craftsmanship of artists like George Edozie.

"It is critical that we document important African artists like Edozie, who has not only contributed significantly to contemporary art, but who worked as a conservator of modernist masterpieces in many private and institutional collections; Edozie is arguably one of the leading professional art conservators currently restoring works in Nigeria."

Speaking on Edozie's latest exhibition, Jess Castellote, director, Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art, noted that, "Gatherings offers

viewers a chance to traverse narratives shaping our shared humanity, transcending superficial boundaries.

"It celebrates an artist who, with each stroke, invites us to look beyond the surface and immerse ourselves in the stories woven through the fabric of his body of work."

While looking forward to another 25 years of practice as a studio artist, Edozie recalls his days of little beginning and journey in the art landscape.

According to him, his artistic talent emerged during his early childhood in Nsukka where he would create paintings, sketches and other crafts.

Considering the strong desire to hone his skills, he enrolled at the University of Benin where he graduated with a Bachelors Honors degree in Fine and Applied Arts in 1996.

Since his graduation, Edozie ventured into full time art and he has never looked back. The artist assures that he will not look back, even at 50 years as a studio artist.



Participants at the Canon Women Who Empower event

Canon celebrates talent at Women Who Empower programme in Nigeria

Canon, a global leader in imaging solutions, successfully concluded "Women Who Empower," an initiative in collaboration with WISCAR (Women in Successful Careers).

A month-long programme, which aimed to empower women in the print and imaging sectors, culminated in an event held on July 24, 2024 at Radisson Blu Ikeja, Lagos, which was attended by participants, and guests including media, industry leaders and senior executives from Canon and WISCAR.

The programme consisted of three modules: printing, photography, and content creation, each designed to equip the 15 participants with valuable skills and knowledge. The content creation curriculum was led by Daniel Ehimen, a Nigerian cinematographer and director, who is also Canon ambassador. The photography curriculum and the printing module was led by Emmanuel Oyeleke, a Nigerian lifestyle photographer, and a Canon ambassador.

As demonstrated by Canon's various diversity and inclusivity programme, this initiative also aligns with its corporate philosophy 'Kyosei,' which means living and working together for the common good.

On her part, Amina Oyejobola, founder/chairperson, WISCAR said, "Our partnership with Canon has been a resounding success, empowering women in the print and imaging industries. This collaboration serves as a powerful blueprint for partnerships that break down barriers, drive meaningful change, and pave the way for a more inclusive future in the print and imaging industries.

"At WISCAR, we believe in the transformative power of empowering women and girls, and this partnership aligns perfectly with our values of inspiring, educating, and mentoring women to reach their full potential.

"By working together, we have made a tangible impact on the lives of women in Nigeria, and we look forward to continuing this important work, creating a ripple effect of positive change that resonates throughout the industry and be-

yond."

Somesh Adukia, managing director, Canon Central & North Africa, added, "Canon is guided by an unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These core values are not just aspirations, but the very foundation upon which we build a thriving and innovative future. We believe in creating an environment where everyone can thrive, and collaborating with partners like WISCAR reinforces this commitment. Together, we are shaping a more inclusive and groundbreaking future in the imaging industry."

The event culminated in a captivating portfolio exhibition, where participants brought their remarkable achievements and newfound skills to life. The exhibition captivated audiences with its blend of evocative photographs, rich in storytelling and dynamic video content, each a vibrant reflection of the participants' unique talents and passions.

Among the many talented individuals, two standout participants received special recognition for their exceptional dedication, creativity, and progress. Joy Ngwolo and Obianuju Lilian Ikegbune were honored for their outstanding contributions to the program.

Joy Ngwolo, a PR professional and photographer, reflecting on her journey, shared: "Prior to 'Women Who Empower' photography classes, my camera skills were limited by a basic understanding. The program's comprehensive training has been transformative, equipping me with a solid grasp of photographic techniques and the science behind them. The resulting improvement in my image quality is remarkable. I highly recommend these classes to anyone seeking to elevate their photography to the next level. I'm incredibly grateful to Canon & WISCAR for this invaluable experience."

Obianuju Lilian Ikegbune expressed her gratitude, stating, "As a public relations and marketing communications strategist, I was drawn to the Canon x Wiscar Women Who Empower Program for its focus on empowering women in the thriving creative industry. I gained valuable knowledge on storytelling

techniques like the 'rule of thirds,' camera handling fundamentals, and key considerations for brand storytelling, which will undoubtedly set me apart in the professional arena. I am incredibly grateful to Canon and WISCAR for offering this program, the chance to learn from industry leaders like Emmanuel and Ehimen, and the opportunity to connect with a network of fellow creatives."

As well, Ehimen spearheaded an intensive content creation course, equipping participants with essential videography skills. The course delved into the fundamentals of videography, camera mastery, the art of storytelling, and provided invaluable hands-on experience with personalized feedback.

Oyeleke led a captivating photography course, focusing on the core principles of photography with a storytelling emphasis.

Participants actively engaged in numerous sessions and practical exercises, gaining a thorough understanding of photography fundamentals, and solidifying their behind-the-lens capabilities. Expanding participants' knowledge base, Emmanuel also led a comprehensive printing workshop. The session explored various printing solutions for photography portfolios and delved into the intricacies of photo studio setups, ensuring participants are well-equipped for all aspects of their photographic journey.

The 'Women Who Empower' campaign marked a significant milestone in empowering women in the printing and imaging sectors. As Canon continues to champion diversity and inclusion, initiatives like 'Women Who Empower' demonstrate the power of partnerships in driving positive change. With plans for future collaborations and programs, Canon remains committed to its mission of empowering individuals and communities through innovation and creativity.

Canon, which has more than 63 percent of women occupying leadership roles in the Middle East and Africa headquarters, has been championing empowerment initiatives for many years as demonstrated by its various diversity and inclusivity programmes.

Arts

'Art making is very therapeutic, doing it with passion makes my day purposeful, fulfilling'

American-based artist Samuel Deji Adebuga unveiled his latest exhibition on Saturday, July 13th at the 700 Bryden building in Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A. Titled 'Deji Adebuga: The Retrospective Exhibit 2024', the exhibition showcases Adebuga's unique artistic vision and talent. His collection captures the essence of human emotions and experiences, offering viewers a thought-provoking and immersive artistic journey. In this interview, Adebuga invites art lovers to reflect on the complexities of life and find connection in their own personal narratives, leveraging his use of color, texture, and composition. Excerpts by JOHN SALAU:

The title of your exhibition, 'The Retrospective Exhibit,' suggests a look back at your journey. What have you been reflecting on lately about your life and career as an artist?

The Retrospective Exhibit 2024 is a reflection of my life journey from childhood into adulthood. My growing-up entailed joyful and unfulfilled periods. As a child artist, I was fascinated with drawing in charcoal and watercolors. Variety of animals were my favorite subject matter - horses, giraffes, elephants, goats, sheep and the rooster- "kukuruku: the time-keeper and alarmist" in rural towns or villages. Along with beautiful and colorful butterflies and of course the general environment landscape of my locality.

In what ways did your early experiences in Nigeria shape your artistic vision and style?

My artistic vision was imbued in my being, before I knew its values as a profession and the therapeutic impart on my daily life. From my elementary (grade) school through college level, I always received encouragement and accolades from my teachers, peers and professors. As a child, my teachers always called me to the blackboard to do illustrations of what we were being taught. I was always glad to do it. One of my teachers had told me at a tender age that "no matter the career path your parents want you to embark on, always take arts with you." and that advice had stuck up with me till date.

In reflecting on your time working with Nigerian newspapers, how did the political and social climate of Nigeria at the time influence your work?

As an editorial graphic artist for Punch and Concord Press in the early 70's until late 80's. Both were independent newspapers that had pride in reporting fair and balanced news about political and social climates in the country as the world changed for good, bad or ugly.

What were some of the most impactful moments or pieces you created as a cartoonist and illustrator at that time?

I enjoyed designing commercial logos, branding for new ventures, advertisements, newspapers and magazines stories, lay-out formats, photo-editing (cropping) and illustrations with no technology usage. Most impactful moments included working on the design of the PUNCH newspaper's logo, layouts and designs of HappyHome, SuperWoman and TopLife Magazines, all PUNCH publications.



Samuel Deji Adebuga

What inspired you to curate 'The Retrospective Exhibit,' and how did you go about selecting the works included in the exhibition?

My memories hold the power to every emotion that has had about situations, telling the stories that create

visual narratives that resonate across time. Deji Adebuga: "The Retrospective Exhibit" aim is to bring out my body of works to the forefront as they entail and serve as an "artist diary" of documentation of happenings in our world. Every piece of my works to be exhibited has a storyline

and timeline. One of them is a work of Cecil the lion titled 'Beloved Cecil.' Cecil was a male African lion who was a major tourist attraction and huge contributor to the national wealth of Zimbabwe. Tourists travel from all over the world just to see him at the Hwange National Park, but was killed by Walter Palmer, an American dentist in 2015.

Are there recurring themes or messages in your body of work that are reflected in 'The Retrospective Exhibit'?

Yes, music is one of the recurring themes. A lot of my paintings depict Nigerian musical instruments, especially the ones we don't see being used in the music industry today. One of the instruments is "Agidigbo." It is always a joy when art lovers stand still to look at this particular work, I dive into story telling of the component and the power of agidigbo; other recurring themes are political and societal issues.

With Artificial Intelligence creeping into the creative industry, what are your thoughts on the future of art?

Artificial intelligence is very much creeping into all aspects of modern lives, including creative endeavors. It's a welcoming development to me as an artist. Simply from "Cavemen wall art" into computerising - artificial intelligence is amazing at what human minds could achieve.

As an artist, how do you maintain your creativity and passion for art

in your daily life?

I live and breathe art. I see art in everything around me. Art making in any form is very therapeutic and doing it with passion makes my day purposeful and fulfilling. A perfect statement that resonates with my life is "Life is art. Art is life. I never separate it" Ai Wei Wei.

