

Summer coaching: The pendulum dangles between knowledge optimisation, financial gains

Critics say, 'children are being over-schooled'

CHARLES OGWO

The long vacation as it is usually referred to presents the students and teachers the best opportunity to be off school work for about eight weeks in Ni-

geria.

Summer holiday comes with the challenge of ensuring that children do not lose grasp of what they had learnt in school and/or deviate into unwhole-

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NUC accredits 31 LAUTECH academic programmes as VC lauds Makinde



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One year after, Tinubu's reforms face sternest test



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Why Ndigbo refused to join #EndBad Governance protest



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Senate's probe into alleged economic sabotage in petroleum sector: Hope or mere hype?



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Why we are not keen on students' loan scheme – Undergraduates



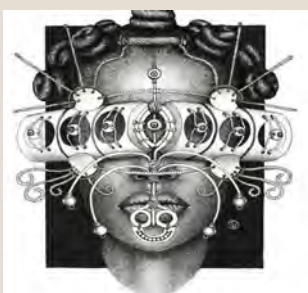
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Nigeria counts the cost of #EndBadGovernance protests

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- As NLC calls for caution, puts death toll at 40
- N700bn lost in two days - Analysts
- Protesters remain adamant
- Tinubu's address may calm nerves

OBINNA EMELIKE, TONY AILEMEN, INIOBONG IWOK, TAOFE EK OYEDOKUN, AND JOHN SALAU

The #EndBadGovernance protests, which erupted across Nigeria on August 1, have inflicted a heavy toll on the nation, with lives lost, property destroyed, and economic activities disrupted.

As the demonstrations enter the fourth day today, the full extent of the damage is yet to be ascertained, but early estimates suggest significant losses.

While the anti-government demonstrations were largely peaceful in the south, it was characterised by violence, looting, and clashes with security personnel in Kano, Katsina, Yobe, Abuja and other parts of the northern region, prompting the declaration of cur-

Continues on page 38

Nigerian students react to new loan scheme amid ASUU's criticism

■ N2.5bn disbursed to 22,120 beneficiaries

DAVID IJASEUN

THE Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) recently reported that the student loan scheme has benefited an additional 2,120 students, raising the total number of beneficiaries to 22,120. Nasir Ayitogo, NEL-

FUND's spokesman, disclosed this in Abuja, stating that loans disbursed across various institutions totalled N2.5 billion.

"NELFUND has approved student loans amounting to over N2.53 billion benefiting 22,120 students," Ayitogo said. He also noted that the fund

aims to alleviate financial burdens on students, enabling them to continue their education.

"So far, six out of twelve institutions have received full payment of their fees, covering over 20,000 students," Ayitogo added.

"The total disbursed to these institutions stands at approximately

Continues on page 40

N70,000 minimum wage can't match soaring food prices in Nigeria

■ As yam, beans, eggs go out of reach of many

AMAKA ANAGOR-EWUZIE

THE new minimum wage recently approved by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and passed by the National Assembly, the bill of which has also been signed into law by the President, may fail to meet the needs of the Nigerian worker as food prices have continued to soar in Nigeria.

Many families are currently struggling to put a decent

meal on the table.

Today, prices of yam, beans, eggs, garri, rice and other food items have been soaring relentlessly pushing many below the poverty line.

A market survey by BDSunday shows that a sizeable tuber of yam goes for between N5,000 and N10,000; a derica and paint bucket of beans go for N2,000 and N12,000; one egg and a crate of eggs go for

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News

Three Nigerians unveiled in TikTok's visionary voices Africa 2024

JOHN SALAU

Burna Boy, Iremide, and Hilda Bassey have been unveiled in the inaugural TikTok's Visionary voices Africa 2024 list, highlighting the individuals at the forefront of industry-shifting innovation, viral trends elevating African music, transforming entertainment spaces, and cultural representation.

The 15 listed visionary voices across Africa were celebrated in three categories covering creators, small-owned businesses, and industry disruptors to highlight the significant impact the honourees have on media, entertainment, and cultural representation across the continent.

"The Visionary Voices List Africa celebrates the extraordinary talent and innovative spirit of the African community. These 15 individuals have made a profound impact on and off the

platform. Their dedication to cultural representation and innovation is truly inspiring," Boniswa Sidaba, head,

content operations, Sub-Saharan Africa, TikTok said in a statement. She disclosed that the

list showcases the accomplishments of the individuals and emphasised TikTok's role in driving

creativity and innovation across the continent. "As these honourees continue to excel in their fields, their influence is set to inspire the next generation of creators, entrepreneurs, and trailblazers, pushing the boundaries of media and cultural development across Africa".

Iremide @iremide, a digital creator focusing on lifestyle, education, and community content was unveiled in the creators' category. Winner of the TikTok Top Creator Awards 2023 in the Lifestyle and Education Category, she wields significant influence and embraces the diversity of African culture in her content.

Damini Ebuloluwa Ogunlu (Burna Boy @burnaboy-official) and Hilda Effiong Bassey (@hildabaci) were both unveiled as industry disruptors by TikTok. According to TikTok, Burna Boy's music resonates deeply with themes of social

consciousness and African pride, contributing to his global acclaim, while his song 'City Boy' has been used in dance challenges across TikTok.

According to the platform, Hilda Baci who holds the Guinness World Record for marathon cooking by an individual in 2023's passion for cooking, connecting with communities and cinematography shines through her TikTok and social media videos.

According to TikTok, the Creators category acknowledges those who have captivated audiences with their engaging and dynamic content. The Small-Owned Businesses category honours entrepreneurs who use the platform to showcase their unique products and services; while the Industry Disruptors category recognises individuals who are challenging conventional industries with innovative perspectives.



L-R: Executive Director, Technical NIRSAL Plc, Olatunde Akande, Director General Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) Commission, Seye Oyeleye, Managing Director, Swagco (subsidiary of The Odua Group), Theo Onadeko at the MoU signing between NIRSAL Plc and DAWN Commission on Friday at NIRSAL office to advance Agriculture and enhance food security in the South West region.

Senator Alli reaffirms NASS commitment to strengthening Nigeria's electoral framework

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan

Senator Sharafadeen Alli (APC-Oyo South) has reaffirmed the National Assembly's collaborative efforts towards enhancing Nigeria's electoral framework and strengthening democratic principles and institutions.

Alli, who is the chairman, National Assembly Joint-Committee on Electoral Matters, made the disclosure in his opening remarks at the National Assembly Joint Committee meeting with the leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The meeting followed the successful South-South Zonal Legislative Interactive Session (ZLIS) in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State.

While emphasising that collaborative efforts required to enhance Nigeria's electoral framework and strengthen democratic principles, he reaffirmed the National Assembly's commitment to supporting people-friendly and development-focused government policies.

The meeting, followed the successful South-South Zonal Legislative Interactive Session (ZLIS) in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State.

In a statement signed by his Special Adviser on Media, Akeem Abas and made availa-

ble to newsmen in Ibadan, he said that there was a need to build on the foundations laid by the Renewed Hope Agenda, ensuring that the legislative body supports initiatives that promote national development.

Alli commended the collaborative efforts of Senators and Members of the House of Representatives, lauding their dedication to effective work plan implementation.

The lawmaker said that the committee's interactive sessions held across the geo-political zones were aimed at gathering valuable inputs from Nigerians.

Alli said that the inputs

gathered would form the recommendations of the technical working committee in the ongoing reform of the Electoral Act, 2022.

He assured attendees that the National Assembly, in partnership with non-governmental organisations and civil societies, has adopted an inclusive and consultative approach to ensure broad-based support and engagement.

According to him, this method is designed to create a more robust, fair, and inclusive electoral system.

The lawmaker said that INEC had been requested to present critical issues affecting the nation's electoral process.



Alli

Ellah Lakes' major investor distributes shares to creditors, shareholders

EMMANUEL NDUKUBA

CBO Capital Partners (CBO) Limited, a major shareholder of Ellah Lakes Plc, has decided to transfer a portion of its equity stake to its shareholders and creditors in a move that will further dilute the ownership structure of Ellah Lakes.

Modupe Ejikeme, head of Administration of the company, made this known in a statement made available to our Correspondent in Awka, Anambra State.

Chuka Mordi, chief executive officer of Ellah Lakes, said that CBO Capital Partners, a major shareholder of Ellah Lakes, is transferring a portion of its' Ellah Lakes shares to its shareholders and creditors in a cross deal.

He said that the trade move was aimed at offsetting CBO's outstanding obligations to CBO Shareholders, while simultaneously fulfilling Nigerian Exchange Limited's (NGX) requirements on the free float of Ellah Lakes shares.

"By undertaking this strategic move, CBO is demonstrating its commitment to financial responsibility and compliance with regulato-



Chuka Mordi, chief executive officer of Ellah Lakes

ry standards set forth by the NGX. "The decision to transfer a portion of Ellah Lakes shares to its creditors not only help CBO manage its obligations effectively, but also enhances the liquidity and free float of Ellah Lakes shares in the market," he explained.

Mordi added that this cross deal signified a proactive approach by CBO to strengthen its financial position and support the stability and growth of Ellah Lakes Plc, saying that "we believe that this trade move will have a positive impact on all stakeholders involved and contribute to the overall success of Ellah Lakes Plc."

Ellah Lakes had signed many agreements in recent pe-

riod for major projects that are expected to form the backbone of the company's business diversification drive.

It had reached an agreement to build a 600-tons sugar refinery in collaboration with Montserrat Investment Limited. The sugar processing facility is expected to run on 100 percent renewable power.

Ellah Lakes had earlier reached agreement with Ondo State on the development of a palm oil and cassava farm, covering about 5,000 hectares. Both partners would jointly develop and manage the farm for the cultivation of oil palm and cassava in Ondo state.

Ellah Lakes had in August 2020 entered into exclusive discussions to acquire the entire issued capital of an oil palm processing company with substantial assets in Delta State.

Ellah Lakes was incorporated on July 2, 1980 and was listed on the Nigerian Exchange (NGX) on January 14, 1993. Originally a fish-farming company, Ellah Lakes had recently embarked on a comprehensive restructuring and diversification of its businesses.

In 2019, it acquired Telluria in order to diversify its product offerings in the agribusiness sector.

HAPPY

Birthday



Abdul Samad Rabi, CFR, CON

I am grateful to the Almighty Allah for your 64 years of impact. I celebrate you on this special moment and pray the Almighty grant you continued strength, good health and wisdom to continue to build legacies that have significant positive impact on our people and our country! Happy birthday, Sir!

KABIRU RABIU

News

Lagos accountants move to tap artificial intelligence for enhanced service delivery

CHUKA UROKO

Accountants on the employment of the Lagos State government are taking proactive steps to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) into their operations, describing AI as a cutting-edge tool needed to ensure quality service delivery.

This strategic move, according to Mudashiru Obasa, the Speaker of the state's House of Assembly, would help enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and overall quality of financial services provided to the residents of Lagos.

Obasa spoke at the 15th annual public lecture organized by the Lagos State public service chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN).

The Speaker, represented at the event by Femi Saheed, chairman, House Committee on Finance, promised that the House would continue to make laws that would support transparency and innovation to move the state to the right



Mudashiru Obasa

financial pathway.

The chairman of ICAN's Lagos public service chapter, Musiat Akinola, said that the theme of the event, 'The Emergence of Artificial Intelligence and the Economic Impact on Private Enterprise,' aligns with global digital evolution trends, enhancing the

state's potential in achieving the 'Greater Lagos Rising' vision.

Akinola encouraged the attendees to leverage the lecture's insights to further their professional endeavours and contribute to the state's ongoing progress.

Also, the 15th chairman of the chapter, Akinsola

Titilayo, acknowledged, in her acceptance speech, the support of Governor Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu for the success of all the activities of the chapter and other distinguished personalities for greatly impacting the chapter's activities and programmes.

She solicited for more support in the area of sponsoring members of the association to the ICAN annual accountants Conferences, international accountants' conferences, and trainings that will give them more exposure and, in turn, translate to more effective performance in the discharge of their various official assignments.

The event reaffirmed the state's commitment to embracing technological advancements and fostering a culture of excellence in public service and governance.

The lead speaker and a distinguished panel of discussants delved into the theme, exploring how artificial intelligence could drive value creation, accountability, transparency and sustainability in the state government's enterprises.

Africa's Business Heroes announces top 50 finalists for 2024 prize competition

OBINNA EMELIKE

After receiving over 20,000 applications from 54 African countries, the Africa's Business Heroes (ABH) Prize Competition has revealed the Top 50 Finalists for its 2024 edition. The competition is a philanthropic programme supported by the Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Philanthropy to honor and elevate African entrepreneurs. This year's competition reflects an increasingly diverse applicant pool, cementing the competition's reputation as Africa's largest and most inclusive competition.