What emotions or messages do you hope your guests took away from experiencing your exhibition?

Appreciating art is an intrinsic part of human life, enabling us to understand the human condition by blistering interaction with others. Visual art can heal emotionally and physically. It teaches us about cultures and traditions that shape our world view. Art tells stories, sparks inspiration and fuels thinking. Most viewers can gaze at a canvas or art installation and feel an immediate connection.

What were the most memorable moments for you as an artist?

For me, the paintings are about pleasure of seeing, of being cognizant of the world around us. I view each piece as being part of a single ongoing work, and as well re-reporting matters as the news break (breaking news) as 'docu on canvas'. What do I want to say with my art? Celebrate the human, the marks people make on the world. These values of remarkable people amongst us were enshrined in the series of mu "The Notables: - Book as my canvas". My subject matter is mature, whether it's traditional drummers, dancers, landscapes, birds or flowers; it is captured in the spontaneous movement with the brush-stroke.

How would you describe the response to your exhibition?

It's everything. Art is an investment of passion that enables me to engage in my local art community and nationally. For the response by the art patrons that visited my art exhibit, I do believe that they understand the value of it and that they appreciate art.

Finally, what advice will you give to emerging African or Nigerian artists?

Dedication, resilience and willingness to continuously; learn and evolve with attention to detail. Dedication is key for artist development. Also, be as efficient and professional as possible as an artist of note. So, go forth and pursue those dreams. Vision and value is also important. You might need to spend some time reflecting on what your art means to you. Make changes as necessary for the painting has a life of its own. "Good to great effects!"



Visitors at the 'Deji Adebuga: The Retrospective Exhibit 2024' exhibition in Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A.

Travel

Looking for something affordable, within this summer...

OBINNA EMELIKE

With the cry of poor business by tour operators and travel agents, it is obvious that the unimaginable foreign exchange rate has stopped many from traveling to their dream destinations this summer.

Truly, at over N1, 500 for \$US1, one really needs to break the bank to travel for summer, except if he/she has a very deep pocket.

However, summer can also be enjoyed at home as some chic home-grown destinations await visitors with enthralling offerings.

Top among them is the Ibom Hotel and Golf Resort, which is a good summer deal.

Situated amidst rich palm forest vegetation, the magnificent resort set on 174 hectares of land connotes peace and serenity complemented by its original atmosphere.

Since inception in 2007, and despite several changes in its management, the Ibom Hotel and Golf Resort, once managed by Le Meridien and Icon Hotels, has not changed.

As Margret Aniefiok, a long-serving staff member puts it: "the facility has not changed. It is only the staff, especially managers that keep changing."

True to her observation, the resort is still very much in a pret-

ty good shape; fascinating and elegantly crafted, with opulence on display. As well, the rich natural pull of the landscape, airy and breezy, is quite enchanting and inviting to feast on any day.

There are many other reasons to visit the resort, which is unarguably, the best in South South and South East of Nigeria.

Tucked in a lush tropical landscape in Nwaniba, a few kilometres away from Uyo, the Akwa Ibom State capital, the resort is a hospitality jewel and a prime leisure and business resort by all standards.

The serenity of the environment amidst tropical beauties easily gives away the outfit as a top get-away and holiday option for discerning vacation seekers, especially this summer.

On offer are 130 guest rooms, 26 suites, and seven chalets; which are world-class accommodation options that complement other facilities conceptualised by Akwa Ibom State, the owners, to glue guests to a sustained leisure outing and memorable experience during their stay. As well, the private terraces in each of the accommodation options will indulge every guest. Besides, each room looks over a forest of palm trees and the golf course. The panoramic view created by this special offering is compared to that of viewing the Atlantic Ocean from the comfort of one's hotel room.

Of course, the height of excite-



ment at Ibom Hotel and Golf Resort is the 18-hole golf course, which has attracted the best golfers from far and near to battle for honour on its lush, rough landscape and well-trimmed lawns.

Again, the golf course with an enchanting and undulating landscape, hilly ranges and water courses, is highly regarded as one of the best and challenging courses in Nigeria and a professional golfer's delight.

The emphasis on the exclusive and luxury sports allows guests to meet with top personalities who, while on a golf retreat, may share the same table or swimming time with other guests. The rooms and other excitements may not make sense to you if you visit when golf tournaments are on.

Apart from the golf course, the resort indulges guests in memorable leisure through other facilities such as three bars, three stylish restaurants, Marina Club House & BBQ Terrace, retail shops, hair salon, and a VIP lounge.

There is also a river by the Ma-



rine Club House that flows through nearby Cameroon and into the Atlantic Ocean, luring guests for a plunge or leisure fishing.

With all its nature endowments and these world-class facilities, the idyllic resort truly woos guests to golf and leisure retreats.

Similarly, the needs of the corporate and business worlds are adequately met through the hotel's conference and banquet facilities. While the banquet hall accommodates up to 1,000 people, there are various options for meetings and seminars. As well, the hotel's business centre includes rental office space and many function rooms.

Emphasis is further laid on leisure with other recreational facilities such as a fitness and health club, outdoor children's and adult pools, two Jacuzzis, tennis and squash facilities, golf club, as well as a riverside marina with a floating jetty.

Lodging in the hotel gives you the opportunity to join every other guest to discover and explore signature offerings created and sustained by indigenous hands.

Of course, the Akwa Ibom axis is known for its great traditional culinary prowess. You will be feted

with enough local dishes that will keep whetting your appetite.

As well, you have a whole range of continental dishes and specialised cuisines developed by Ibom Hotel and Golf Resort's internal talents to choose from.

Also, the resort's efforts at boosting the golf course for regular competitions are yielding results. The management of the resort is already connecting the golf course to international almanac amid plans to host international tournaments that will draw tourist dollars to the resort, Uyo, the state and the country at large.

Most importantly, the journey to discover this hide-out is short and more convenient this summer as Ibom Air connects guests from Lagos, Abuja and other parts of the country to the Victor Attah International Airport, Uyo, which is approximately 30 minutes drive to the resort.

As well, ardent golfers will not forget a swell experience at the resort this summer in a hurry.

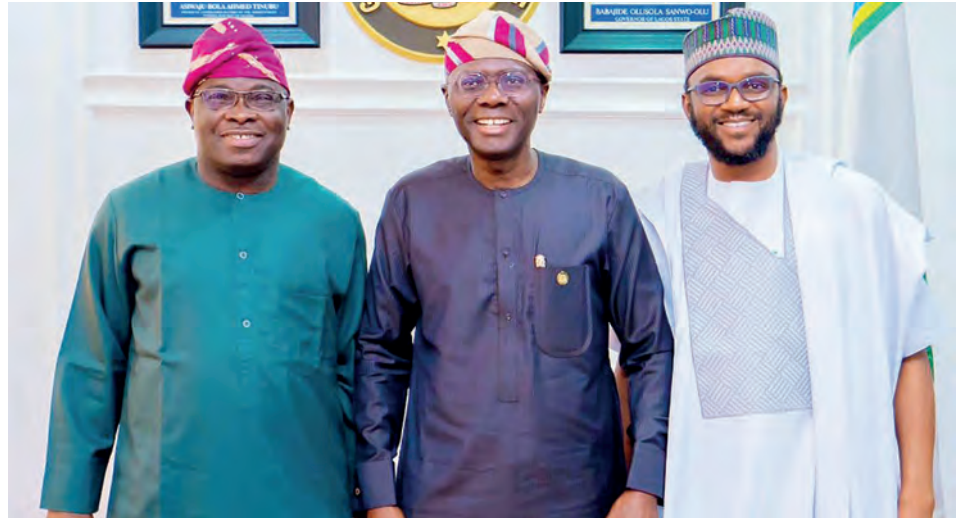
So, save money, save the stress and look inwards to the resort and other top home-grown destinations this summer.



Photo Reel



L-R: Federal House of Representatives committee on Public Assets and Special Duties, Hon. Taofeek Ajilesoro; the clerk, Mrs. Cordelia Eromosele; Hon. Clement Akanni; Hon. Patrick Umoh; the chairman, Hon. Ademorin Kuye; Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu; the vice chairman, Hon. Dabo Haruna; Hon. Tunji Akinosi; Hon. Mohammed Isa Anka; Director General National Power Training Institute of Nigeria, NAPTIN, Alhaji Ahmed Bolaji Nagode and the Attorney General/Commissioner for Justice, Mr. Lawal Pedro (SAN) and others, during a courtesy visit to the Governor by the Federal House of Representatives committee on Public Assets and Special Duties, at Lagos House, Ikeja.



Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, flanked by the Chairman, Federal House of Representatives committee on Public Assets and Special Duties, Hon. Ademorin Kuye (left) and his Vice, Hon. Dabo Haruna (right) during the committee's courtesy visit to the Governor, at Lagos House, Ikeja.



Left to Right: Chief Dotun Odekeye (Aare of Awe), Chief Ogunbode (Aro of Awe), Dr. Ayoola Oduntan (Group Managing Director, Amo Farm Sieberer Hatchery Ltd), HRM Oba Cornelius Abiola Taiwo Oladokun III (Alaawe of Awe), Olori Olujemisi Taiwo, Oloja of Ago-Oja, Isale Oyo, during the coronation ceremony of the Alaawe of Awe, recently.



L-r Senior Standard Engineer - Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON) Engr . Bature Inuwa Mohammed ,Guest Dr.Olugbenga Fadipe; Vice Chairman Organizing Committee , Nigerian Institution of Civil Engineers (NICE) Engr Lola Adetona, Chairman Organizing Committee ,Engr ,Dr Robbie Owivry; National Chairman (NICE) Engr Virgilus Chukwudi Ezugu; General manager ,Lagos Stee Public Works and Corporation, Engr Tokunbo Ajanaku ; Member (NICE) Engr Okodugha Dauda Aluyah ; Chairman (NICE) Lagos Chapter , Engr Faith Oko-Ukoni; during the Opening Ceremony of Construction Expo Africa , Organized by Nigerian Institution of Civil Engineers (NICE), Construction Expo Africa (CEA) ,Construction & Engineering Digest (CED) held in Lagos



R-L Engr Bade Oke, FNSE Immediate Past President; Engr Kunle Adebajo, FNSE Vice-President; Engr Kam Selem Bukar, FNSE, President of Association for Consulting Engineering in Nigeria (ACEN) during its EGM in Kano on 24 July 2024 with the theme, "Future Trends in Engineering and Infrastructure"



L-R: Samuel Iboroma, External Communications Manager, Nigerian Bottling Company (NBC), Oluwafunke Siji-mabeweje, Senior Tax Manager, NBC, Oluwasoromidayo George, Corporate Affairs & Sustainability Director, NBC, Ahmed Alao, Execution Excellence Director, NBC at the recently concluded Businessday CEO Forum where NBC was a sponsor.



Proprietress Goldenline international Schools Ajah Rev (Mrs). Helen Nkwo; (Middle) pose with the jss3 graduates, during the Class of 2024 Graduation and Prize Giving Day by Goldenline International Schools Addo road Ajah



Proprietress Goldenline international Schools Ajah Rev (Mrs). Helen Nkwo; (Middle) pose with the SS3 graduates, during the Class of 2024 Graduation and Prize Giving Day by Goldenline International Schools Addo road Ajah

Safety bureau deepens commitment to accidents' investigation, reopens office at Lagos airport

IFEOMA OKEKE
-KORIEOCHA

The Nigeria Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) has restated its commitment to transportation safety with the re-opening of its office at the Lagos airport.

Speaking during the re-opening of its Lagos regional office at Lagos airport on Friday, Alex Badeh, director general, NSIB said the occasion was especially momentous after a challenging three-year period during which its operational capacity in Lagos was severely impacted.

Badeh said the unfortunate demolition of its previous office under the past administration left them without a physical presence in this critical location, hindering its ability to serve the transportation sector effectively.

"During this hiatus, our



Festus Keyamo, minister of Aviation and others at the event

dedicated team members were left without the means to carry out their vital work, resulting in a struggle for productivity and a gap in our service delivery. "When I was appointed

Director General of the NSIB in December 2023, I was met with many unfinished tasks at the Bureau.

"Employee morale was low, and there were teeming

requests and competing demands. As a non-revenue-generating agency, we have grappled with limited government funding and bureaucratic inefficiencies," he said.

He stated that despite these challenges, his team approached the task with determination and a can-do attitude.

He thanked Festus Keyamo, minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, for his commitment and efforts.

"When I approached the Minister and presented this project to him, he promptly facilitated the necessary funding from the ministry's operating budget, making the vision of this new office a reality. His leadership and vision have been instrumental in enhancing our capabilities and ensuring the safety and security of our skies," he said.

He however, hinted that they have continued to face significant challenges in fulfilling their mandate, notably securing the necessary funding to support our operations.

"The non-compliance with the NSIB Establishment Act of 2022 by the Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and the

Nigerian Railway Commission (NRC) in remitting the statutorily required percentages of their revenue to NSIB has severely impacted our ability to conduct comprehensive multi-modal accident investigations.

"The NSIB Establishment Act of 2022 stipulates that NI-MASA should remit three percent of the three percent gross freight from international cargo, while the NRC is required to contribute five percent of ticket sales and cargo charges.

"This financial shortfall not only limits our operational capabilities but also hinders our growth and effectiveness in safeguarding Nigerian lives," the DG said.

He called on the federal government to further support the critical role the NSIB plays in ensuring the safety and security of our nation's transportation networks, adding that the value of human life and the importance of public safety cannot be overstated.

Phillips Consulting enhances management training in Africa with assima software

AMAKA ANAGOR-EWUZIE

Phillips Consulting (PCL), Nigeria's consulting firm, has unveiled a new training platform aimed at helping organisations in Africa stay ahead in a rapidly evolving digital landscape through change management training.

Known as assima training software, the software launched in partnership with assima will allow clients from Africa to have access to the world's top system training platform.

With the combined experience of over 50 years, Phillips Consulting and assima will provide effective solutions to existing training challenges, leading to smoother transitions, better adoption of new systems, and greater success in achieving strategic goals.

Speaking at the launch of the assima training software in Lagos, Paul Ayim, senior partner at PCL, said the collaboration between both organisations will elevate the way organisations train across the African market.

"We will leverage the latest innovations in training and change management, providing a holistic solution that addresses both technical and human aspects of business transformation," Ayim said.

He said Phillips Consult-

ing has continued to provide transformation, advisory services, technology and training solutions to organisations in Africa.

He said PCL is committed to helping people and organisations navigate change, accelerate growth and redefine the future.

"PCL's unparalleled expertise and innovative solutions have consistently driven success for its clients, making it a trusted partner in their journey towards sustainable development and industry

leadership in an ever-evolving business landscape," he said.

Brendan Scullion, chief executive officer of Assima, said the partnership will facilitate the growth of Phillips Consulting services and Assima software in the African market.

According to him, the combined expertise of both companies will elevate the standards of systems process training to unprecedented levels.

Christian Edohor, head of delivery and digital learning

at Phillips Consulting, said both organisations will benefit from state-of-the-art systems training development, comprehensive change management strategies, and customised solutions tailored to their unique needs.

Edohor listed other benefits including reduced costs, hyper-realistic training simulations, faster speed to competency, replacement of training clients, empowered end-users, and significantly improved adoption of key systems.



L-R: Onesimus Ocheho, senior digital learning advisor; Christian Edohor, head of delivery, digital learning; Paul Ayim, senior partner and Henry Ogbu, head of delivery, Fintech at the recent launch of PCL and Assima system training platform in Lagos.

Veterinary Medical Association urges Ododo to establish livestock ministry in Kogi

VICTORIA. NNAKAIKE

The Nigeria Veterinary Medical Association, (NVMA) Kogi State Chapter has called for the establishment of the Ministry of Livestock Development in the state.

Tolu Omotugba, chairman of NVMA in Kogi State, said that while briefing newsmen in Lokoja, also called on the state governor to consider the appointment of a credible Veterinarian as its commissioner, when the ministry is created.

"As key stakeholders in the livestock industry and given the significant and growing population of livestock in Kogi State, we seize this opportunity to call on His Excellency to leverage the newly-created Ministry of Livestock Development by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration.

"We advocate for the establishment of a similar Ministry in Kogi State and the appointment of a credible Veterinarian as its commissioner," Omotugba said.

The group commended the state Governor, Usman Ahmed Ododo for approving and prompt implementation of the 2021 Revised Consol-

idated Medical Salary Structure (CONMESS) for their members within the Kogi State Civil Service.

The statement read in part said: "Following the resolutions reached at our recently concluded executive meeting, we wish to address several important matters.

"First, we extend our profound gratitude to the Executive Governor of Kogi State, Ahmed Ododo, for his approval and prompt implementation of the 2021 Revised Consolidated Medical Salary Structure (CONMESS) for our members within the Kogi State Civil Service.

"This gesture underscores the Governor's unwavering commitment to the welfare of Kogi State workers and his recognition of the pivotal role the Veterinary profession plays in the state's economic prosperity."

He noted that the approval and implementation has motivated their members to carry out their duties with renewed enthusiasm and the highest level of dedication, as he called on the governor to utilise his esteemed office to ensure the prompt payment of the accumulated arrears of two months since the implementation in January, 2021 of the salary structure.

NewsXtra

OMAA's F5 CNG pick-up brand debuts at Nigeria Auto Industry conference in Abuja

BRIGHT IMOHO

Competition in Nigeria's automotive segment is getting super-charged with the recent unveiling of the OMAA's F5 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Pickup and double cabin 4-wheel drive (4WD) Pickup at the concluded Nigerian Automotive Industry Stakeholders conference held at the Shehu Yar'Adua Centre, Abuja.

The official presentation was led by Oluwemimo Joseph Osanipin, director-general of the National Automotive Design and Development Council (NADDCC), alongside other key stakeholders in the automotive industry.

F5 CNG Pickup, a testament to OMAA's commitment to innovation and sustainability, features two powerful variants: a 2.7-liter engine with a 5-manual transmission and a 2.4-liter engine with a 6-automatic transmission, both offering the option of a 100 liter or 200 liter CNG tank.

The vehicle was designed to meet the demands of both work and play, combining a rugged exterior with comfortable interiors.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's P-CNG programme gained significant traction following the exhibition of the new OMAA F5. The double cabin pickup suitable for vari-



L-R: George Djankar, Business Devt Manager OMAA; Yomi Charles, president, Value Plus, Joseph Osanipin, director-general (NADDCC) and Charles Ehiedu, Sales Manager, Kojo Motors at the Automotive Stakeholders Conference in Abuja, recently.

ous federal government agencies and parastatals can run efficiently on compressed natural gas, showcasing Nigeria's move towards greener and more sustainable energy.

OMAA promises to lead the way with CNG vehicles, comprehensive after-sale services, including spare parts, maintenance support and software solutions that ensure efficient operations.

Speaking at the conference, the NADDCC boss reiterated,

that the, "The Nigerian automotive sector is a vital artery of our economy, propelling commerce, facilitating transportation, and creating jobs. As we all know, this industry is a dynamic force, intimately intertwined with the economic climate, technological advancements, and even the environmental landscape."

On his part, George Djankar, Business Development Manager at OMAA, emphasised during the public

presentation that OMAA is at the forefront of new energy vehicles. We introduced the first dual-fuel vehicle in Nigeria, capable of running on both petrol and CNG.

"Our portfolio includes CNG Pickups, CNG Minibuses, and GNG high-capacity buses designed for BRT or mass transit schemes. Additionally, we offer CNG and LNG Light, medium, and heavy-duty trucks for logistics. While Electric Vehicles EVs are

in development," Djankar said.

On the pickup, he further disclosed that both the powertrain and suspension systems of the OMAA F5 have been calibrated and tuned solidly to adapt to Nigeria's road conditions. On a full charge, the CNG-powered vehicle can cover over 300 kilometers, running smoothly and eco-friendly.