Since its inception in 2019, ABH has dedicated itself to identifying, supporting and spotlighting talented African entrepreneurs. Annually, this sector-agnostic competition awards a total grant of \$1.5 million to 10 deserving entrepreneurs. Beyond financial support, ABH provides its finalists and the broader entrepreneurial community with significant exposure, training, mentorship and networking opportunities.

"Over the past five years, the ABH Prize Competition has seen growth and increased participation from critical demographics, reflecting our commitment to inclusivity. This year, we are thrilled to recognize the exceptional talent and potential of the top 50 finalists, who embody the diverse entrepreneurial spirit of our continent. As these entrepreneurs lead the way toward a brighter future for Africa and beyond, we are proud to highlight their innovative achievements. At the same time, we



Ikpeke-Neto-overall-winner

look forward to the continued impact of ABH in empowering African entrepreneurs and driving positive change across the continent," said Zahra Baitie-Boateng, managing director, Africa, Africa's Business Heroes Initiative.

Meanwhile, the 2024 call for applications received submissions from all corners of Africa, demonstrating the continent's vibrant entrepreneurial spirit. Notably, female applicants reached 39 percent, surpassing the five-year average of 30 percent and North African representation increased from the five-year average of 5 percent to 9 percent.

Building on this momentum, the 2024 ABH top 50 represents a diverse spectrum, encompassing 14 sectors across 18 countries, with 40 percent female and 20 percent francophone representation. Agriculture remains the most prominent sector, alongside strong showings in education and healthcare, continuing trends from previous years. The diversity among finalists mirrors the broad range of applicants, underscoring ABH's commitment to inclusivity.

Bocepharm appoints Aproko Doctor as brand ambassador

Bocepharm Pharmaceuticals, a leading pharmaceutical company, has unveiled, Chinonso Egemba, a medical doctor and healthcare content creator, popularly known as Aproko Doctor, as its latest brand ambassador.

Obinna Ezenwe, a pharmacist, and managing director, Bocepharm Pharmaceuticals, made the announcement at a press briefing, which held recently at the company's office in Yaba, Lagos.

Bocepharm Pharmaceuticals, an indigenous pharmaceuticals company and promoter of the immunboost range of supplements for men and women, boasts over two decades of experience in preventive healthcare with quality assurance, meeting national and international regulatory standards.

Speaking on the choice of the social media sensation as its brand ambassador, Ezenwe said: "Aproko Doctor's background as a medical doctor and his commitment towards improving healthcare in Nigeria through art and various digital platforms made it very easy for us to make our decision to work with him.

"His personality and professional reputation in the healthcare space, we believe, aligns with that of Bocepharm

objectives, which is to promote and educate the public on healthy living."

Accepting the role, Dr. Egemba, noted that the collaboration further emphasizes his passion for improvement within the Nigerian healthcare system with a focus on promoting preventive healthcare practices.

He added that the standard and quality put into the Bocepharm product range assure optimum healthcare and

support the vision of universal health coverage.

"Before this partnership, I have been using immune boost products. There is a quality of care ensured in the production of this product. There is a high level of quality, which is usually not the case with other supplements, especially those which have been certified by public bodies.

"One of the pillars of universal healthcare is health information. I have always been

focused on education and that will not change. Part of the education is also going to the healthcare professionals. The immune boost product is not designed as a drug but people can get them into their lifestyle practices." Egemba further explained that part of his conversations with the Bocepharm managing director revolves around sustaining excellence in the product delivery for the Immunboost range for the long haul.



L-R: Obinna Ezenwe, pharmacist and MD, Bocepharm Nigeria Limited and DR. Chinonso Fidelis Egemba, popularly known as Aproko Doctor, at the event where Egemba was announced as the brand ambassador.

Edo plans establishment of 400-hectare Esan Enterprise Parks

IDRIS MOMOH, Benin

As part of his "finishing well programme" as the Governor of Edo State, Godwin Obaseki has approved a 400-hectare industrial layout for the establishment of the Esan Enterprise Park.

The park was aimed at bolstering the State's industrial capacity.

Kelvin Uwaibi, managing director of the Edo State Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO), disclosed this while speaking with newsmen in Benin City. Uwaibi said the new park was part of an ongoing initiative to develop industrial parks and business clusters across the state.

The ESIPO boss, who said that there are currently two active industrial parks in the state, added that plans are also underway to further expand the park to meet investor interest in Edo Central and Edo North senatorial districts.

He further added that ef-

orts are underway to establish a mechanic village in Auchi, noting that the investments was a demonstration of the proactive approach of local government officials to attract investments.

According to him, the state's commitment to fostering business growth is evident in its thorough approach to signing Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs).

"A notable success story is the MoU signed two years ago with a development partner, which has since led to a €3 million investment in the state's agricultural sector," he said.

He explained that the Esan Enterprise Parks project would be driven primarily by private sector initiatives.

He, however, disclosed that the state government is currently inviting investment proposals and seeking profiles of industrious individuals from Edo State's private sector to serve on the advisory board.

Uwaibi, stated that interested parties are encouraged to submit their profiles to invest@edostate.gov.ng.



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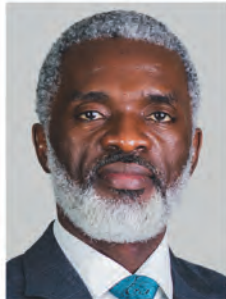
THURSDAY OCTOBER 17, 2024



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



DORIS UZOKA-ANITE
Federal Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment of Nigeria



SAM ABU
Country Senior Partner, PwC Nigeria & Regional Senior Partner, West Market

SPEAKERS



MUNZALI DANTATA, PhD
Founder, Dantata Foundation & Zuma Institute for Globalization & Entrepreneurship Studies



FOLUKE OYELEYE
Non Executive Director, NGX Limited



AUSTIN AVURU
Co-Founder, Pioneer CEO, Platform Petroleum Limited / Seplat Petroleum Development Company Plc



ESIRI AGBEYI
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News

NUC accredits 31 LAUTECH academic programmes as VC lauds Makinde

...Oyo opens portal for scholarship

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan

The Ladoké Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH), Ogbomosho, has recorded a 100 per cent success in the accreditation of its courses by the National Universities Commission (NUC), as the commission accredited 31 academic programmes presented by the university.

R.O. Rom Kalilu, professor and vice chancellor of the university, gave the indication in a letter addressed to the Governor of Oyo State, Seyi Makinde, who is the Visitor and Proprietor of the institution through the institution's Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council, Deji Omole, a professor.

He commended the governor for his magnanimity and strong support towards the institution, which he noted, ensured the success of the accreditation.

According to the VC, in a letter dated 26th July, 2024, the accredited programmes were presented to the NUC between October and December 2023, with the result released this month.

He added that 13 of the university's new academ-



R.O. Rom Kalilu

ic programmes that were granted initial approval in 2022 are also due for NUC accreditation between October and December 2024.

The letter read in part: "The university made one hundred per cent success without any denial to continue to run any of those academic programmes assessed

and accredited.

"Quality-wise, twenty-nine (29) or 93.5 per cent of the programmes have full accreditation while two (2) or 6.5 percent have interim accreditation.

"The university is very proud and grateful to you for your magnanimity through diverse support that enabled

the outstanding success of the university."

Meanwhile, in response to the current prevailing economic challenges in Nigeria, the Oyo State Governor Seyi Makinde, through the Oyo state Scholarship Board, has initiated measures to alleviate the financial burden on Oyo state indigene students in public tertiary Institutions.

One of such measures is the Oyo State Indigene Students Bursary Award, which is aimed at providing financial support for the final year students pursuing higher education in Public Nigerian universities, polytechnics and Clinical Schools.

The scholarship board has also released the application portal for eligible students to apply.

Maroof Atilola, chairman, Oyo State Scholarship Board, who made this known in Ibadan explained that all final year students of Oyo State indigene in public universities, polytechnics, Clinical Students, Aviation and Maritime Students are eligible to apply for the Bursary.

Atilola, however, called on interested and eligible students to submit applications from 1st August to 31st August, 2024.

GHAPP to advance Nigeria's agricultural technologies – Origin Tech

JOHN SALAU

The chairman of Origin Tech group, Samuel Joseph Samuel, has disclosed that the recently approved Greener Hope National Agricultural Mechanisation Programme (GHAPP) initiative of the Federal Government (FG) will advance agricultural technologies, promote agro industrialisation, and encourage youth participation in agribusiness.

According to him, the programme targets the cultivation of 500,000 hectares of arable land. "The programme will establish modern agricultural mechanisation service centres and hubs across 37 farming clusters. These centres will be equipped with state-of-the-art machinery provided by Origin Tech Group's subsidiary, Origin Automobile Works."

He disclosed that the programme will leverage technical partnerships from South Korea, Taiwan, and Brazil to produce and supply agricultural machinery and establish enterprise centers nationwide.

According to Samuel, a key component of the GHAPP is the training and support of youth on modern agricultural techniques and equipment. "Additionally, a digital gateway for tractor hauling and recruit-

ment will be developed in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Communications."

Samuel further disclosed that the programme emphasises modern infrastructure, including high-powered tractors, dozers, sprayers, drones, and large-scale silos. According to him, GHAPP will also establish equipment and data centers, and spare parts shops to ensure efficient management and maintenance.

"To ensure sustainable growth and development the programme aims to be replicable and sustainable, extending support to smaller farms and involving international partners like Campo Brazil for expertise and assistance," Samuel stated.

Recall that the Greener Hope National Agricultural Mechanisation Programme was approved by the Federal Executive Council on June 25, 2024, to enhance food security and economic development across the country.

The initiative that will be spearheaded by Origin Tech Group in collaboration with the ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, aims to boost productivity and create sustainable growth in the agricultural sector.

Zulum lifts curfew as business owners lament low patronage

LADI JOSSY, Maiduguri

Abagana Zulum, Borno State governor, has lifted the curfew imposed following the protests that hit the city where about four people reportedly died and several others wounded.

The government last Friday temporarily relaxed the curfew to allow Muslims observe the (Jumaat) prayers.

Zulum made an announcement in a statewide broadcast Friday evening while citing that the protest in the state was hijacked by hoodlums who made several attempts to destroy public infrastructure, but for the timely intervention of the military and other security agencies.

"It is unfortunate that some hoodlums hijacked

the protest thereby causing havoc to lives and property which is unacceptable.

He sympathised with the families of the Kawuri bomb attack, saying that it was necessary to impose the curfew to avoid Boko Haram elements taking advantage to create havoc in the state.

"As the curfew is now lifted, government will not hesitate to deal ruthlessly with anyone who breaks down law and order in the name of protest," he said.

He urged the residents to go about their normal activities, saying that the security of the state would not be compromised for any reason.

Business activities are proceeding smoothly in some streets visited but nevertheless, several traders have regretted a decline in sales as a result of

the protest.

It was observed that business activity has not fully commenced in popular Monday Markets, while some stalls and establishments are still closed.

"Activities are slowly returning to normalcy after first day the curfew was lifted. Many people refused to open their shops, there is low patronage compared to what we used to experience at weekends," Umaru Bandu, a trader along Bulumkutu Road, said.

Mohammed Kaomi, a business owner, lamented the low patronage and financial losses incurred during the protest.

"Business activities have resumed, but the impact of the protest is still being felt. Hopefully, things will change from Monday," Mohammed said.

GAIN rallies stakeholders to boost access to safe, nutritious foods

GIFT WADA

The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is set to convene critical stakeholders from across the nutritious food supply chain in Sub-Saharan Africa in Nigeria in a bid to boost access to safe and nutritious foods.

The convening aims to empower Enterprise Support Organisations (ESOs) to integrate effective nutrition strategies into their support for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

GAIN, in a statement, noted that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in low- and middle-income countries MSMEs dominate agricultural value chains from farm to fork, and play a critical role in pricing (affordability), markets (accessibility), and quantity (availability) of foods on the market.

However, despite the crucial role that MSMEs play in

ensuring affordability, availability, and access to safe and nutritious foods, the organisation noted that they face several challenges that limit their ability to grow and increase the production of nutritious foods.

"To enhance their effectiveness, these MSMEs need support from business support organisations such as the ESOs. With a focus on "Catalysing Nutritional Innovation: Empowering ESOs to Transform Food Systems," the One-day event happening August 29 feature presentations, stakeholder engagements, and panel sessions", Mercy Olorunfemi, Project Manager - Nutrition Impact at Scale at GAIN.

"This gathering will serve as a catalyst for advancing nutrition-focused entrepreneurship in Nigeria. By fostering collaborations across sectors and engaging with relevant actors, we aim to create an enabling environment that supports the growth and impact of

MSMEs focused on nutritious foods. We are excited to bring together diverse stakeholders to drive innovation and transform food systems in Sub-Saharan Africa", Olorunfemi added.

Key objectives of the convening include equipping ESOs with advanced tools and skills for driving innovation in nutritious food product development and business practices, fostering partnerships across public, private, academic and finance sectors, and advocating for supportive regulatory frameworks that encourage investments in nutrition-focused enterprises.