Chino Ogwumike, Marketing manager at Kojo Motors, added, "The OMAA F5 model is not just a Pickup but a unique product that is segment competitive. It can be adapted to personnel carrier for security like the armed forces, Police and other agencies like Customs, Immigration and the Federal Road Safety Corps.

"It can be used as a utility vehicle by construction companies, ministries, departments and agencies, cargo and cooling van for agriculture; and even ambulance for healthcare.

These numerous cases make the OMAA F5 CNG Pickup capable of delivering high returns on investment. The OMAA F5 Pickup is equipped with the latest multimedia system, ensuring that drivers and passengers stay connected and entertained.

Its powerful performance is complemented by the CNG option, offering the best in terms of Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) and significant fuel savings. OMAA backs the F5 with a 2-year warranty or 75,000km whichever comes

first and ensures comprehensive aftersales service with centers across Nigeria.

OMAA is offering a special-pre-order reservation for the F5 CNG Pickup with a deposit of only N2 million at omaa.com/F5. Deliveries will commence in August 2024.

To celebrate the launch, OMAA is providing an exclusive offer for the first 1,000 customers: free vehicle registration, 1-year free comprehensive Insurance and 1-year periodic maintenance.

These offers are available while stocks last, even as the dealership advises customers not to miss out on this incredible opportunity to own the OMAA F5 CNG Pickup described as the ultimate vehicle for those who demand power, efficiency, and reliability.

OMAA is committed to delivering cutting-edge automotive solutions that meet the diverse needs of Nigerian consumers. Beyond mobility, OMAA hybrid energy systems integrate natural gas generators with solar power.

Infrastructure initiatives offered by OMAA include the development of CNG mini/mobile Refueling Units (MRUs), micro-manufacturing hubs and industrial parks. With a focus on innovation, quality, and customer satisfaction, OMAA continues to set the standard in the industry reinforcing their commitment to sustainable growth.

Organisation donates medical items to boost maternal health in Lagos

DAVID IJASEUN

The Rotary Club of Greenfield donated medical items to the Apena Health Center in Ago-Okota, Lagos State in a bid to enhance maternal and child health. This generous donation, which included mosquito nets, diapers and comfortable seating for mothers aims to improve the conditions and care provided to new mothers and their infants, highlighting the club's ongoing commitment to supporting community health. It was also in commemoration of their Maternal Month for 2024.

Nigeria, with a population of nearly 180 million, is predominantly young, with almost 46 percent under the age of 15, according to The United Nations International Children Emergencies Fund (UNICEF).

UNICEF also reported that there are approximately 31 million children under five years old, and about 7 million babies are born annually. However, over 75 percent of Nigerian children live below the poverty line. Low birth registration, which

can be as high as 62 percent in some regions, often leads to underestimating the extent of child health issues.

Nigeria's maternal mortality rate stands alarmingly at 576 per 100,000 live births, contributing to 10 percent of global maternal deaths. Annually, around 262,000 newborns die, with the infant mortality rate at 69 per 1,000 live births, and rising to 128 per 1,000 for children under five. "Diseases such as malaria, pneumonia, and diarrhoea are major causes of these deaths," the report read in part.

Speaking at the event, Nnanna Achugo, President of the Rotary Club of Greenfield, emphasised the importance of

the event. "We are celebrating Maternal Month, focusing on both antenatal and postnatal care," Achugo stated. "Today, we are visiting postnatal mothers and their children. Our donations include pampers, mosquito nets, and chairs to provide comfort and ensure proper vaccination for the babies."

Achugo also highlighted the club's role in global health initiatives, particularly collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) in polio eradication. "During polio week, we ensure the administration of polio inoculations and other essential vaccines, contributing to a healthier future for these children."



Emelda's Maison Valor: Redefining Luxury bedding in Nigeria

IFEOMA OKEKE
-KORIEOCHA

Emelda Obichie, founder of Maison Valor, is revolutionising the interior decor industry in Nigeria with her commitment to excellence and passion for high-quality bedroom essentials.

Maison Valor, a hospitality and home decor company, specialises in crafting premium bedroom and bathroom products that reflect sophistication and individuality.

Emelda Obichie, a home expert and fashion enthusiast, established Maison Valor to fill a significant gap in the Nigerian market. With a background in advertising and brand management, Emelda recognised the need for high-thread-count Egyptian cotton sheets and other luxury bedding products that were previously only accessible abroad here in Nigeria.

Her vision was to provide Nigerians with top-quality bedding without the hassle of international shipping and excess luggage costs.

Maison Valor's mission is to offer superior bedroom and bathroom essentials that pro-

mote the highest form relaxation and comfort right there in your home. Emelda believes that the bedroom is more than just a place to sleep; it is a personal sanctuary where creativity and innovation can flourish. "The bedroom is the bedrock of some of the world's greatest ideas. A well-curated space that not only promotes relaxation but also fosters creativity and innovation," says Emelda.

The journey of Maison Valor has not been without challenges. Emelda has navigated issues such as import duties, fluctuating exchange rates, and the need for continuous staff training.

Despite these obstacles, Maison Valor has thrived, due to its



Emelda Obichie

unwavering focus on quality and customer satisfaction. Emelda's dedication to her clients is evident in her approach to handling customer feedback. She ensures that every client leaves satisfied, often going above and beyond to resolve any issues.

Maison Valor stands out in the market due to its commitment to quality and excellence. Emelda's keen eye for peculiar designs and her passion for lifestyle aesthetics is reflected in every product. Maison Valor meticulously curates items that exude sophistication and reflect the unique personalities of their owners. From high-thread-count sheets to quality duvet sets, each product is curated to elevate your living experience.

Emelda's vision for the future of Maison Valor includes major expansions and improved distribution channels. She aims to make Maison Valor a household name in Africa, recognized for its quality and luxury.

"We are dedicated to supplying the West African market with the finest Egyptian cotton sheets and other premium bedding products. Our goal is to become one of the most recognised bed linen brands in Africa," Emelda shares.

NewsXtra

Revenue shortage: Agbakoba tells Tinubu to tackle corruption, maximise crude oil earning

INIOMBONG IWOK

Olisa Agbakoba, Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), has said that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu can resolve the revenue shortage by tackling graft and making the anti-graft agency effective to discourage people.

Agbakoba stated this in a statement to the media over the weekend, noting that it was imperative for the President to act now.

The legal luminary further advised the President to maximise crude oil outputs by removing the international oil companies from control of the nation's hydrocarbons revenue, noting that they were paying down debts and hedging

the naira against the dollar with crude oil dollars.

"So, there is a simple solution. I urge President Tinubu to look at how President Obasanjo resolved his money headaches.

"First, President Obasanjo tackled Corruption and plugged waste. Nuhu Ribadu saw to that, as the fear of Nuhu was the beginning of wisdom.

"Second and most im-

portant was that president Obasanjo understood what is called public sector borrowing requirements and how much was needed to sustain the National system. Most important was President Obasanjo's clear vision of how to raise revenue," he said.

According to him, "This was from optimal production of crude oil. The revenue from crude oil was fully maximised.

Crude oil daily production was at maximum capacity. Funds from sales of crude propped the Naira value to the dollar.

"The Government was able to get things done without borrowing but using crude oil revenue. President Tinubu must reverse the trend by maximizing crude oil outputs, removing the international oil companies from control of our hydrocarbons' revenue, paying

down debts and hedging the Naira against the dollar with crude oil dollars.

"So, quite simply, President Tinubu should maximise crude oil production to at least, 2.4 million barrels a day, pay down debts, apply funds to meet national needs. If this simple fiscal process is sustained, Nigeria will be out of this desperate situation within six months."

We own no interests in Maltese oil storage company - Oando

JOHN SALAU

Oando Plc has denied recent news report of being a shareholder and owning interest in a Maltese Oil Company, Raz Hansir Oil Terminal Limited.

In a statement signed by Ayotola Jagun, company secretary, Oando Plc, the company also denied any interest in the oil storage and blending facility, stating that Oando was not responsible for importing adulterated petroleum products into Nigeria.

"We wish to refute such claims and attest that neither Oando Plc nor its executives have ever held shares, investments, or interests in the fictitious Maltese company."

Jagun stated further that Oando conducted a compre-



hensive investigation into the basis of the false claims, by conducting a search of the Malta Business Registry, which is the official repository for all registered entities past and current within the country. "Our search yielded no results for a company bearing that name. Subsequent due diligence ef-

forts similarly failed to uncover any record of the company's existence," Jagun stated.

He further stated that the false claims were intended to mislead the public and Oando's stakeholders.

"We want to reiterate that as a publicly listed company, any corporate action, such as ac-

quisitions, are declared publicly in accordance with applicable corporate governance laws and rules.

"Furthermore, it is imperative that information released about a publicly quoted company such as Oando, is thoroughly researched and deemed accurate before it is published in the public domain," Jagun stated. According to him, the company's securities are traded daily across two exchanges (NGX and JSE) and can be easily verified to prevent misinformation and confusion among investors, as well as its other stakeholders.

"We implore all members of the press to take adequate steps to ensure the veracity of reports by fielding all enquiries with Oando Plc's corporate communications department," Jagun stated.

Lagos Continental triumphs as 'Hotel of the Year' at 2024 Hotel Managers Awards

IFEOMA OKEKE
-KORIEOCHA

Lagos Continental Hotel has been honored with the prestigious title of Hotel of the Year at the 2024 Hotel Managers Conference.

The event took place in the Grand African Ballroom at Lagos Continental on Monday, 14th July, highlighting the hotel's exceptional contribution to luxury hospitality.

This accolade is a significant addition to an impressive list of awards for the Continental Hotels Group Nigeria. Earlier in April, the group was also named the Best Nigerian Hotel Brand of the Year 2024 at the International Hospitality, Tourism & Eco-Sustainability Forum. These recognitions underscore Lagos Continental's leadership in the African

integrating technology into hospitality to enhance guest experiences and ensure service excellence.

"In an ever-evolving technological world, it's up to us as hospitality professionals to keep up with the times and look for innovative ways to continuously improve our service, such as using algorithms to personalize services for guests based on their past behaviors and experiences," Hala stated.

During his acceptance speech, Hala expressed deep gratitude, saying, "Every award we win solidifies the efforts we put into making this hotel a standout success. I extend my heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed to this achievement.

"Specifically, I acknowledge the staff and the entire Continental Hotels Group Nigeria team for fostering a culture of warmth, hospitality,

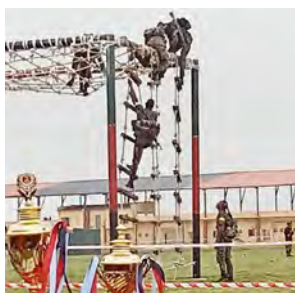
3 Division emerges champion in Nigerian Army obstacle

NATHANIEL GBAORON, Jos

The Nigerian Army on Saturday concluded its Inter-Division Combat Platoon Obstacle Crossing Competition 2024, with the 3 Division emerging as the overall champion.

The competition held at the Nigerian Army 3 Division Jos, Plateau State which aimed to test the endurance and combat readiness of troops in a simulated war situation, saw eight divisions showcased their skills.

The 3 Division, which is headquartered in Jos, demonstrated exceptional prowess and tactical expertise, outperforming other divisions to take



the top spot.

The 2 Division, came second, while the Army Headquarters Garrison took third place.

The competition, which was designed to mimic critical war scenarios, pushed troops to their limits, testing their physical and mental endurance.

The obstacle course included challenging terrain, water crossings, and combat simulations, requiring troops to employ their combat skills and teamwork to overcome.

The results of the competition saw the 8 Division take 8th

position, 1 Division take 7th, 81 Division take 6th, 82 Division take 5th, and 6 Division take 4th.

Toareed Lagbaja, a Lieutenant General, and the chief of Army Staff, represented by Musa Etsu Ndagi, a Major General, commended the participants for their exceptional team spirit and resilience.

The Army chief praised the troops for their display of endurance and combat readiness during the competition, which was designed to simulate critical war scenarios.

GText Holdings commits to rewarding excellence

GText Holdings, has reiterated its commitment to rewarding excellence among its staffers with a recent car gift to one of the best performing staff in Lagos.

"There's what we call rewarding excellence and that is what we do at GText. It's also a way of also telling our staffers thank you we appreciate the energy you brought, the sales that you've also brought," Goke Olabokunde, head,

GText & Associates, said during the recent gift presentation in Lagos.

He said further that the company is more interested in the personal development of its staffers and realtors, and that the reward system is to appreciate their contributions to GText.

"We train realtors on how to go about the business and we have just one sole goal; we want to make over 100, 000 people billionaire through

real estate by the year 2035 and we've started that process," Olabokunde said.

He disclosed further that more winners will be celebrated before the end of the, especially those who meet their sales target. "Jessica happens to be one of the first recipients of this phase and this is what we're going to be doing on a monthly basis," he said.

Jessica Elebiyo, sales manager, GText & winner, best sales person for half-year 2024, said

she was motivated by the personal story of the chairman, Stephen Akintayo.

She discloses further that she got motivated because she wanted a change in my life and that of her family.

"I don't have a car before now. This is my first car and I'm grateful it's coming from someone I really look up to. So, I decided to put in the work because I want that change in my life. I want the best,"



Karl Hala

luxury hospitality sector.

The Hotel of the Year award celebrates hotels that deliver outstanding service and demonstrate remarkable performance in the luxury hospitality industry.

The gala event featured inspiring speeches from industry leaders and a keynote address by Karl Hala, General Manager of Lagos Continental.

Hala's presentation emphasised the importance of

and exceptional guest experiences. Every milestone we reach, we achieve together, as a family."

Lagos Continental consistently sets the bar high with its exceptional hotel services. The hotel offers state-of-the-art amenities, luxurious accommodations, and advanced conference facilities, all designed to meet the diverse needs of guests in Lagos, the bustling economic capital of Nigeria.

Sport



Paris Olympic: Djokovic records 6-0 6-1 win in opener

Stories by JOHN SALAU

Novak Djokovic recorded a 6-0 6-1 win over Matthew Ebden in the 2024 Paris Olympic opener on Saturday.

Djokovic, a 24-time Grand Slam champion and top seed in Paris, could potentially face long-time rival Rafael Nadal next.

Spain's Nadal will be in singles action later in the week against Hungary's Marton Fucsovics.

Reigning French Open and Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz also made quick progress, beating Lebanese Hady Habib 6-3 6-1.

Serbia's Djokovic has won almost everything there is in tennis but has never bettered his bronze from Beijing 2008.

He needed just 53 minutes to beat Australia's Ebden, who was playing his first singles match for two years.

Ebden did, however, win over the crowd with his self-effacing reaction to what was unfolding on court.

And it was exactly as he'd feared: after 30 minutes, he was 6-0 2-0 down and looked to be out of ideas.

He tried everything - including an underarm serve that Djokovic still returned - before jokingly offering his racquet to a group in the crowd to see if they could do any better.

The biggest cheer of the afternoon came when Ebden finally got on the board for 4-1 in the second set. Ebden put his shirt over his head and celebrated towards the crowd, who gave him a standing ovation, before an amused Djokovic patted him on the shoulder as they went to their chairs.

Djokovic may have wished for slightly tougher opposition to find his rhythm on the court, but he will welcome a quick victory nonetheless.

No play was possible on the outside courts on Saturday, with Britons Jack Draper, Cameron Norrie, Dan Evans and Katie Boulter having to wait an extra day to begin their singles campaigns.

Slot earns first win as Liverpool manager

Arne Slot recorded his first win as Liverpool manager during the pre-season in a 1-0 win over Real Betis in Pittsburgh.

Dominik Szoboszlai, the £60m signing from RB Leipzig last summer gave Slot his first win.

The Reds were beaten 1-0 by Preston, external in a behind-closed-doors friendly at their training ground earlier this month.



but the post-Jürgen Klopp era is

now up and running with their first win on their US tour.

Hungarian midfielder Szoboszlai opened the scoring after 34 minutes by sweeping in Mohamed Salah's through ball, while Betis striker Juanmi missed two chances in front of 42,679 fans.

Defender Bradley was the pick of the starters, linking well with Salah on the right flank and created the majority of the best chances.

Meanwhile, Carvalho, fresh from a loan spell at Hull City, looked determined to impress with a number of dangerous moments.

There was a total change in line up as youthful substitutes Trey Nyoni, Vitezslav Jaros, Tyler Morton, Harvey Blair, Ben Doak, Luke Chambers, Nat Phillips, Luca Stephenson, Owen Beck, Stefan Bajetic, Kaide Gordon and Lewis Koumas all came on in the

second half.

Nyoni, 17, excelled as the first of the youngsters coming on for an injured Curtis Jones. He dictated the play in the middle of the pitch and also created a big chance for Blair.

The youthful squad was down to Liverpool's policy to give their players from Euro 2024 and Copa America their full recommended three-week holiday, as dictated by players' union FIFPro, when many rivals cut them short.

Ibrahim Konate and Diogo Jota will return early, however, having had minimal involvement for their national teams.

However, Liverpool lost midfielder Curtis Jones on the half hour mark with Slot saying it was too early to say how bad the injury was.

The Reds face Arsenal in Philadelphia on Thursday and then take on Manchester United in Columbia on Sunday, 4 August.

Guardiola set to renew Manchester City contract

...Hopes Ederson stays at City

Pep Guardiola on Saturday revealed he has not ruled out signing a new contract with Manchester City.

"We will see what happens. But I will not rule it out absolutely to extend my contract. I would love to stay because I would love to stay."

"When I'm leaving, I will say I'm leaving, but I didn't say that," Guardiola, who has led City to six Premier League titles, two FA Cups and a maiden Champions League among a host of honours, told reporters.

Guardiola's current deal is due to expire next summer and appeared to hint after steering City to a fourth successive Premier League title in May that next season could be his last at the club.

However, the former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss on Friday opened the door for his time at the Etihad to be extended into a 10th year.

"Nine years today in the same club is an eternity. So I want to be sure it's the right decision. Not just for me, for the club, for the players."

"Still they run like they ran for eight years, it doesn't matter the competition, it doesn't matter the tournament and this is what I have to see," he said during the club's pre-season tour of New York.

The 53-year-old also addressed ongoing speculation over goal-



keeper Ederson, who has been linked with a move to the Saudi Pro League in recent months.

The 30-year-old Brazil international future have been uncertain with two years left on his current contract.

However, the City boss was more forthcoming about the future of his first-choice goalkeeper two days later.

"I wish with the bottom of my heart Eddie will continue with us. I would love him to stay."

"I cannot imagine our processes succeeding these last seasons without him. He is an important figure in the locker room," Guardiola said



CAF open invitation for 2024/25 flagship club tournaments

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) has opened an invitation to tender (ITT) for the media rights to its flagship club tournaments ahead of the 2024/25 season of the TotalEnergies CAF Champions League and Confederation Cup.

The media rights available are on a Pay/Free-to-air basis across the Sub-Saharan region and the Rest of the World ("RoW") until 2025 (2024/25 season), and deadline for submission is 23 August 2024.

According to CAF, the rights are available for exploitation across

most languages across the region including English and local language, albeit with broad exclusions for the French language.

The tender process will allow CAF to select the media companies that are best placed to achieve CAF's objectives of providing maximum exposure for the tournament and offering fans in Sub-Saharan Africa a high-quality viewing experience.

The events being offered in the tender are:

TotalEnergies CAF Champions League 2024/25

TotalEnergies CAF Confederation Cup 2024/25

Sport



Paris Olympic: Vatican urges athletes to embrace sportsmanship

JOHN SALAU

As the 2024 Paris Olympic gets underway, *Athletica Vaticana* has urged participating athletes to embrace the spirit of sportsmanship as they compete to win together, the medal of fraternity.