The event will also highlight the benefits and potential returns of investing in nutrition-focused MSMEs, promoting innovative financing solutions. Participants can expect in-depth discussions, networking opportunities, and actionable insights aimed at transforming food systems to better meet nutritional needs in Nigeria.

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News

Operational efficiency, growth in focus as InfraNova offers IT solutions to SMEs

CHUKA UROKO

Operational efficiency, optimal resource allocation and sustainable growth are in focus as InfraNova sets eyes on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to provide information technology (IT) solutions to them.

InfraNova is a premier consulting firm that is redefining growth and success for businesses worldwide through its innovative technology solutions. It has strong presence across Africa, United Kingdom and United States and has become a trusted partner for diverse business and government clients. Its proprietary technology provides tailored solutions to meet each client's



unique needs. The firm delivers strategies that enable it to offer services that range from business consulting to identifying growth opportunities,

streamlining operations, and improving performance.

It also offers technology consulting with advanced solutions for digital transforma-

tion, IT optimization, software development, and AI integration. Others are government consulting to enhance public services and infrastructure

through policy development, project management, and technology-driven solutions.

InfraNova's extensive regional experience enables it to offer culturally adapted solutions. In Africa, the firm drives infrastructure development and economic growth, while in the UK and US, it helps enterprises to innovate in competitive markets. "As an organization, InfraNova is built on excellence, integrity, and a client-centric approach, consistently exceeding client expectations by staying ahead of industry trends and continuously evolving its technology," a statement from the firm at the weekend affirms.

According to the statement, the firm is also committed to sustainability and social responsibility, minimizing its environmental impact and supporting community devel-

opment through education, healthcare, and economic empowerment initiatives.

Looking ahead, InfraNova aims to expand its reach and develop advanced solutions to address modern business challenges, with a steadfast commitment to driving growth and fostering long-term partnerships. "Our mission is to deliver innovative and tailored solutions that not only meet, but also exceed our clients' expectations. We believe in the power of technology to transform businesses and communities for the better," the statement assures.

InfraNova is dedicated to continuous improvement and excellence. It is also committed to staying at the forefront of the consulting industry, driving sustainable growth for its clients and contributing positively to society.

WIMBIZ to partner Nigerian High Commission in UK on trade opportunities

NGOZI OKPALAKUNNE

Women in Management, Business and Public Service (WIMBIZ) has expressed its intent to partner the Nigerian High Commission in the United Kingdom in promoting female leadership and facilitating market access, trade opportunities between Nigeria and the UK.

The organisation made this known when its officials paid a courtesy visit to the Nigerian High Commission

in the United Kingdom.

In a statement signed and made available to the media by the Executive Director of WIMBIZ, Omowunmi Akinhohungbe, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Bisi Adeyemi who spoke during the visit, emphasised the organisation's commitment to highlighting Nigerian entrepreneurs and working closely with the High Commission through its various export support initiatives.

Adeyemi in the statement said, "Our robust network of female-led businesses across

various sectors is strategically positioned to capitalise on international trade opportunities between Nigeria and the UK to foster prosperity in both nations."

According to the statement, Adeyemi also advocated for increased representation of women on international corporate boards and added that her organisation has a substantial pool of qualified and board-ready women for firms looking to diversify their governance teams.

The Nigerian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, represented by its Min-

ister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Bello Jaye, voiced his support for women's inclusion.

He stated: "The Nigerian High Commission is committed to supporting Nigerians and promoting beneficial programmes. We are eager to facilitate investments and trade between Nigeria and the United Kingdom and are open to collaborating with your organization and its members."

Recall that WIMBIZ had just concluded the second edition of its annual London Conference with the theme, 'Next level—succeeding beyond boundaries.'



WIMBIZ officials during their courtesy visit to the Nigerian High Commission in the United Kingdom.

Dev-Afrique empowers OAU Lab with 4.8KW Solar Power donation

ABUBAKAR IBRAHIM

Dev-Afrique Development Advisors has donated 4.8KW solar power backup for the Molecular Bacteriology Laboratory, Department of Microbiology at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

The support, which covers the cost of the solar panels, mounting racks, circuit breakers, cables, and installation, aims to support academic research on molecular biology.

resources to become self-sufficient in handling emergency outbreaks.

Nkem Torimiro, the Head of the Department, and Professor Bridget Omafuvbe thanked Dev-Afrique for their commitment and contribution. They highlighted that this donation will enable the department to meet local and international demand and provide students with the much-needed resources to conduct research. Professor Shittu also mentioned that the support will ensure an uninterrupted power supply,



Shittu Adebayo, the founder of the Molecular Bacteriology Laboratory, noted that the laboratory was established in January 2023 and is one of the first in Nigeria.

He said its goal is to equip students at Obafemi Awolowo University and other tertiary institutions with state-of-the-art equipment for researching pathogen infections to prevent epidemiological outbreaks.

This initiative comes as Nigeria needs to focus on utilizing its human and capital

allowing for game-changing antibiotic resistance research in Nigeria. Ridwan Sorunke, the Principal Advisor at Dev-Afrique, noted that "this donation of solar panels to Obafemi Awolowo University is in line with Dev-Afrique's commitment to promoting and developing local talents in science, technology, and innovation. With this donation of solar panels for scientific research, we hope the University continues to drive scientific research and innovation."

Firm trains entrepreneurs, professionals on growth, development

NGOZI OKPALAKUNNE

More-Thenticity Ltd has recently hosted a two-day workshop in Lagos, themed, 'The Breakthrough Blueprint,' aimed at empowering entrepreneurs and career professionals in Nigeria.

The event, which drew entrepreneurs and career professionals from across the state, was held in partnership with Bukie Adebola-Ezeh, a UK-based sales and confidence coach, and Monica Walters, a US-based coaching and creative strategy expert.

Speaking at the training, Founder, MMore-Thenticity Ltd, Monica Nnoka, who is also known as "The MMore Coach" and a mindset and Transformational coach, explained that the event was necessary as it marked a significant milestone in the personal growth and development journey of entrepreneurs and career professionals in Nigeria. On the theme of the training, 'The Breakthrough Blueprint', Nnoka said:

"We want to empower as many entrepreneurs and careers professionals with actual breakthrough success. Rather than just motivation, we are giving them a practical blueprint. We focus on inner growth and development, helping individuals cultivate their inner influence and confidence.



L-R: Monica Nnoka, the MMore Coach; workshop Participant, Ifeoma Maranzu, and Bukie Adebola-Ezeh.

"By working from the inside out, our goal is to equip them with the tools and strategies needed to elevate their impact and give them the tangible results that they expect in their businesses, life, work, and then, extend that influence to the world around them as well.

"Statistics show that most Nigerian businesses don't last up to five years. Again, most career professionals are unhappy in their jobs. A common underlying factor is a lack of inner influence, which is crucial for success and fulfillment.

"There are unresolved traumas that can hold people back

from unlocking their potential. Those unaddressed childhood traumas such as bullying, emotional neglect, parents divorce or even sexual violence or abuse can hinder success and fulfillment causing procrastination, self-blame, or guilt.

"We are not saying that we are accusing the parents of negligence because every parent is doing the best that they can at the level that they are, and with the resources that they have available to them."

According to her, "The big question is can we help those that have lost sight of their dreams or forgotten who they are, and are just struggling to

cope in the current economy? The Breakthrough Blueprint workshops aptly answered this because whether you like it or not, there are people that the present economic situation is working for, because they see the opportunities in the challenges. They have been able to position themselves to thrive and make the most out of their situation.

"I work as 'The MMore Coach' here in Nigeria because I know that there are lots of opportunities that Nigerians are missing out here and my job is to help them rediscover themselves and reposition for success."

How parents can nurture children's entrepreneurial skills - Babajide

AMAKA ANAGOR-EWUZIE

Parents have been urged to encourage curiosity and innovation in their children as essential behaviours that can hone their future entrepreneurial skills.

Familusi Babajide, a serial entrepreneur and founder of Africa at Under 40 CEOs, disclosed this at a Family Hack Moments webinar organised by Greensprings School with the title 'Equipping Children with Entrepreneurial Skills for Modern Success.'

According to Babajide, encouraging curiosity and innovation in children from an early age is important because it has a significant impact on a child's personal development and future career achievements.

He said equipping children with entrepreneurial skills prepares them for potential business ventures and also foster critical thinking, creativity, resilience, and problem-solving abilities essential for career growth.

He further said that part of the practical ways parents can nurture the entrepreneurial abilities in their children is by encouraging financial literacy through saving and budgeting, promoting independence and responsibility through age-appropriate chores, and supporting extracurricular activities that build teamwork and leadership. Babajide urged parents and educators to foster an environment that encourag-



Babajide

es exploration and risk-taking within safe boundaries as these create a supportive framework for children to develop and refine their entrepreneurial capabilities.

He urged all stakeholders and community members to commit to integrating entrepreneurship into education and daily life as the impact of these skills goes beyond childhood but sets them up for academic success and prepares them towards fulfilling career or business ventures in the future.

The Family Hack Moments webinar series is a Greensprings School initiative that empowers parents with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in the modern world.

Babajide said entrepreneurial skills are the building blocks of success in a rapidly changing world. "Equipping children with entrepreneurial skills is not just about preparing them for the modern world; it is about empowering them to shape it.

Babsomo unveils Kara Magazine to promote Africa's diversity to global audience

AMAKA ANAGOR-EWUZIE

Babsomo Communications, a media company, has launched a new magazine dedicated to creating engaging and educational content that highlights the beauty and diversity of African culture.

Kara Magazine launched in Manitoba, Canada will educate and inspire the world about the rich beauty and diversity of the African continent through the eyes of young Africans, both in the diaspora and in Africa.

Speaking at the launch of the magazine, Abiodun Adetu, founder and editor of the magazine, said Kara Magazine was born out of a deep passion to share the stories and experiences of young Africans with the world.

"We want to celebrate the beauty and diversity of our cultures and provide a platform for young voices to be heard," Adetu said.

She said the magazine aims to bridge the gap between Africa and the rest of the world, offering a fresh and authentic perspective on the continent's rich heritage and contempo-

rary issues.

According to Adetu, the magazine is more than just a publication; it's a movement to showcase the vibrant culture, history, and contemporary trends of Africa. She said the magazine will serve as a valuable resource for anyone interested in learning more about Africa and its people.

Adetu further said the magazine will feature sections such

as Movie O'clock, highlighting the latest in African cinema; History, exploring the continent's rich past; Tourism, presenting breathtaking destinations; Cooking, offering delicious African recipes.

Other content includes puzzles, engaging readers with fun activities; Fashion, showcasing the latest trends; special young celebrity interviews, providing insights into the lives

of inspiring young Africans; book reviews, featuring the best in African literature; and much more. Adetu said the magazine is now available for readers worldwide, bringing the unique flavours, stories, and perspectives of Africa to a global audience.

She called on all stakeholders to celebrate the launch and discover the beauty that lies within the African continent.



Abiodun Adetu, (2nd r) founder and editor of Kara Magazine, and other stakeholders at the recent launch of Kara Magazine.

Oyo govt intensifies measures to tackle flooding, erosion

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan

The Oyo State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to intensify measures to tackling flood and erosion, in a bid to safeguard the lives, and property of its citizens.

Abdulmojeed Olawale Mogbonjubola, the State Commissioner for Environment and Natural Resources, disclosed this during an Advocacy and Sensitisation programme for the 11 Local Government Councils in Ibadan zone.

The event, organised by the Nigeria Erosion and Watersheds Management Project (OYONEWMAP), was held at Mapo hall, in Ibadan South East Local Government Area.

According to the Commissioner, the advocacy and sensitisation programme on early warning and action on flood and erosion hazards was a follow-up to similar programmes held in Saki, Ogbomoso, Eruwa, Oyo, and Iseyin.

The commissioner added that the programme was necessary to reawaken Local Government Councils, community leaders, youth leaders, and market men and women to their collective roles and build their capacities in achieving a sustainable environment that

would foster development and healthy living for the people of Oyo State.

He stated that, in line with the Seyi Makinde administration's focus on people's welfare, streams, rivers, and waterways were desilted across the State to mitigate the impact of flood and erosion hazards on communities.

Mogbonjubola noted that the zero record of flood incidents in the last few years in the State was attributed to the preparedness, proactiveness, and prompt response to environmental issues and hazards pursued vigorously by the Seyi Makinde administration.

"The State will continue the clearing of drains, desilting of rivers, streams, and waterways within the nooks and crannies of the State to avert any possible flooding. We are here today to disseminate information and create awareness among our people about the dangers of flood and erosion and the importance of maintaining a safe environment," he said.

The Environment and Natural Resources Commissioner appealed to residents of the State to maintain environmentally friendly practices to save lives and make the environment sustainable to all and sundry.