"Every training session, every challenge overcome,

every moment of difficulty faced with courage, that brought you to the Olympic Games is not just victory or defeat but a journey through life that is never done alone," *Athletica Vaticana*, the Holy See's official sports association, said in a statement.

The Association further urged athletes to go forward in their fair play and success with a spirit of fraternity and

closeness. "With the beauty and fairness of each person's sporting gesture, and without ever resorting to shortcuts, the Games can be opportunities for hope."

Accordingly, it stated that the Olympics and Paralympics can be strategies for peace and antidotes to war games.

Athletica Vaticana lamented that the Olympics this year take place amid wars, tensions and injustice

on a global scale, decrying this as a "dark time for humanity." The Association reiterated Pope Francis' appeal for an Olympic Truce. Calling on sport to welcome efforts to promote peace, the Association noted that while the athletes may be unable to stop what Pope Francis refers to as "the third world war fought piecemeal," they are, however, able to cultivate a more fraternal humanity.

Abia football 'Supalig' excites club owners

GODFREY OFURUM, Aba

Football club proprietors in Aba, Abia State under the aegis of Association of Private Football Club Owners of Aba, have expressed joy over the recently launched State football league, known as Su-

palig, noting that it would create jobs and boost the state's economy.

Ukoha Udensi, president of the association, made this observation after a recent meeting with Dike Dimiri, chief executive officer, Fifty1 Alliance, a sports and entertainment assets management company and promoters of the league.

He expressed optimism that the birth of a new business-oriented football era on the domestic front is already on the horizon in Aba, stressing that the Abia Supalig is bringing the business in football that the current environment is not used to and an opportunity to make Aba the biggest football factory in Nigeria.

"We're not talking about mere grassroots football. We've seen and have heard about the marketing and business side of the proposed league. It's a massive shift from the usual thing we are used to, which has not been profitable. I'm seeing something that will boost the economy of this State and we are getting involved."

Chijioke Kalu Ukpai, vice president, Private Football Club Owners of Aba, said that the idea of a Supalig and the structure already in place is something he cannot wait to

get started.

He stressed that the football management in the country has done a whole lot of disservice to many talents emerging from the domestic front, as they have not been given an organised platform to feel what professionalism in the game looks like.

Ukpai said that with over 50 private football clubs in the state and each having players, who are hungry for opportunities, the Abia Supalig is not just an exciting prospect, but a total liberation for talents, who are yearning for a chance to make something out of football.

"We have not seen such before in our State. We were expecting such moves from the State Government, but we thank God that today private football club owners in Aba will begin to see a spectacular change in the football landscape of this city," Ukpai said.



Oyo govt sets for 2024 world school athletics trials

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan.

Oyo State Government has expressed its readiness to host a memorable World school Athletics Trials organized by the Nigeria School Sports Federation among primary and secondary schools students across the country.

The Commissioner for Education, Science and Technology, Salihu Adelabu, a professor indicated that the trial will kick-start on Monday, 5th August and end on Friday, 9th August, 2024

He added that the tourney will be held at the Lekan Salami Stadium, Adamasingba Ibadan, billed for 9am daily.

The trial, according to the Commissioner, is meant to select prolific athletes who are to represent Nigeria at the World

Athletes. This is another opportunity for our students to showcase their talents and also boost the commercial activities of the state within this period.

"I must say that the Governor Seyi Makinde led administration is leaving no stone unturned to ensure our students strike a balance between education and sporting activities, and we believe that our representatives at the trial will make us proud" "The trial will be in three categories, Under 12, this is for primary school pupils, Under 15 is meant for junior secondary school students, while senior secondary school students are for the under 18 categories.

"I want to appeal to the organizers to put in the necessary efforts and be



School Athletics Championship coming up later this year in Bahrain.

The statement reads, "All is set for the hosting of the 2024 World School Sports

fair to all the participating schools, while the athletes should embrace the spirit of sportsmanship and build a lasting relationship among themselves"

France fine Jaminet €30,000 over racist video

French Rugby Federation (FFR) has fined full-back Melvyn Jaminet €30,000 (£25,335) and suspended for 34 weeks after he posted a racist video on social media.

During France's summer tour of Argentina earlier this month, the 25-year-old posted the video, which included a racist comment aimed at the Arab community.

Jaminet admitted he had harmed the best interests of rugby," the FFR said in a statement.

The Toulouse full-back can re-

Completion of those activities would free Jaminet to be available for selection before the start of the 2025 Six Nations.

Jaminet, who was sent home from the tour, has said he is "deeply sorry and ashamed of my comments".

In a post on Instagram, he added: "Racism, in all its forms, is unacceptable and goes against everything I believe in."

Jaminet's France teammates Hugo Auradou, 20, and Oscar Jegou, 21, were charged with the aggravated rape of a 39-year-old woman during the tour.

duce his ban by eight weeks by taking part in anti-discrimination activities to "promote the values of sport".

same tour. Auradou and Jegou say they had consensual sex with the woman and deny rape.



Sport

Napoli director drops hint on Osimhen's future

ANTHONY NLEBEM

Napoli director Giovanni Manna has made a statement regarding the future of star striker Victor Osimhen, who has been linked with Chelsea, Arsenal, Manchester United, and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG).

Chelsea and PSG have been plotting to sign the prolific Nigerian striker, but the 25-year-old's £110m release clause has been a significant hurdle. Only a few clubs can afford the Nigeria international



at this price, limiting the potential suitors for the 6ft 1in forward.

Speculation has increased that Osimhen could be on the move, especially with new Napoli boss Antonio Conte reportedly interested in acquiring Chelsea outcast

Romelu Lukaku.

"We aimed to provide the coach with a competitive team from the first days of training camp to immediately tackle the championship. There will be movements, as there is still a month of the market left, and we might make

some additions," Manna commented on Osimhen's potential departure.

"This is a process, a project starting this year with the coach at its centre. We share a strategy with the club, and we are calm and clear-headed. We will not make any reckless moves but will make decisions that support our technical and tactical ideas."

While he acknowledged potential "movements," Manna did not specify what those might be. He emphasized that they were satisfied with their attacking options, which included Osimhen, Giovanni Simeone, and Walid Cheddira, hinting that no one might

we will make our evaluations."

Osimhen, whose contract runs until 2026, remains a key player to watch as the transfer window progresses. There has been speculation regarding the striker's future, with top Premier League clubs still showing interest in his signature.

In January, Osimhen spoke about the rumour of his move to England amid strong interest from Premiership clubs.

"The rumour is going around about me linked with the Premier League. When you're one of the hottest strikers on the globe, you expect this type of thing, and of course, the Premier League is one of the biggest and best leagues in the whole world," Osimhen said as quoted by Teamtalk.

"I'm with Napoli, I signed a new contract. I'm enjoying my time there. I think I've already made up my mind, I already know what I want to do in my career."

As the summer transfer window enters its final weeks, Manna's comments suggest that while Napoli is considering its options, the club is keen to maintain a strong and united front with its current attacking lineup. Osimhen's future, however, remains uncertain as he continues to attract interest from Europe's elite clubs.

Paris 2024: Super Falcons chase vital win against Spain

ANTHONY NLEBEM

The Super Falcons of Nigeria will hope to secure their first win in the women's Olympic football tournament at the Paris 2024 Olympics when they take on world champions Spain on Sunday, aiming to keep their qualification hopes alive in Group C.

The Super Falcons suffered a narrow 1-0 defeat against Brazil in their opening match on Thursday and will look to earn a vital three points to stay in the tournament.

The match is scheduled for the Stade de la Beaujoire in

Nantes and it will be the first encounter between the two teams. Kickoff is set for 6 p.m. Nigeria time.

La Roja are making their Olympic Games debut in Paris after defeating France 2-0 to win the maiden Women's Euro Nations League. They are also clear favourites to win their first Olympic gold at the tournament. The Falcons are making their fourth appearance at the Olympics, having debuted at the 2000 Games in Sydney.

The Falcons are currently bottom of the group after losing 1-0 to Brazil, while Spain sits at the top with

three points, courtesy of their 2-1 win over Japan. Though finishing third in the group could still be enough for qualification, a defeat for the Falcons will further limit their chances of clinching one of the two slots available for the best third-placed teams.

Spain has been in imperious form since their World Cup triumph, winning nine of their last ten matches. The eleven-time African champions will have their work cut out against a star-studded Spanish side led by World Cup Golden Ball and Ballon d'Or winner Aitana Bonmati, who netted the equalizer in the victory over Japan.

Randy Waldrum's team can take courage from their display against Brazil, during which they failed to capitalize on their chances, especially in the first half. Despite falling behind, the Falcons mounted a late rally but could not find the equalizer.

Super Falcons captain Raheeda Adebayo was a constant threat against Brazil, and the team will need to complement her efforts upfront if they are to stand a chance of securing a positive result against Spain.



Brazil teenager Endrick unveiled at Real Madrid

ANTHONY NLEBEM

Brazilian teenager Endrick has officially joined Real Madrid, days after signing his contract with the Champions League holders. The La Liga giants agreed to sign the forward from Palmeiras in December 2022 in a deal reportedly worth €72 million, including variables and taxes. But he could not formally join the club until his 18th birthday on July 21, 2024.

The 18-year-old was visibly emotional at his public presentation at the Bernabéu stadium, expressing his long-held dream of playing for the reigning La

Liga champions. His parents, also present, were moved to tears.

"This is crazy," Endrick said. "I am so happy. Since I was a kid, I have always been a Madrid fan, and now I am going to play for Madrid. I am here, I am going to play, I am so happy, my family are as well. I don't have words to describe what I am feeling. I always wanted to be here. I wanted to play for Madrid. It was a dream. Today it is a reality. I am grateful to everyone. Now we are going to sing a chant together, I am sure you will all be singing with me: Three, two, one... 'Hala Madrid.'"