News

MTN Nigeria invests N2.6bn in corporate social investment initiatives

In its commitment to fostering social inclusion and driving digital transformation across Nigeria, MTN Nigeria, through its foundation, has announced a significant investment of N2.6 billion towards Corporate Social Investment (CSI) initiatives in 2023, up 35.2 percent compared to 2022, and reaching more than 58,000 people in over 90 communities. This achievement was revealed in the company's recently released 2023 sustainability report.

At the heart of the company's CSI strategy lies a commitment to bridging the digital divide in Nigeria. Recognizing that access to digital technologies is pivotal for socio-economic development, MTN has directed a substantial portion of its CSI budget towards ICT-enabled initiatives. The initiatives aim to empower

underserved communities with the necessary digital skills and tools to thrive in an increasingly connected world.

In 2023, MTN Nigeria prioritized projects within the ICT ecosystem, focusing on areas such as digital skills training, mobile connectivity expansion, and promoting digital entrepreneurship. By empowering individuals with digital literacy and access to online resources, MTN aims to unlock opportunities for economic growth and social inclusion, particularly among marginalized groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

The N2.6 billion investment was distributed across various sectors; 2 percent for orphanages and community sponsorship each, 47 percent for health initiatives, 31 percent for ed-

ucational programs, and 7 percent for economic empowerment projects. The remaining 11 percent was allocated to other operating expenses, ensuring effective administration and implementation of their philanthropic efforts throughout the country.

Speaking on MTN Nigeria's commitment to national priority areas such as equity and drug abuse, Odunayo Sanya, executive director, MTN Foundation, emphasized that "The core message of our Anti-Substance Abuse campaign at the MTN Foundation is that it is everyone's fight, because the singular objective of the campaign is to reduce the rate of first-time abuse among youths aged 10-25 years."

Again, the MTN Foundation, a key driver of these initiatives, continues to play a pivotal role in advanc-



L-R: Adenrele Oni, MD, Richway Micro Finance Bank and first vice chairman, National Association of Microfinance Banks; Olufemi Oyekola, head, enablement and ecosystems, Stanbic IBTC Bank; Adebola Osibogun, chairman, Imowo Microfinance Bank; Olawale Raheem, MD, Imowo Microfinance Bank; Taiwo Opeseitan, head, segment solutions, Stanbic IBTC Bank, during the 14th annual general meeting and awards of the National Association of Microfinance Banks held recently in Abuja.


ing education, healthcare, and youth empowerment across Nigeria. Programs like the Anti Substance Abuse Programme (ASAP), Yellopreneur initiative, MTN Scholarships and the "What Can We Do Together" community development programme have gained significant traction, addressing critical societal issues and fostering healthier communities through


education and advocacy.

By collaborating with local stakeholders and global partners, MTN Foundation ensures that its initiatives are aligned with both national development priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). Also, MTN Nigeria implemented robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for all its CSI initiatives, as part

of its commitment to transparency. This ensures that resources are deployed efficiently and that the impact of investments is accurately measured and reported.

Through regular stakeholder engagements and rigorous reporting standards, MTN always strives to uphold the highest standards of corporate governance and accountability in its CSI endeavors.





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Politics



Asue Ighodalo

PDP candidate, Ighodalo, promises to re-establish fruit juice factory at Ehor, others

IDRIS MOMOH, BENIN

Asue Ighodalo, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate for the forthcoming September 21, 2024 governorship election in Edo State has promised to re-establish fruit juice factory in Ehor, in Uhumwonde Local Government Area if elected governor of the state.

Ighodalo made the promise while addressing party members and supporters during his ward campaign tour to Ehor, Uhi, Igeduma and Irhue in the locality.

He said his administration would turn Uhumwonde Local Government Area into food basket of the state on assumption of office in November.

According to him, Ehor and by extension Uhumwonde Local Government Area is blessed with huge expanse of very fertile land that is suitable for food, fruits and cash crops even in commercial quantities.

"For its rich endorsement in natural resources, my administration is prepared to industrialised and turn Uhumwonde into the state's food basket as part of my economic blueprint which places emphasis on agricultural development and industrialisation as a major plank to further develop Edo State.

"Ehor is the capital of fruits in Nigeria. We are going to bring in a company to Ehor that will engage in fruit processing for the people," he said.

Recall that the government of Lucky Igbinedion between 1999 and 2007 established Ehor Fruit Juice factory but the company was, however, privatised and sold by the same government.

The PDP governorship hopeful noted that the local government was very key to his developmental plan because of its rich natural endowments and inherent potential in agriculture.

While assuring that more investors would be attracted to explore the natural resources in the state, he added

that the people must benefit from the dividends of democracy.

Also addressing the people, Osarodion Ogie, the party's deputy governorship candidate, said they are in the race to improve on the lives of Edo people.

"Whatever we are going to do to improve your lives, we will do. The road between Ihue and Urhue will be completed. You cannot spend all your time in the farm and will not see the road to evacuate your produce," he stated.

At Egbede and Uhen Wards in Ugoneki, the PDP candidate promised the people of good governance, just as he promised that his administration would address their peculiar needs.

Highpoint of the tour was the defection of some members of Labour Party and All Progressives Congress to the PDP.

Some of the decampers include Jegede Idemudia, Alari Felix, Nicolas Edokpagbe, Stephen Arogha, Vincent Omokaro, Paul Nosa, Alice Salami, Sunday Osasere and Anthonia Michael.



Monday Okpebholo

Edo Guber: APC candidate, Okpebholo promises to float state-owned airline

IDRIS MOMOH, Benin

Monday Okpebholo, candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), in the forthcoming governorship election in Edo State, has said his administration will float an airline for the state, if elected.

Okpebholo, an incumbent senator representing Edo Central Senatorial district, disclosed during an interactive session with members the Correspondents' chapel of the Edo State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) in Benin City.

The APC flag bearer, who said Oba Akenzua II Airport was one of the busiest and viable airports in the country, noted that his administration would take advantage of its viability to float the state-owned airlines.

He said that the state would join Akwa-Ibom State that floated its own airline.

He said the airline would contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (IGP) of the

state as it would go a long way in boosting internally generated revenue.

"We are going to see a new Edo. Can we say we have a befitting state capital? Benin was the capital city during the defunct Midwestern state and also capital for the old Bendel and similarly the capital city for Edo.

"Unfortunately, there is no single flyover bridge. Go to Calabar, go to Port Harcourt and you will appreciate what I am talking about," he said.

He also promised that as an IT expert, he would deploy his experience to bring in international investors into the state and not the Memoranda of Understanding that the current government was synonymous with.

Okpebholo, who, decried the high level of insecurity in the state, promised to declare a state of emergency on security in his first day in office.

While promising to revive the education system in the state, he opined that there was nothing in the much-talked-about EdoBEST education reform in the state.

"I went to some schools and cried because of the poor infrastructure. No classrooms and teachers. Regrettably, there is a ratio of two teachers to more than 200 students in a school.

"These are critical areas we will look into when I emerge. We will set the ball rolling," he added.

The governorship hopeful also expressed his plan to revamp the health sector, which he said had been in a state of coma in the last eight years.

He asserted that Obaseki had messed up the achievements of Adams Oshiomhole, saying however, that he was coming to fix the state.

He bemoaned the increasing debt profile of the state, saying the present government in the state took the profile from N43 billion to more than N500 billion.

Okpebholo, who promised to provide conducive environment for job creation and opportunities, recounted his contributions to development in his senatorial district, even before nursing the ambition to join partisan politics.

LG election: Soludo sends ANSIEC Board members list to House of Assembly

EMMANUEL NDUKUBA, Awka

Governor Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra State has sent the Anambra State Independent Electoral Commission (ANSIEC) board members' names to the House of Assembly for confirmation.

This is part of the preparations for the conduct of Local Govern-

ment Elections in the state.

Somtchukwu Udeze, speaker of the House, read out the governor's letter requesting consideration and confirmation of the board members during plenary recently.

He, however, referred the letter to the Screening Committee headed by the Deputy Speaker of the House, Chukwuma Okoye for further deliberations.

The governor's letter contained

names of the board members, including Magistrate Chinelo Genevieve Osakwe as chairman. While Osita Igbokwe, Chinedu Anthony, Ifeyinwa Umeh and two others are members.

The Speaker urged the Screening Committee to expedite action on the letter and report to the House on the next adjourned date.

Recall that there was an uproar early July this year when Soludo

dumped the democratisation of the local government system to swear in another appointed Transition Committee (TC) Chairmen.

The governor, retreating from his earlier promises, played another waiting game to swear in appointed TC Chairmen contrary to his commitments to bring governance closer to the people.

During his inauguration on March 17, 2022, the governor

pledged to prioritise local government elections in the state, a move anticipated to invigorate grassroots democracy.

This promise went down well with the electorate, who longed for leaders accountable directly to them.

The establishment of the Anambra State Independent Electoral Commission (ANSIEC) is seen as a crucial step towards fulfilling this commitment.

Politics

Edo guber: INEC moves to check electoral fraud

...Assures stakeholders of free access to voting, collation centres

...Only reform of INEC can guarantee credible poll - Analysts

INIOMBONG IWOK

As the race for who becomes the next governor of Edo State in the September, off-cycle gubernatorial election continues to gather momentum, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has intensified efforts to conduct a free and fair poll by replacing several infrastructure and electoral facilities damaged in a recent flooding of its head office in Benin City.

Unlike previous elections, the Commission would also give stakeholders unrestricted access to voting and collation centres in a bid to stem election rigging and other irregularities on Election Day.

INEC chairman, Mahmood Yakubu said this during a recent quarterly consultative meeting by the Commission.

Furthermore, to check the threat of insecurity which has trailed elections in recent years in Nigeria, the commission constantly meets with security agencies under the auspices of the inter-agency consultative Committee.

Yakubu assured everyone of the commission's readiness to conduct an acceptable gubernatorial poll in Edo State and seek stakeholders support.

According to him, "I am glad to report that we have recovered from the torrential rainfall that resulted in the severe flooding of our State Headquarters in Benin City two months ago.

"The damage to the physical infrastructure as well as movable and immovable facilities are being fixed or replaced.

"I want to assure you that security in Edo and Ondo will be a major issue for discussion at the meeting.

"We are as concerned about the safety of your personnel and equipment just as we are about the security of our officials, observers, service providers, and, above all, the voters. We will also work with the security agencies to ensure that accredited journalists are granted unimpeded access to all voting and collation locations."

The off-cycle poll will be conducted on the background of mistrust among the electorate in Edo state, based on their experience in last year's general election; many people say that the commission failed to keep its promise of transmitting results electronically in real-time.

The development came despite repeated promises and assurances by the commission in the run up to the polls that results would be transmitted electronically.

Since then, many Nigerians are not happy with the Commission



Mahmood Yakubu

and have little confidence that INEC could be neutral or deliver credible election.

In fact, many local and international Civil Society organisations have questioned the neutrality of the Commission under the present leadership.

But speaking ahead of the poll, INEC chairman said in the last few months, the Commission had conducted all its pre-election formalities of concluding registration of eligible voters.

The INEC's chairman said the Commission triumphed over initial setbacks of floods in its offices which damaged several bimodal registration machines and quickly mobilised replacements and completed the exercise within the time advertised for the event.

"There was also fire in some offices in the Edo State, where election materials were damaged and which the Commission has overcome," Yakubu stressed.

But despite the promises, many people are anxious and hoping that the commission would erase the doubts of the past and meet the expectations of Nigerians this time around.

However, based on the experience of the past and disappointments, associated with the commission's handling of off-cycle gubernatorial elections in Kogi, Imo and Bayelsa States last year, many say there is little to cheer.

As the election draws closer, not everyone is keen and optimistic that the Commission can conduct

a gubernatorial election devoid of the usual manipulation and fraud associated with polls in Nigeria in recent years.

"INEC's failure to meet the expectations of Nigerian citizens, despite repeated promises in the past, still creates some doubts about what may happen in the election, suffice it to say that all eyes are on the electoral umpire to remedy the situation,, Olusola Oludiran, political analyst, said.

Within Edo State, many people have expressed worries about the election, saying that even though the electoral umpire has promised a free and fair exercise, the commission must brace up to perform better.

However, some people are somehow pessimistic that INEC could break its record of mistrust.

"INEC, as we all know, dashed

I think many people are not comfortable with the way the commission has performed so far; it is just promises, but when the election comes people's will would not prevail

people's hope in the last general election but you know that INEC, just like other institutions, is not perfect and has its shortcomings, but they have continued to assure us that the Edo election will be very credible and fair.

"From the assurance given by the INEC chairman and other top officials, they have what it takes, as they have been given all support by the government," Bartholomew Okudo, president of the Conference of non-Governmental Organisations in Edo State, said.

But Tayo Balogun, public affairs commentator, said INEC must redeem its image in the Edo gubernatorial election, considering the controversy that trailed last year's gubernatorial in Kogi, Imo, and Bayelsa States.

He, however, advocated for reform in the commission for it to be able to deliver on its mandate.

According to him, "The election is an opportunity for INEC to redeem image, but don't expect so much, so you would not be disappointed.