Endrick was overwhelmed by the turnout, with sources telling ESPN that more than 40,000 fans attended the event. Real Madrid president Florentino Perez welcomed the club's latest young talent.

"This moment was what you dreamed of as a child," Perez said. "That conviction has led you to fulfil a lifetime dream. That dream you had when you were only nine years old with the Real Madrid Foundation. Your play and goals already bring fans to their feet, and Madrid are delighted to have you as part of the family." Endrick revealed that Cristiano Ronaldo's influence drove his fandom of the storied club. The emotion of the moment overwhelmed him on the pitch. "It [the tears] wasn't planned, but as I said, since I was young, I have loved Real Madrid," Endrick said. "Firstly, because I saw Cristiano Ronaldo, and that's initially why I wanted to know more about the club and started looking back at all the stars that have been here. I have been enamoured by Madrid since then. I didn't want to cry, but it came from the soul. I hope we can now create history together." He added that his parents' tears during the event "touched his heart," saying he "would not be here without them."



Sport

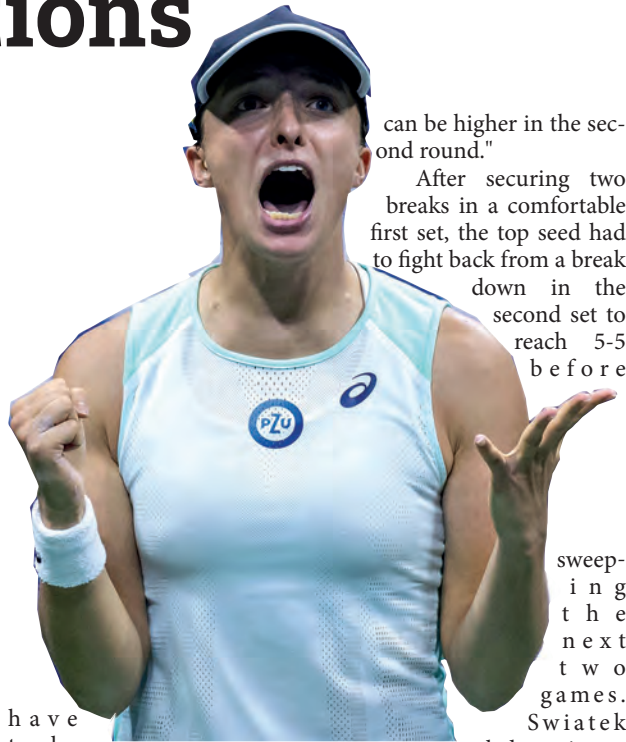
Swiatek shines in Olympic opener amid rain disruptions

ANTHONY NLEBEM

World number one Iga Swiatek enjoyed a winning start at the Olympics tennis tournament on Saturday as torrential rain swept across Roland Garros, causing major disruptions to the schedule.

Swiatek battled to a 6-2, 7-5 victory over Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania. The 23-year-old Pole, back at the venue where she captured her fourth French Open title last month, had the advantage of playing under the roof of Court Philippe Chatrier.

"I'm happy to get through. The atmosphere was a little bit different, so I was a little more nervous," Swiatek said. "But I



have the chance to work on a few things tomorrow so my level

can be higher in the second round."

After securing two breaks in a comfortable first set, the top seed had to fight back from a break down in the second set to reach 5-5 before

sweeping the next two games.

Swiatek sealed victory when Begu double-faulted. Swiatek, who only made

it to the second round on her Olympics debut in Tokyo three years ago, will face either Diane Parry of France or Argentina's Nadia Podoroska for a place in the last 16.

Italy's Jasmine Paolini, who was easily defeated by Swiatek in the French Open final, also advanced to the second round with a 7-5, 6-3 win over Romania's Ana Bogdan.

"It's great to come back here; it's a different kind of tournament when it's the Olympics," said Paolini. "I really love to play for my country, but I feel a little more pressure."

While Swiatek and Paolini advanced, the start of play on the outside courts was delayed by more than four hours due to rain. A total of 40 matches were scheduled to be played on the uncovered courts on the opening day.



Paris 2024: France's TGV high-speed trains resume after attack

ANTHONY NLEBEM

Traffic on France's TGV high-speed trains was gradually returning to normal on Saturday after engineers worked overnight to repair sabotaged signal stations and cables that caused travel chaos on Friday, the opening day of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.

In Friday's pre-dawn attacks on the high-speed rail network, vandals damaged infrastructure along the lines connecting Paris with cities such as Lille in the north, Bordeaux in the west, and Strasbourg in the east. Another attack on the Paris-Marseille line was foiled, French rail operator SNCF said. There has been no immediate claim of responsibility.

"On the Eastern high-speed line, traffic resumed normally this morning at 6:30 a.m. while on the North, Brittany and South-West high-speed lines, 7 out of 10 trains on average will run with delays of 1 to 2 hours," SNCF said in a statement on Saturday morning. "At this stage, traffic will remain disrupted on Sunday on the North axis and should improve on the Atlantic axis for weekend returns," it added.

SNCF reiterated that transport plans for teams competing in the Olympics would be guaranteed after what the rail company called the "massive attack."

"Our intelligence services and law enforcement are mobilized to find and punish the perpetrators of these criminal acts," Prime Minister Gabriel Attal posted Friday on X, calling the attacks "prepared and coordinated acts of sabotage."

Services from Paris to much of France saw mass cancellations and delays. The Eurostar company said it scrapped about a quarter of its trains between London, Paris, Brussels, and Amsterdam. It predicted cancelling about a fifth of trains over the

weekend, and all services will face delays.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer had to take a plane instead of a high-speed train to the Olympics ceremony. Four special trains bringing Olympic athletes to Paris, including some US team members, went ahead, SNCF said.

With one of France's busiest holiday travel weekends clashing with the start of the Olympics, SNCF said about a quarter of trains will be cancelled on Saturday and Sunday on the lines attacked. Trains that run will face delays.

The company said thousands of staff worked to repair the damage and try to get services running again. It is estimated that about 250,000 passengers were affected on Friday. Junior Transport Minister Patrice Vergriete said 800,000 could face the fallout over the three days.

The coordinated attacks were staged at 4:00 a.m. (0200 GMT). At each site, the perpetrators targeted fibre optic cables that carry safety information for drivers and control rail changes, SNCF chief executive Jean-Pierre Farandou said.

Gerard Due, mayor of Croisilles in northern France, one of the sites hit, said the attackers had specialized equipment to access the cables and then "threw a flammable liquid" on them.

Vergriete said that the saboteurs had been spotted with "vans," while "incendiary devices were found at the scene."

Paris prosecutors opened an investigation into attacks on "the fundamental interests of the nation" and criminal conspiracy. A similar sabotage attack was staged in Germany last year and in eastern France in January 2023.

The attacks left passengers stranded in stations across Paris and in many cities in eastern, western, and northern France. Some at Montparnasse station in Paris were left in tears.

Paris 2024: IOC apologises for introducing South Korean athletes as North Korean

ANTHONY NLEBEM

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has expressed regret for an error during the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympics, where South Korean athletes were incorrectly introduced as being from North Korea.

As the South Korean delegation sailed down the Seine River in Paris, they were mistakenly introduced using the official name for North Korea: "Republique populaire democratique de Coree" in French and "Democratic People's Republic of Korea" in English.

"We deeply apologize for the mistake that occurred when introducing the South Korean team during the broadcast of the opening ceremony," the IOC stated on its official Korean-language X account. The error sparked strong reactions in South Korea, a significant cultural and technological hub that remains technically at war with the nuclear-armed and impoverished North.

South Korea's sports ministry expressed "regret" over the incident, stating, "We express regret over the announcement during the opening ceremony of the 2024 Paris Olympics, where the South Korean delegation

was introduced as the North Korean team."

Jang Mi-ran, South Korea's second vice sports minister and a 2008 Olympic weightlifting champion, has requested a meeting with IOC President Thomas Bach to discuss the issue.

The South Korean foreign ministry contacted the French embassy in Seoul, which expressed regret over what it termed an "incomprehensible mistake."

South Korea's National Olympic Committee also plans to meet with the Paris Olympics Organizing Committee and the IOC to voice their protest, request measures to prevent a recurrence

and send an official letter of protest from the head of its delegation, according to the sports ministry.

North Korea was correctly introduced with the country's official name during the ceremony.

Relations between the two Koreas are currently at a low point, with North Korea strengthening military ties with Russia and sending propaganda balloons to the South. In response, South Korea's military has been broadcasting K-pop and anti-regime messages from border loudspeakers and recently resumed live-fire drills near the demilitarized zone that divides the Korean peninsula.



Adesina on the rage of hunger!

THAT Nigeria, with a vast, mostly arable land mass of 923,759 square kilometers, blessed with Rivers Niger and Benue, along with several tributaries and bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the South, parades the painful paradox of harrowing hunger in the midst of such resources is simply inexcusable and shameful! Worse still, the country boasts over 230 million people.

Ranked 109th out of 125 countries on the 2023 Global Hunger Index, GHI, even as 60percent of the youth are either unemployed or under-employed the recent decision by the President Ahmed Tinubu-led government to resort to food importation, is another knee-jerk approach that would amount to leaving the substance- of improving local economic productivity- to chasing the shadows of food insecurity. Hunger would therefore, act as the match-stick trigger to fuel the proposed mass protest billed for August 1, 2024.

Though the food importation is coming as a short- term measure in the face of the hunger in the land, it again reflects the recurring ugly decimal of abysmally poor leadership performance, over the decades. If not, how do you explain the sad situation that it is in this same crude oil-rich country, which boasts of four refineries, that the importation of the refined by-products goes on unabated, with trillions of naira down the drain. Still, according to several media reports much of the huge revenue keeps going into the coffers of the unpatriotic rotten-rich, oil cabal, if only to satisfy their insatiable epicurean tastes.

What an unjustifiable anomaly; that we keep importing the processed products of the raw materials our creator has richly blessed us with in abundance. So, that brings to the fore the recent intelligent and thought -provoking response to the government's food importation policy by none other person than the world renowned, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, president of the African Development Bank (AfDB).