"I think many people are not comfortable with the way the commission has performed so far; it is just promises, but when the election comes people's will would not prevail. It is so sad.

"We saw that in the 2023 general election and even last year's off-cycle gubernatorial polls. There was nothing to cheer for me; in a sane country major reform should be carried out in INEC and there would be no progress without that."

The INEC Chairman has appealed to political parties in Edo State to adhere strictly to the timeline for the upload of the list of polling and collation agents to the dedicated portal.

He said, "As we inch closer to election day in Edo State, it is also imperative to remind political parties of the need to adhere strictly to the timeline for the upload of the list of polling and collation agents to the dedicated portal.

"Doing so will enable the commission to produce and deliver the identity cards in good time for the expected 76,823 Polling Unit agents and 3,587 ward, local government, and state collation agents for the 17 political parties participating in the election."

Furthermore, many stakeholders have also raised concerns about the security situation in the state, weeks leading up to the poll.

Last month, there were some reported cases of gunshots in some parts of the state, a development that created tension among the residents.

Although security agencies doused the tension, observers hoped that such incidents would not rear their ugly heads during the

electioneering process.

Many observers say the Edo election is also likely to face a similar trend, as events in the past have suggested. In June, there were some reported cases of gunshots in some parts of the state, a development that created tension among the residents.

Although security agencies doused the tension, it is hoped that such incidents will not rear their ugly heads during the electioneering process. Many fear that these incidents and other reported cases have created tension in the state as election day draws closer.

"Insecurity challenges may undermine the smooth process of the election and ultimately the credibility of the poll. It could also trigger low participation in the election if care is not taken," Oludiran added.

Political analyst, Kunle Okunade said that INEC's back is on the wall, and that the commission should immediately begin stakeholders' engagement and ensure robust voter education and public enlightenment on the guidelines for the conduct of the election.

"They should begin the retraining of the adhoc staff to be used and as well test and retest their electronic voting facilities. For me, the present INEC without restructuring can't deliver, I hope they keep their promises this time around," Okunade said.

On the ground in the last few weeks, various political actors have continued to strategise to secure the majority of the people's votes and return their candidates duly elected with less than two months to the opening voting.

Incumbent Governor, Godwin Obaseki is rounding off his second and final term in office. He was elected on the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC), but defected to the People's Democratic Party (PDP), to win re-election in 2016.

So far, the campaigns have progressed well, except for the incident that happened on the Benin airport road when Phillip Shuaibu arrived in the state after the Federal High Court in Abuja invalidated his impeachment and ordered his reinstatement. An Inspector of Police lost his life in the incident and scores of persons were injured.

INEC had published a list of seventeen candidates for the poll, which includes sixteen male and one female candidate.

Patience Ndidi of the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP) is the only female candidate on the list.

The leading candidates are; Asuerinme Ighodalo of the PDP, Okpebholo Monday of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Olumide Akpata of the Labour Party (LP).

Politics

Why NNPP should not be underrated in Ondo guber election - Adeyemi

Rotimi Adeyemi is the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) deputy governorship candidate in the Ondo State gubernatorial election. In this interview he disclosed how the new entrant political party in the state would come out victorious in the November 16 gubernatorial poll, why the party is attractive to Ondo people, among other issues. INIOBONG IWOK brings the excerpts:

What's the reaction of Akure people to your choice as the deputy governorship candidate of the NNPP in Ondo State?

I want to appreciate the wisdom of the NNPP, our great leader, distinguished Senator Rabiu Kwakwanso, the Kano State governor, and the party's governorship candidate in Ondo State, Gbenga Edema, for their decision to pick an Akure-speaking person as the deputy governorship candidate. I'm fortunate to be the Akure-speaking person they picked. I want to say, without mincing words, that the people of Akure were looking forward to being considered for a very reliable and appointing position, but unfortunately, they were let down by both the ruling party, All Progressives Congress (APC) and the supposedly opposition People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the state. So, the only party that is left in Ondo State that is now known to have considered an Akure-speaking person is the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP). Since my emergence became public knowledge, the people of Akure, the high and the low, have been calling to have interaction with me. They have even sent me to thank the party's leadership for considering me and considering Akure for that position. People have been meeting at the ward and unit levels, even at motor parks, to discuss the new thing happening to Ondo State through NNPP. I can assure you; we'll see it through to the end, God helping us.

But there's the perception within the political class that NNPP is not popular in the South-West?

Many of us are forgetful about history, and more often than not, we forget what happens. In this state, before Dr. Olusegun Mimiko became governor, the parties we heard about in those days were AD, ACN, and PDP. There was no party like the Labour Party (LP). But when Governor Mimiko felt cheated and decided to try his opportunity elsewhere, he pulled out of the PDP, and today history can justify his decision. He won and had his two terms before he left the office. What I'm trying to say is that thank God that NNPP is not a party that just came yesterday. It has been in existence for a long time. Today we have governors in our fold, senators, House of Representatives members, and chairmen, among others. During the time of the Labour Party, they didn't have any structure anywhere, and they won. And going by last year's presidential election, when Peter Obi came and said he wanted to be a presidential candidate for the Labour Party, what they told him was that there was no structure, but they surprised him in Lagos State, which is the home state of the current President of Nigeria. So, what are they



Rotimi Adeyemi

talking about? NNPP is a household name and has a state like Kano. We're saying that in this state of ours, people have not been taking cognisance of NNPP, but we are bringing it into the limelight with Gbenga Edema and Rotimi Adeyemi, and we will see how the wonder will flow.

What are your chances of winning the November 16, 2024 election?

You are saying the obvious. I talked about a party that came from nowhere and won the election. Two things stand for them: the pedigree of those who carried the governorship flag of the party, and that is the same thing we are having in the NNPP.

Whether you like it or not, the standard-bearer of the party, Hon. Gbenga Edema, is a household name. Some people have not even met him one-on-one, but they've heard about him, either when he was in the legislature or when he became OSOPADEC Chairman, or in the NDDC. Flowing down from him is his deputy, who just retired from the service of Ondo State. But I can say that if anyone goes to any local government in Ondo State and any ward where there is a health facility and mentions Rotimi Adeyemi, he or she would see that he's a household name. So, it's a combination of a good pedigree from the political frame and a grassroots mobiliser, Rotimi Adeyemi, who has been so involved in the grassroots politics of the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE).

To ice the cake, Rotimi Adeyemi is from the Akure-speaking area, and other political parties have so neglected the Akure-speaking people in the permutation of elections in this

in Ondo State. I can assure you that come February 2025, we will be in the Government House.

What is your reaction to the recent judgement of the Supreme Court on local government autonomy?

We thank God for the judgement of the Supreme Court. It's a noble decision from the apex court and it has actually come to corroborate what we believed in NNPP that local government autonomy is sacrosanct to development at the grassroots level. We're happy about the judgement and it will form a cornerstone in our administration because it is one of our cardinal points. We're going to grant local government autonomy to them and we'll allow them to operate freely. We won't be involved or indulge in pilfering their finances. We'll also support them to achieve more because if people at the grassroots are happy and have means of livelihood, it will be better for the development of a state and the nation. We're glad that the Supreme Court has given us the ground to leverage on and to work on. Right from outset, I'm an advocate of local government autonomy. I've written several articles on this, and we have organised several peaceful rallies to support this purpose, and we were on it when I was still in the service. We have been to Abuja, and we've sent emissaries to all the State Assembly Speakers, traditional rulers, and governors. At the close of the last administration of former President Buhari, of the 36 states and FCT, we needed just two-thirds to get it. At that time, 16 agreed that local governments should be given autonomy. One of the few states that never did it was Ondo State. It is said in the constitution that the local government shall establish and maintain markets. Today, all the markets in Ondo State are being run by the state government. We also said that they should allow local governments to take tolls at the park. Today, the state government is the one in charge. These are the things that have been taken away from the local government and would be returned to the local government.

But the local government staff that have been craving autonomy didn't issue any statement on the decision of the Ondo State government to oppose autonomy?

I pity the local staff because, by statute, code of conduct and practice of engagement, they are to be seen and not heard because they are employees of the government. They're not policymakers or decision-makers. They don't make laws; they don't make statutes. But they can take cover under the umbrella of the union, under which they are all together. The union has the right to protect the interests of all the workers, and that is what the union has done. The very day when the Attorney-General of this

state issued a statement that Ondo State would object to the Federal Government decision to give local government autonomy, there was a directive from the union that there should be a peaceful protest. I know that in every local government of the state, workers carried placards to the palaces of traditional rulers and stakeholders. It's unfortunate that other states are seeking to give autonomy to local governments, but Ondo State decided to say no and opposed the Federal Government on it.

Do you subscribe to the argument that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should take charge of the election of local government chairmen and councilors?

There's no need for duplicity in the electoral body. If they're doing the same thing, why duplicate them? Elections in the local government and the state in the past were done by FEDECO, and they were done at once. State Electoral Commissions are another branch of government because they will come cap in hand to the government for money. If the governor says there's no money, the election cannot be held. The election will only be held at the mercy and convenience of the governor.

Considering that elections in the country involve spending huge sums by parties, do you think the NNPP has the wherewithal ahead of the poll?

Money is not the thing; it is the individual that will put the money to use. NNPP has productive money, not electoral money. Productive money is the money that we need to mobilise, sensitise, educate and bring the people's consciousness to what lies in their voting power - their tomorrow is by their fingertip. If they wish to mortgage their tomorrow for another person who will offer them N10,000 for their vote, and in a matter of three to four days, they will finish spending it and suffer for four years. It is left to them. Often, they don't know the implication. What we have done is educate them that they shouldn't mortgage the future of their children and our development. Our cornerstone is that everybody should be educated. When we get to government, education shall be free from all state-owned primary to state-owned universities.

What will you do differently as a deputy governor if your party wins the election on November 16?

The first thing I'll do differently is that I'll give my principal, Hon. Gbenga Edema, 100 percent of my time because his success is our success. We have seven cardinal objectives that we are out to canvass, which transcend health, agriculture, local government autonomy and infrastructure.

We have seven cardinal objectives that we are out to canvass, which transcend health, agriculture, local government autonomy and infrastructure

Politics

One year after, Tinubu's reforms face sternest test

...As protesters seek reversal of controversial reforms

...Experts react

INI OBONG IWOK

Just over a year in office, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's controversial reforms aimed at turning around Nigeria's economy is facing increasing opposition from Nigerians.

Perhaps, the glaring message from protesters in the anti-government nationwide protest tagged #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria is that the reforms have brought untold hardship and further impoverished them.

Many Nigerians said they had fed up with the hardship in the land, they want a reversal of his reforms and immediate return of petrol subsidy to ease their suffering.

Tinubu, a former governor of Lagos State, won a controversial presidential election last year. On assumption of office, he announced several reforms aimed at stabilising the economy and putting more money into government purse.

The President announced the removal of petrol subsidy that had been a drain on the nation's treasury, costing the nation trillion of naira every year.

In the weeks that followed, Nigeria unified the segment of the foreign exchange market into a single window in order to allow the naira trade more freely.

The new policy triggered massive devaluation of the currency.

The measures have also exacerbated a record cost-of living-crisis in the Africa's most populous nation where inflation is at all-time high, affecting the cost of food items and energy prices.

Nigerians are battling with food inflation at about 50 percent and fuel prices have added more than 500 percent since Tinubu started his reforms last year.

"President Tinubu administration's reforms, including the removal of fuel and electricity subsidy and the floating of the naira, have had a devastating impact on the Nigerian populace, particularly those on the lower rung of the economy. The problem is that they are all done the same time," Adelaja Adeoye, an economist and entrepreneur, said.

Adeoye stressed that the suffering in the country was exacerbated because of lack of social welfare system and high unemployment rate.

"The sudden increase in essential commodity prices has led to widespread agitations and a rise in poverty levels and you can't blame them, because a lot of people are jobless and there is no social welfare," he said.

In recent months, the worsening economic situation has plummeted the popularity of President Tinubu among the people.

Many Nigerians are alarmed that despite cutting public spending and removing subsidy in electricity and petrol the Tinubu's administration has not shown enough desire to cut cost of governance and check wastage in government.



Bola Ahmed Tinubu

At a time the country is ensnared in economic hardship, and the citizenry urged to make more sacrifices and tighten their belt to combat the economic challenges, some of the expenditure and plans of the Federal Government are raising dust in the polity.

Observers say the profligacy seen among public officers and elected officials in the previous administration was still there.

Some months ago, President Tinubu promised to implement the Steve Oronsaye report, aimed at reducing the number of public agencies in a bid to cut cost of governance, but many are baffled that the President has since continued to make indiscriminate appointments into parastatals and agencies of government.

As opposition to the administration reforms and policies grows across Nigeria, analysts said the lack of job creation and human capital development initiatives have left the youth population vulnerable.

They said the ongoing protests were a manifestation of the government's failure to deliver on its campaign promises, especially in a nation where unemployment is high.

Many say the failure of the government to implement the palliative programme aimed to cushion the effects of the reforms has had a devastating effect on the people and make living more expensive for Nigerians.

"While I acknowledge that the subsidy regime was marred by irregularities and corruption, the government's failure to fulfill its promises to cushion the effects of the removal by injecting funds into the real sector of the economy has exacerbated the situation and make suffering more.

"So, on the streets across Nigeria, there is the notion that the Tinubu's government is not sincere, just about one year in office, many Nigerians appear to have lost hope with the administration already. Of course, such pessimism has fueled the current protest against this government.

"It sad really; what is baffling is that when he releases palliatives, money or food the people who need them don't see it, it is hijacked by the ruling party and the governors and he does not bother to check how it is shared. Nobody has told us how the N2billion palliatives money was used," Lawal Muritala, a lawyer, said.

Lawal noted that it was devastating and sad for the Tinubu administration to initiate such far-reaching reforms without any social welfare programme that would have direct impact on the people.

"For now, people are left on their own after initiating the reforms without any support and you expect them to calm down? That is why you are seeing the protest now, people are upset," he added.

Tunde Daramola, Public Affairs commentator, said the Tinubu administration pushed Nigerians to the wall, when there was no plan to alleviate the suffering of the people from his reforms, noting that it was obvious it was not planned.

According to him, "Nothing is wrong with the introduction of reforms in any country's economy. What is unacceptable is when nothing is done to alleviate the hardship brought as a result of the reforms. My thoughts are that it was not well-researched and managed.

"The removal of subsidy and floating of the currency will have created an upsurge in income to

government, instead of taking care of the executive and legislature, etc, they should have taken care of the populace by multiplying wages and salary. The gain experience will now be loss economically and politically."

The Tinubu administration has made some pronouncement in recent days to ease the economic pain, including delivering rice to states across the country and removal of tariffs on imported foodstuffs, but many people are not taken the government serious, they said previous palliatives given to governors did not reach them.

"It is like pouring water into a basket, nothing would come out of it," Shola Ogunwale, a student, said.

The #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest which began last Thursday has spread across Nigeria with many killed and several injured.

However, the demands from various organisers reflect a broad spectrum of issues.

It is clear that their main demand is for the government to tackle the economic hardship and reverse the reforms seen as harsh.

Protesters are calling for the restoration of the fuel subsidy and a reduction in fuel prices to below N300 per litre.

They also demand an increase in the national minimum wage to N300,000, contrasting with the N70,000 recently signed into law by Tinubu.

The protesters are pushing for affordable electricity tariffs and the creation of an emergency fund to support small and medium enterprises, which they see as vital to the nation's struggling economy.

Additionally, they advocate for a state of emergency on inflation to address the rising costs impacting households across the country.

There have been calls for the re-opening of the borders to stimulate trade and prioritise made-in-Nigeria goods to bolster local economy.

Protesters also demand the restoration of previous import duty rates to revive local industries and alleviate financial pressures on consumers.

While the demands are extensive, some critics argue that certain requests are too vague or unachievable.

"The protest is about the bad governance in Nigeria, poor standard of living of our people and high inflation. We are just tired with the state of Nigeria now," Ismail Olushola Oladare, told Al Jazeera.

Analysts react to criticism of Tinubu's reforms

Some experts say rather than focusing on just currency reform, the Tinubu administration should have fixed the productive part of the economy, power and roads.

They said these are critical issues that were needed to drive the economy and grow SMEs in the country.

Speaking about the Tinubu reforms so far, Omoruyi Temitope,

the Lead Investment Advisor at Afrinvest (West Africa) Limited, a Nigerian capital market holding company with specialised subsidiaries focusing on the unique but integrated wealth management needs of clients in West Africa, said that though the current administration lagged on major economic indicators that mattered to the average Nigerian, there were still hopes that its policies and reforms would deliver the needed impacts in the long term.

"I will look at the performance from two viewpoints for a balanced assessment. On the policy/reforms front, this administration has taken several bold and almost unprecedented steps across both fiscal and monetary policy to address Nigeria's economic quagmire.

"We have seen courageous moves on subsidy removal, unification of the foreign exchange market, student loans, national credit schemes, fiscal prudence, and the electricity sector, just to mention a few, although many have not achieved their intended impact due to many setbacks in implementation.

"However, policy and reforms are means to an end. The end is to improve Nigerian welfare. This takes me to the second performance index: macroeconomic indicators. This administration has lagged on major economic indicators that matter to the average Nigerian. The inflation rate has reached its highest levels in decades. The exchange rate hit its highest level in history. Economic growth at barely 3% for a developing country like ours is less inclusive.

"Oil production has not improved massively. Our foreign reserves are still heavily encumbered, not to mention Nigeria's rising fiscal vulnerability from mounting debt stock and its impact on government liquidity," the Afrinvest analyst explained.

He added: "There are a myriad of disturbing challenges that now keep the country on the verge of a social crisis, especially from food and energy insecurity. While the reform measures taken look laudable and have a potent positive sentiment for foreign investors, the actual performance of the economy is critical to the nation's stability going forward.

"For this administration, it is not time to count gains yet if more Nigerians do not have access to or cannot afford adequate food and energy compared to previous years, irrespective of the cause. In short, people's welfare is the most important scorecard, and that has fared poorly in the last year."

Speaking further, Adelaja pointed out that President Tinubu put the people first in his policies.

"A softer approach is needed to address the concerns of citizens, beyond just engaging stakeholders. The government must prioritise human capital development and wealth distribution to ensure economic growth and stability," he said.

Politics

Why Ndigbo refused to join #End bad governance protest

... 'We don't want another python to dance in Igboland'

OBINNA EMELIKE, LAGOS, AND GODFREY OFURUM, ABA

FOR the three days the #EndBadGovernance protest has swept the country, so far, there has been calm in all the South-East states, amid indications that the peace will continue.

While that is not a surprise to other Nigerians, considering the insecurity situation and the agitations, it intrigues the South-East governors, who are baffled by the calmness.

Sadly, some of the governors, especially Hope Uzodinma of Imo State, are claiming that it was their interventions and plea to the people that made them not to join the protest.

But investigations by BD Sunday revealed otherwise.

It would be recalled that days to the commencement of the protest on August 1, 2024, leaders of the South-East, including governors, political and traditional leaders, had several meetings and engagements with people from the zone, calling on them to shun the protest.

According to the investigations, the people from the zone would rather comply with the direction of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) or Eastern Security Network (ESN) than the governors, who they insisted are only in office to better their personal interests and for favour from Aso Rock.

What seems a consensus reason for many residents of the five South-East states is that Igbos have refused to be used as scapegoats.

According to them, the bad experiences of the #EndSARS protest still hunt the Igbos, who were wrongly accused of sponsoring the protest then, by their detractors, despite the fact that their businesses were destroyed.

"Before this protest, the Bola Ahmed Tinubu government had accused Peter Obi of sponsoring it. But Obi is not the only opposition. They did not point to Atiku Abubakar. That accusation is against all Igbos and we and our businesses are the target, whether you like it or not," Amanze Ezeokoye, an Awka-based lawyer said. For Chijioke Umelahi, a for-

mer Abia lawmaker, the Igbos are not participating as expected because they did not vote for the All Progressives Congress (APC) government and cannot protest against it.

"The Igbos protested with their votes during the 2023 presidential election against the poor governance of the APC government, but other Nigerians supported the party and that is why we are here today. So, there is no need to protest again, when your authentic protest with votes did not count," Umelahi explained.

Again, many concerned Igbos think that the current security situation in some communities in Anambra, Imo and Abia states, do not need additional protest, because it could be hijacked by government-sponsored hoodlums.

It could be recalled that there was a heavy deployment of soldiers and armoured patrol vehicles (APVs) in the zone, especially in Aba, few days before the start of the protest.

The earlier deployment, according to many in the zone, suggested that Ndigbo were the target of the protest.

"So, our withdrawal is tactical and not weakness. It is wisdom, because our people have been killed since the Civil War and the government does not care," Ezeokoye said.

He strongly refuted the idea that the governors influenced the decision of the people to shun the protest in the zone.

"We are wiser now. The governors cannot influence us because they don't equally care about the interest of Ndigbo. Is it Uzodinma or Soludo, who are seeking for favour from Aso Rock, or the one Dave Umahi planted in Ebonyi. It is only Alex Otti that seems to have the Igbo consciousness in him," Ezeokoye lamented.

In line with Ezeokoye, Idika Arunsi, a retired top government official in Abia State, acknowledged the advice from Igbo leaders, governors, Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide, parliamentarians and others in the private sector, but thinks that the action today for the protest is based on the realities of Ndigbo, who he described as an endangered race in Nigeria.



"No matter what you do, Nigeria will not appreciate the contributions of Ndigbo. We have always been their target, so why present ourselves to be slaughtered. Wisdom is more important than the protest," the soon to be crowned traditional ruler in Abia State, said.

However, Ndigbo also commended, Benjamin Kalu, deputy speaker of the House of Representatives, who openly cautioned them not to join the protest, as they would be made scapegoats since the protest has been revealed to be targeted at them, for the destruction of their means of livelihood and for setting them up before the security agencies.

Although Kalu called on Igbos to show weakness rather than their usual strength and abstain from the protest, the compliance, according to many, is not in obedience to Kalu's advice, but wisdom from their past

ugly experiences.

"Ndigbo do not want another python to dance in the zone," he said.

For instance, in Aba, the commercial hub of Abia State, the signs that the national protest will not hold in the city was obvious some days before the start of the protest, as many residents expressed no interest in the plan.

Unlike other cities where designated places were mapped out as gathering centres, there was none in Aba, no group stood out as the organiser, unlike what was available elsewhere.

While people protested in most parts of the country, Aba residents sat at home, while youths converted roads to emergency football fields.

All the major markets in the commercial city, including; Ariaria International Market, Eziukwu Market, Ahia-Ohuru,

Ekeoha Shopping Centre, Ehre Market, Alaoji Spare Parts Market, GSM/Computer Village, St Michael's Phone/Accessories Market and Uratta Integrated Market, were all closed.

Commercial banks, schools and all public facilities were also shutdown.

This was the same situation in Anambra, Imo Ebonyi and Enugu states. Most people choose to sit at home, while a few went about their normal businesses.

Some residents, who spoke to BD Sunday said that they would have loved to join the protest, but could not do so following the bad experience of the October 2020, #EndSARS protest that almost crumbled Aba and other cities in the South-East zone.

They said that the current security situation in the city, which has recently seen police and soldiers attacked and killed in different locations made the protest a difficult one in Abia, Anambra and other parts of the zone, as it could create an ugly situation that no one anticipated.

Gerrard Akunna, a resident of Emelogu Road, in Aba, said that he would

have loved to come out in the streets, but because of the security situation and how security agencies treat protesters in the South-East, he preferred to sit at home.

"We are not immune to the hunger and poverty, experienced all over the country, but it will be stupid for one to go out to protest against hunger and poverty and end up dead," Akunna said.

For Okereke Uzochukwu, another resident, embarking on such a protest, would be suicidal, due to the current security situation in Aba.

"We have seen and heard the calls from different political and traditional leaders, our resolve to stay at home today should be seen as wisdom and not cowardice. What we did today shows that we have become wiser and smarter.

"No need to die recklessly. You will hardly hear of killings in this protest today from Lagos to Abuja, but any move here will end badly. So, I like what our people did today.

"It is not that we love the current government and what they are doing, but we want to remain alive because nobody obeys any law in this country

including fundamental human rights.

"Since 2017, we have seen blood flow in peaceful protests here and we are simply tired of that," he said.

Chukwu Kalu, a trader, who decried the high cost of living in the country, observed that Aba residents decided to stay indoors, to avoid being tagged members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

According to him, "it is not that we are happy with the state of our economy, but we do not want to lose lives, as any protest by Igbos at this moment, would be misconstrued to be sponsored by IPOB.

"You can see soldiers everywhere, any little thing now, they will start shooting at people and we don't want that to happen," he said.

Ngozi Osaji, a trader in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, still makes money as customers through her medium-sized grocery shop to buy things since August 1, the protest started.

But the trader wished that residents of the state would join the protest as high cost of living has impacted her business and may likely see fewer customers in coming days as the hardship

persists.

Onyemachi Ikedinobi, a resident of Enugu, noted that people are going about their businesses, except government and public institutions like banks, which closed for fear of attacks.

"If there is any reason to protest, it should be for the emancipation of Ndigbo because Nigeria don't like us. They send jet fighter and soldiers here because of IPOB, but will tell us Boko Haram is tactically defeated and even celebrate repentant Boko Haram and bandits, while people in the South-East are branded terrorists. It is unfair and that is why the streets are calm. We are wiser now," Ikedinobi, said.

Coming from an entirely different angle, Olisa Akanite, a member of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, noted that Ndigbo are in mourning mood now and cannot protest.