Speaking at a recent retreat hosted by the

“
Nigeria cannot rely on the importation of food to stabilise prices. It should be producing more food, while creating jobs and reducing foreign exchange spending... Nigeria must feed itself with pride
”

- Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, president, African Development Bank (AfDB).

African Primates of the Anglican Church held in Abuja, Adesina stated, and bluntly so, that the food importation policy may destroy the agric sector. With the theme, 'Food Security and Financial Sustainability in Africa, the Role of the Church,' he described the move as "depressing."

Furthermore, he explained that the food duty suspension threatens private investment, even as the policy could undermine the hard work and private investment that has so far gone into the agriculture sector.

It would be recalled that on July 10, 2024 the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Abubakar Kyari stated that the federal government has suspended duties, tariff and taxes on the importation of maize, husk brown rice, wheat, cowpeas through both the land and sea borders for 150 days, or five months. In addition, the federal government will import 250,000 metric tonnes (MT) of wheat and 250,000 MT of maize in semi- processed state. These will be given to small scale processors and millers across the country. It is in the light of the announcement that we juxtapose it with Adesina's response.

Approaching the disturbing issue through a broad-based discourse, it would be appreciated

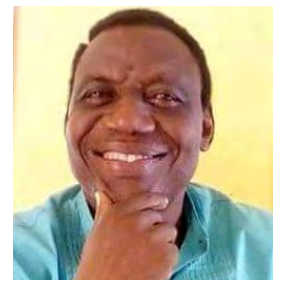
that while the short - term measures adapted by the current administration might be sincere on the face of it, sustainable pragmatic measures have become compelling necessities. Having held leadership positions, as the then Vice President of Policy Partnerships of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), back in 2008 when FoodBusiness International magazine, that yours truly, headed had an engagement with him, it was patently evident that he certainly knows his onion.

Subsequently, he became the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development under the then President Goodluck Jonathan -led government. In both instances, his policies were farmer-focused. In fact, he canvassed for subsidy for African farmers. As he rightly noted: "When I say that we need smart subsidies, I mean that the private sector has to distribute the inputs, the government should support the farmers together. The government has to make sure that the farmers are provided proper extension services, to be very effective."

He decried the situation of seeing graduates of agriculture roaming the streets looking for paid jobs, describing it as a "bizarre thing." That statement was made 16 years ago but it rings true today as ever ago.

Going forward therefore, the government should muster the political will to combat the challenge of the herders- farmers crisis instead of the creation of the Ministry of Livestock for political reasons. A civil servant who left for farming in Ekiti state is lamenting the frequent threats from the fully armed, farm-crushing cattle herders. It is a worst-case scenario in Ondo State as well as Plateau and Benue states that have been reduced from the 'Food Basket of the Nation' to the blood-letting fields, all to actualise the obnoxious land-grabbing agenda of the sponsors of the herders.

In addition, to curb the food insecurity incubus, focus should be on the small-scale farmers who have to be taught on modern agricultural practices such as the use of disease-resistant, early maturing hybrid seedlings with bumper



AYO OYOZE BAJE

Baje is Nigerian first food technologist in the media and author of 'Drumbeats of Democracy'

harvest. They also need the knowledge on food processing and preservation. These should be on organic farming techniques as being consistently canvassed by the wave-making Xtralarge Farms and Resorts Ltd.

Above all, with the hunger in the land the chickens have finally come home to roost. Restructuring is the best way to go. The Federal Government should hands off agriculture to the states and local councils. With the past interventions by the federal government through the Green Revolution, Operation Feed the Nation, Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure, DFRRI and the transformation of agriculture from the rustic to mechanised farming, under the then President Goodluck Jonathan not able to stem the swelling tide of the hunger in the country that is the best way to go.

Like it or not, the Tinubu-led administration should listen to the voices of reason, when faced with socio- economic and political challenges instead of feeling hurt by pieces of honest advice.

With over 16 multinational companies having exited the country and the exponential rise in the cost of living, the provision of an enabling environment for increased local productivity and businesses to thrive has become an imperative. In a democracy good governance will be achieved when majority of us, including the leaders are propelled by policies, programs and projects driven in the national interest.



IKEDDY ISIGUZO

Isiguzo is a major commentator on minor issues

PRESIDENT Bola Ahmed Tinubu has shot himself so badly with his bold mis-steps on the planned protests. He cannot asked people not to protest. He should stop threatening them as he has been doing in the past few days. His approach is poor politics completely incompatible with the world-acclaimed political sagacity of the President.

Nigerians have been reminding the President that he led the protests against President Goodluck Jonathan 12 years ago. The essence of the protests that shut down Lagos and some parts of Nigeria was to get Jonathan out of office, get Muhammadu Buhari into office, all as the prelude to Tinubu's already blighted presidency.

Professor Wole Soyinka was in that protest. Let us assume that at 90 he is too tired to join the peaceful protests, he can issue a statement condemning Tinubu's flagging performance. If that is too heavy, too soon after Tinubu eulogised him on his birthday, Prof can still do something.

Why not apologise to Nigerians for mis-leading them into following Tinubu's scripts? Would that be too much too?

Your great scholarship, earlier sacrifices for Nigeria and Nigerians are daily diminished by your new twists and turns against the masses.

Where is Pa Enoch Adeboye, great leader of men and women whose messages provide direction to his millions of followers? He followed Tinubu, protested, preached about the hard times. Will he be at Lagos' Freedom Park for a worthy remembrance party of how the exit of Jonathan

Will Prof Soyinka, Adeboye, Bakare, protest or apologise?

has given us a better country? Is he unaware of the tough times? Does he expect that, "It is well" will be enough to manage the situation? We know you are human. We agree you can make mistakes. An apology from you can assuage angry Nigerians. If you let the President know that if a protest was a good idea in 2012, it is a better idea in 2024, you would have played your part.

The 12th anniversary of that protest should be celebrated peacefully. The event of 2012 was peaceful because government did not unleash unmitigated fury on the people. Why would a protest be banned?

Is Tunde Bakare against a peaceful protest? Can he tell us why? Can he say he has forgotten his roles at Freedom Square? Should he not tell us where he stands? We do not want to mis-interpret his silence as support for Tinubu? How does he account for his involvement in the enthronement of Buhari and Tinubu?

The trio should speak up. The time is ticking. Not only has the President refused to acknowledge that there are major challenges before Nigerians, he believes he can continue postponing deploying solutions until the people forget their hardships. Each time he speaks, like Buhari, he gets people angrier through a consist inclination to under-rate the problems.

Tinubu's media managers are worse than him by far. They shout down views that draw their attention to the fact that they mobilised Nigerians against Jonathan in 2014.

Evidences are in abundance. Since Tinubu is special and the law bows to his wishes, they think Nigerians have had a memory wipe.

More threats have been issued to Nigerians in the past few days than in the entire presidency of Tinubu. The strategy is simple but out-dated-threaten those who intend to protest.

Why is the President short of political sagacity, and economic measures, from his impressive management of the resources of the oil company he uses it name to tell us what a great wealth creator he has been most of his life?

The man who built Lagos through eight years and has had a hold on its chaotic economy does not know what to do with higher responsibilities of his office. Is he at the end of his strategies? Did he even have any?

His panic over a peaceful protest that has been announced long ago is embarrassing. He had enough time to start addressing issues the protesters raised. He would not.

Tinubu blames everybody as if his presidency is a joint responsibility of all Nigerians. He may not be clueless but he has no clues about what to do. Most times he appears unwilling to do anything.

A sudden discovery that filling the public space with noises that his second term is guaranteed would not be the bridge to cross to 2027, increases his panic. He has no answers to his own worries. How would he have time to worry about others?

The resort to fractitionalising the country over his failures are new challenges from mis-managing the opportunities genuine dialogues provide. Tinubu, his past failed promises aside, does not feel our pains. He is actually incapable of feeling our pains having promoted his comforts well above our issues.

Hunger, anger, insecurity, have spread across the country though the impacts are heavier on some parts. Anybody willing to allow an ethnicisation of the situation is free to do so. Tinubu has no answers to the problems. Are people in Lagos excluded from these issues?

Almost all arms of the security agencies are threatening Nigerians. The right to protest is in abeyance. The President has not spoken against these threats by his security officials.

The security agencies have the tacit approval of the President to stop the protests any which way the deem necessary.

Others are discouraging the protesters with emphases on the futility of the protest. We are inundated with consequences of protests.

Even if the protesters want to be peaceful, the government does not want a protest.

Governors gathered to celebrate their latest

largesse in refunds from the Federal Government are against protests. Their Chairman, Hope Uzodinma renewed the state of homelessness with this explanation.

"This is so that we can manage the challenge of insecurity, the challenge of national minimum wage, the challenge of food security and then the struggle to come out of the current economic recession.

"We are using this opportunity to also advise our young boys and girls to desist from being instigated into causing crisis or chaos in the country.

"Already, Nigerians have suffered a lot; the global economic recession, the insecurity in Nigeria, the political tension occasioned by instigations and campaign of calumny by opposition parties, the social media attacks on various policies of government.

"We want to advise for the interest of the country and as a show of patriotism, our citizens must take ownership of this country because we have no other country we can call our own outside Nigeria," Governor Uzodinma rambled.

President Tinubu should provide security for Nigerians to protest peacefully unless he can tell us why he led protests in 2014 for reduction of the price of fuel, the only issue in contest then.

Finally...

ALHAJI Aliko Dangote cannot be the dim businessman we are being made to believe he is because of problems of crude oil supplies to his refinery. How can someone invest over \$20 billion to set up a plant without certainties on raw materials? Does it make sense? The explanations are more befuddling. Dangote should manage his refinery or sell it. I also hope Nigeria does not borrow money to buy Dangote's problem.

I HEARD that Abia State will not protest. The people are over-fed on good governance and are satisfied, the Governor's media aide, Kazie Uko, said.

.Isiguzo is a major commentator on minor issues