"We lost three prominent Igbo personalities; Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, president-general of Ohanaeze, Ifeanyi Ubah, a senator and Onyeka Onwenu, our distinguished daughter. So, let others protest on our behalf for now because Ndigbo are mourning our huge loss," Akanite said.

While peace reigns in Owerri, Emeka Onwulia, a lecturer at the Federal University of Technology Owerri, is not happy that the protest is not happening in the city.

"We are Nigerians too and are feeling the harsh impact of the economic policies of this government. We should not shun the protest. I see some people joining from next week in Owerri, no matter how the government wants to stop them," Onwulia said.

Despite the mourning mood, Akanite fears that some Igbos, especially youth, will join the protest if it is not disrupted for the 10 days it is meant to last.

"We call them Gen Z, they will likely break the calmness and hit the streets in the South-East if the protest last longer than this Monday because they are feeling the economic impact the most. Many are unemployed, no money, no food and what do you want them to do," he decried.



A greener future for the telecoms industry

The telecommunications industry globally has experienced growth and transformation, with a rapid increase in data usage and the development of infrastructure to cater to the ever-growing demands of consumers. However, the growth has also brought about environmental concerns. According to a 2024 report by the World Bank Group, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector contributes at least 1.7 percent to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally.

With climate change and global warming becoming growing concerns, it has become necessary for operators within the telecommunications sector to be aware of the impact of their operations on the environment and take responsible measures to curb the negative ways in which they could affect the environment.

Fortunately, several organisations within the industry have stepped up to imbibe Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles, realizing the need to implement policies and strategies that are geared towards environmental sustainability.

Vodafone, British multinational telecommunications company, has set out an extensive climate transition plan as it hopes to achieve an absolute reduction of at least 90 percent of GHG emissions in its operations worldwide by 2040. So far, the company has been able to reduce the amount of energy required for each unit of data traffic across its network by 65 percent less than what was needed in 2020. Also, since 2021, 100 percent of the grid electricity used in its operations across Europe has been matched with renewable energy sources.

In the United States of America, AT & T has created the Climate Change Initiative (CCI), which is committed to promoting the utilization of smart



climate solutions that use AT&T connectivity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The company is known to be one of the largest corporate buyers of renewable energy in the United States.

Within the local telecommunications sector, MTN Nigeria has recognized its responsibility to protect the planet and consider the impact of its operations on the environment. As such, the telecommunications giant has taken active steps towards ensuring best practices for a sustainable future.

In 2021, MTN launched its Project Zero Initiative, in line with its long-

term goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and its overall carbon footprint. The organisation has gradually transitioned from utilizing high-emission energy sources to eco-friendly and cost-effective alternatives.

According to its 2023 Sustainability report, the company has implemented several energy efficiency measures, including the utilization of 5G and fibre using renewable energy sources in operations and sensitising its value chain actors on energy management and efficiency. These innovative steps have significantly paid off, as MTN

achieved a 10.3 percent reduction in scope 1 and 2 emissions in 2023, compared to the emission values in 2021.

Scope 1, being the emissions from energy sources directly used and controlled by MTN, decreased from 65,899 tCO₂e in 2021 to 58,356 tCO₂e in 2023. The telco was also able to manage emissions from its energy production sources, which account for Scope 2 emissions, reducing the emission value from 44,196 tCO₂e to 40,360 between 2021 and 2023. These reductions in scope 1 and 2 emissions were achieved, despite MTN's 5.3 percent increase in total energy consump-

tion in 2023.

The telco has also taken up the responsibility to sensitize its value chain actors on energy management and efficiency, as they are responsible for Scope 3 emissions, which are the toughest to reduce.

With its 2 to 1 SIM Registration Device Revival initiative, MTN has also been able to manage e-waste, which is also a contributor to GHG emissions. The initiative, which involves dismantling two devices to retrieve one, is expected to divert 11,760kgs of e-waste from landfills.

Although MTN has made these impressive strides in its sustainability goals, it is only a fragment of what the company intends to achieve, as the goal is absolute carbon neutrality. Speaking on MTN's commitment to protecting the planet and the Project Zero initiative, Mohammed Rufai, its chief technical officer, said, "With a core focus on reducing our carbon footprint to achieve Net Zero by 2040, Project Zero exemplifies our dedication to sustainability and drives transformative change across all aspects of our operations. By prioritising initiatives like renewable energy adoption and green technology integration, Project Zero helps us to meet our sustainability goals."

Even as the telco moves towards expansion, it remains committed to its environmental sustainability goals. The company has stated that its soon-to-be-launched data centre will operate using eco-friendly energy sources with low-emission properties and eventually move to utilizing zero-emission energy sources.

The telecommunications sector is a significant contributor to innovation and economic growth within a nation. But it must also be a front-runner in environmental sustainability. With notable organisations like MTN embracing eco-friendly practices, the industry can reduce its environmental impact and contribute to a sustainable future.



L-R: The Celebrant Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Governing Council of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye. Prof. Toyin Ashiru; Former President of Nigeria Chief Olusegun Obasanjo; President, Nigeria Society of Engineers (NSE) Engr, Margaret Oguntala, during the 70th birthday of prof Tonyin Ashiru held in Lagos recently

Focus

Senate's probe into alleged economic sabotage in petroleum sector: Hope or mere hype?

GODSGIFT ONYEDINEFU

THE Nigerian Senate has launched yet another probe to address fundamental challenge in the petroleum sector after series of probes that failed to produce any result.

The Upper Chamber on July 3, 2024 constituted a 15-man ad-hoc committee led by Opeyemi Bamidele, the Senate leader, to investigate allegations of economic sabotage in the petroleum sector.

The constitution of the committee came amid the dispute between the Dangote Group and regulators in the sector which the probe seeks to find solutions to. The Senate also expressed concerns over the increasing trend of illegal activities such as bunkering, pipeline vandalism, and oil theft, which have significantly drained the nation's revenue and contributed to the current economic downturn.

But this is not the first time the Senate would be probing the illegalities in this crucial sector. Experts in the security as well as the oil and gas sector argued that past inquiries lack efficiency and transparency, failing to produce meaningful outcomes, leading to a decline in public confidence.

Barely nine months ago, the Senate launched an investigation into the petroleum sector which is yet to yield any tangible result. The investigation was to unravel all activities of crude oil theft in the Niger Delta region which has bled Nigeria of resources. The country had been grappling with dwindling oil production in recent years.

In 2018 and 2019, the government set a budget benchmark of 2.3 million bpd. But in 2020, 2021 and 2022, the production benchmark was cut to 1.8 million, 1.88 million, and 1.86 million bpd respectively.

The committees on Pe-



roleum Resources (Upstream), Petroleum Resources (Downstream), Gas, Host Communities, and Niger Delta launched the investigation and was expected to report back within 6 weeks for further legislative actions, but the committee has not submitted its report yet.

There have been other parliamentary inquiries, such as the 2016-2017 investigation into stolen crude oil costing \$17 billion. In 2022, the then Senate set up a 13-man committee to investigate oil theft in Nigeria and its impact on petroleum production and oil revenues.

Meanwhile, the sector

continued to lose in revenue. Nigeria lost an unprecedented oil revenue of \$7.2 billion and \$22.4 billion for 2021 and 2022, respectively, due to oil theft. In the first eight months of 2022, N1.3 trillion was lost from oil theft, which is more than the total allocation to health in the 2023 budget, according to the 2023 European Modern Studies Journal.

Proshare, a market intelligence and data analytics firm, in its 2022 report titled 'The anatomy of crude oil theft in Nigeria', said N1.03 trillion, up to 54 percent of actual gross oil revenue earned in the first half of

2021, was lost to crude oil thieves, marking a notable deterioration compared to previous years.

Godswill Akpabio, the Senate President, while inaugurating the 15-man ad-hoc committee highlighted the severity of the issue, noting that these illegal activities have not only deprived Nigeria of essential development funds but have also eroded investor confidence and distorted market operations.

Even though public confidence on legislative probes is currently at its lowest ebb. Bamidele-led ad-hoc committee has however, shown

determination and willingness to be different, and produce results that will sanitise Nigeria's oil sector.

The ad-hoc Committee investigating alleged economic sabotage in the petroleum sector also said it was ready to name and expose alleged saboteurs in the sector, which it notes is the lifeblood of Nigeria's economy, upon conclusion of its probe.

The Committee was set up through resolution adopted after exhaustive debate by senators on motion sponsored by Asuquo Ekpenyong, senator representing Cross River South, on importation of Hazardous Products and dumping

of substandard Diesel into Nigeria.

Opeyemi stressed that the Ad-hoc committee would not operate like previous Senate Committees investigating activities in the oil sector over the years without any outcome.

At the core of this assurance is that all members of the committee have expressed willingness to stake their integrity in other to get the job done, which provides a ray of hope.

"We will do what we consider to be in overriding public interest. Will committee will have the courage to name violators at the end even if they are Senators. If and where necessary, we have been told that we will do this without fear or favor, and there shall be no sacred cows," Opeyemi told journalists at a press conference recently.

The Committee chairman also boast-

ed in the caliber of the senators in the committee whom he noted were carefully selected by the Senate leadership. Other members of the committee are Asuquo Ekpenyong (Cross River), Abdulahi Yahaya (Kebbi), Tahir Monguno (Borno) Olamilekan Adeola (Ogun) Diket Plang (Plateau) and Abdul Ningi (Bauchi), Khabeeb Mustapha (Jigawa), Ipalibo Banigo (Rivers), Adams Oshiomhole (Edo), Adetokunbo Abiru (Lagos), Osita Izunaso (Imo), Sahabi Ya'u (Zamfara), Olajide Ipinagba (Ondo) and Ekong Sampson (Akwa-Ibom).

"The Senate could have

had a lot of good selection, because there are a lot of accomplished people here, but could not have had a better selection. Our integrity is drawn from the father by the grace of God. We have been able to individually overcome our greed. Greed is a natural and personal thing. And every human being has a tendency for it. But if we're able overcome it, that's where your integrity stems from," the Chairman said.

"I want to assure you again; we are going to approach this on a note of integrity. We are not doing this for anyone. We are doing it for our country. We are doing it for the future of this nation and the future generations.

"The Senate Ad-Hoc Committee on Alleged Economic Sabotage in the Petroleum Industry assures the public that we will pursue this investigation with the utmost diligence and integrity. We are dedicated to safeguarding the interests of all Nigerians and restoring confidence in our energy sector," Opeyemi stressed.

He further cautioned that the investigation is not meant to witch hunt any individual or group of people, or corporation, but rather to find a lasting solution for Nigeria's collective mutual gains.

Bamidele is also poised to ensure a more transparent

process. He said in the course of the investigation, the panel would also organise a public hearing to be held from 10 to 12 September.

Other members of the committee have also voiced their readiness to end sabotage in the oil and gas sector. Sahabi Ya'u, on his part, said the committee members would not compromise for any reason, adding that the lawmakers are more concerned about protecting their integrity and names, assuring that they would be fair and transparent in their investigations.

Oshiomhole, while acknowledging unfruitful probes in the past however, said: "This one is different. The Chairman is very much conscious of the fact

country.

The Ad-hoc Committee will also determine the level of compliance of the NNPC's Direct Sale and Direct Purchase (DSP) arrangements in line with the provisions of the Petroleum Industry Act, including the extent of transparency and accountability.

It will further beam legislative searchlight on the activities of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), including payments made to transporters in the last 10 years; and enquire from the NNPC the state/status of the 22 depots built by the defunct NNPC to eliminate road distribution of petroleum products, among others.

To carry out the mandate,



that the future of our country is in this committee. By the time we proceed, actions will speak louder than voice. There's no basis to doubt. We are absolutely committed as a committee, and we do our very best to ensure that we do not disappoint."

The Terms of Reference of the Committee is to examine the pre-shipment and pre-discharge standard test parameters adopted by the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Regulatory Authority with a view to uncovering loopholes, if any, being exploited to get toxic cargoes into the

the Committee said it would interface with the Minister of State for Petroleum, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC), the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Nigeria Ports Authority (NPA).

Others are, the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA), Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), Nigeria Customs Service, Nigerian Navy, International Oil Companies (IOCs), Dangote Group, Capital Oil, and Modular Refineries.

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The politics and economics of Dangote Refinery

Aliko Dangote deserves our collective support and official encouragement. I told him the day I visited his plant that he's "an authentic African hero and a real icon, and I meant that from the bottom of my heart. As an investor and businessman, he's succeeded where our government has failed. He has built a huge business empire consisting of manufacturing, oil and gas, agriculture, fertilisers, and petrochemicals and will earn more than Nigeria next year. For the 2025 FY, the Dangote Group is expecting to gross a total revenue of \$30 billion, with the refinery contributing \$19.5b; fertiliser, \$2.5b; oil and gas, \$1.5b; and cement, \$6b. Nigeria is projected to earn about \$22 billion in revenue from crude oil exports next year. Given the huge oil theft from the Niger Delta, the bulk of Nigeria's oil production is currently coming from the deep-water terrain, which is operating under the PSC fiscal regime. Therefore, with the projected 1.4 mbpd, average crude oil price of \$70, and a sharing ratio of 55 percent to Nigeria and 45 percent to the operators, the expected \$22 billion in revenue is inadequate for a country of over 200 million people. Nigeria is indeed a poor country. The \$30 billion inflow next year to DIL will undoubtedly have salutary impacts on our exchange rate. Is this why some people are bitter against the man? He has repeatedly stated that

the oil mafia is more powerful and dangerous than the drug cartel. The Tinubu administration should therefore save the refinery from the mafia and protect it as a national asset.

Every educated adult Nigerian knows that our country is run on the basis of ethnicity, religion, and partisan politics and is governed largely by incompetent fellows who are obsessed with pursuing self-interest. No matter how well-meaning a government official appears, he's driven by an innate urge to promote his personal interests above the good of the people. The relentless pursuit of self-interest and the absence of love for the country are at the root of our national problems. The recent statement credited to the chief executive of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Regulatory Authority (NMDRA), Engr. Farouk Ahmed, typifies a good example of how personal interests trump national development. He spoke to the press recently and stated, to the shock of the nation, that Nigeria should never discontinue importation of refined petroleum products even if the Dangote refinery has the capacity to satisfy domestic consumption because a reliance on the refinery is "a threat to energy security." Farouk also alleged that the diesel produced from the refinery is below standard in terms of sulphur content. It is apposite that Mr. Dangote himself has categorically denied Ahmed's allegations of producing substandard product and has assured that the sulphur content of his diesel has been falling steadily to meet the

country's requirement. The business group went further to provide evidence that NMDRA had earlier certified its laboratories that have consistently tested his products.

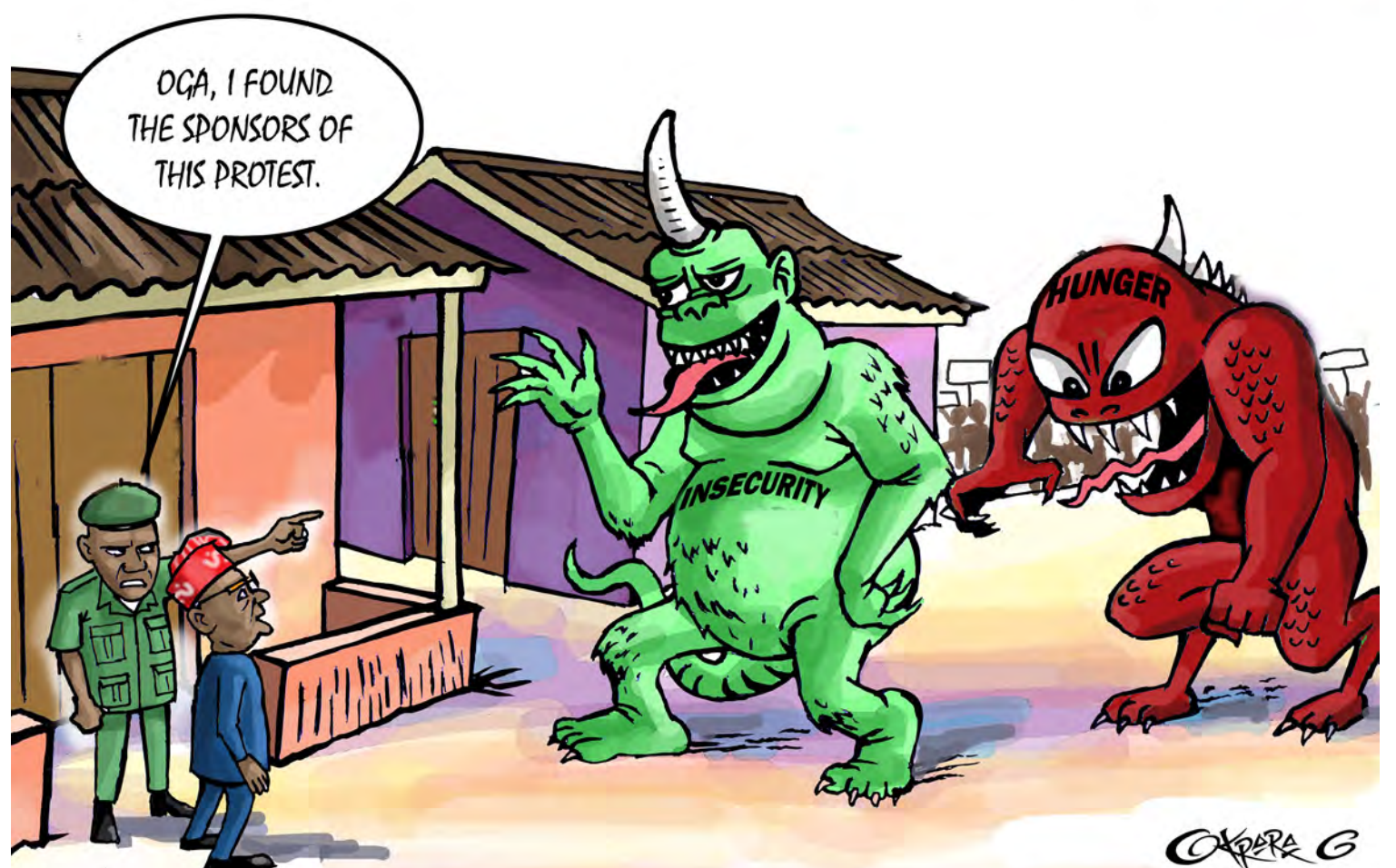
There is no doubt that Engr Ahmed is driven by self-interest in audaciously pushing for continued importation of products rather than supporting domestic production. A lot of NNPC and regulatory officials are making quick bucks from the importation of petroleum products, and they do not want to let go. They've grown too rich in the corrupt and opaque oil importation and oil swap business—so much so that they don't even want government-owned refineries to work. They profit from endless turn-around maintenance programmes that produce no results, yet those comatose refineries have a full complement of workers receiving salaries and other emoluments year after year. Farouk is not bothered that the country has lost billions by exporting crude oil and continuously importing refined products. All that matters to these people is their bank accounts.

A regulatory authority that talks down on domestic producers and denigrates in-country production efforts in preference for continued importation is either incompetent or corrupt, or both. No matter how wobbly domestic producers are, or irrespective of the nascency of the level of domestic production, a regulator's main objective should be to offer guidance, an enabling environment, incentives, and encouragements to help the operators succeed. That's how

Taiwan moved from being producers of inferior goods to becoming a major producer of chips and semiconductors; Bangladesh moved from being the poverty capital of the world in the 1980s to being a major producer and exporter of clothing, even though the country has no single cotton field. Vietnam moved from being a producer of tennis shoes to becoming a major producer of computer chips. The chaebols of South Korea grew due to the government's support. I don't even want to mention China!

Strong regulators help in growing the economy. The Central Bank of Nigeria, for example, will never get to the press and announce names of weak banks in the country and threaten to close them down or invite foreign banks to take over. It is also the reason NAFDAC, SEC, NCAA, or any other regulators do not make silly statements in the media, lampooning the operators in their industry. A good regulator works with the operators to meet minimum standards. They don't create panic and embarrassment. The national outrage that trailed Farouk Ahmed's statements is a measure of how resentful Nigerians are of endless fuel importation and the endemic corruption in and around the NNPC, its subsidiaries, and industry regulators. Their inability to revive our moribund state-owned refineries has made Nigeria the laughing stock of the world and the butt of all jokes at drinking pubs. I called on President Tinubu to sack Engr. Ahmed right away, saving the country from his embarrassing indolence.

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Perspective



OJO EMMANUEL ADEMOLA

Navigating Nigeria's future: A call for dialogue and collaboration

The current situation in Nigeria, marked by protests, unrest, and economic challenges, underscores the urgent need for dialogue, reconciliation, and concerted action to address pressing issues and pave the way for progress and development. As Senator Orji Uzor Kalu rightly points out, the ongoing protests have deviated from the principles of peaceful assembly and are causing harm to the economy and society at large. In this context, it is imperative to suspend the protests indefinitely, engage in meaningful dialogue, and chart a collaborative path forward for the benefit of the country and its citizens.

The current protest in Nigeria has failed to meet every parameter that defines a protest. Indeed, half education is a dangerous tool; as the saying goes, "Half education is worse than ignorance." In this case, the protester's lack of proper education led to the downfall, akin to falling on their own sword. The consequences of being misinformed or partially educated can be potent and destructive, highlighting the importance of seeking and acquiring a comprehensive education to navigate life's challenges with wisdom and discernment. This lack of education and turbulent approach undermines the legitimacy and impact of the protest, emphasizing the significance of knowledge and strategy in effective advocacy.

There are several reasons why the current protests in Nigeria may fail to meet the criteria to be referred to as a protest.

Firstly, the protests may lack a clear and unified message or demands. Without specific goals or demands, it can be difficult for the protests to gain traction and effect change.

Additionally, the protests may lack organization and leadership. Without clear leadership and organization, it can be challenging to sustain momentum and coordinate effective actions.

Furthermore, the protests may lack widespread participation and support from the general public. For protests to be successful, they often require broad-based support and participation from a diverse range of people.

Overall, the current protests in Nigeria may fail to meet the criteria to be referred to as a protest due to a lack of clear goals, organization, leadership, and widespread public support.

On day one of the protests, disturbing reports emerged of violence and evidence of politicians financing demonstrations against the government. This insidious manipulation of public dissent for political gain further undermines the legitimacy and integrity of the protest movement. Such actions not only detract from the noble intentions of those genuinely seeking positive change but also perpetuate a cycle of unrest and division within society. It is crucial to scrutinize and condemn these nefarious tactics to uphold the true essence of peaceful protest and democratic discourse.

The presence of violence and the involvement of politicians in sponsoring protests can detract from the legitimacy and effectiveness of a protest. Violence can undermine the message and goals of the protest, causing harm to individuals and property, and potentially alienating potential supporters.

Additionally, when politicians are involved

in sponsoring protests, it raises questions about the authenticity and motives behind the demonstrations. Politicians may have their own agenda or interests in supporting protests, which can take away from the grassroots nature of a protest and undermine its credibility.

For a protest to be effective and have a positive impact, it needs to be peaceful, well-organized, and driven by genuine grassroots movements with clear and unified demands. The presence of violence and political interference can hinder the success of protests and make it difficult to achieve meaningful change.

In addressing the current turmoil in the country, the government must consider a range of strategic interventions. First and foremost, fostering open dialogue and engagement with all stakeholders, including protest leaders and community representatives, is essential to understanding the underlying grievances and finding common ground for resolution.



Additionally, implementing transparent and accountable governance practices, such as enacting meaningful reforms and combating corruption, can help rebuild trust and restore confidence in the government's ability to address the people's concerns. Furthermore, investing in social programs and infrastructure development to improve the quality of life for citizens can help alleviate some of the systemic issues fueling the unrest. Ultimately, a combination of proactive communication, effective governance, and holistic development initiatives is crucial for the government to navigate the complexities of the current situation and promote lasting peace and stability in the country.

Essentially, the government should intervene as a matter of utmost urgency in the current protest situation in Nigeria in several ways, including:

1. Dialogue and negotiation: The government can engage in dialogue with protest organizers to address their grievances and find peaceful solutions to the issues at hand. This can help de-escalate tensions and build trust between the government and protesters.

2. Law enforcement: The government can deploy law enforcement officers to maintain public order and ensure the safety of all citizens. Law enforcement should act in a professional and non-violent manner to prevent further escalation of violence.

3. Political reforms: The government can address the grievances of protesters by implementing political reforms that address issues such as corruption, inequality, and lack of accountability. By taking concrete steps to address these issues, the government can demonstrate its commitment to addressing the concerns of the protesters.

4. Economic reforms: The government can

implement economic reforms to address issues such as unemployment, high cost of living, and lack of economic opportunities. By improving the economic situation of the country, the government can address some of the underlying issues that are fueling the protests.

5. Reconciliation and healing: The government can work towards reconciliation and healing by acknowledging past wrongs, promoting unity and understanding among different groups, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and tolerance.

Overall, the government should prioritize peaceful and inclusive approaches to addressing the current protest situation in Nigeria, while also taking concrete steps to address the underlying issues that are driving the protests. By engaging in meaningful dialogue, implementing reforms, and promoting reconciliation, the government can work towards resolving the current crisis and building a more stable and prosperous future for all Nigerians.

In charting this course, stakeholders across all sectors must collaborate and prioritize the long-term collective interests of the nation, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility in shaping Nigeria's future trajectory.

Of course, moving forward, the way forward for Nigeria at this critical time involves a combination of immediate actions and long-term strategies to address the current challenges and pave the way for sustainable development and progress. Some key steps that could be considered include:

1. Dialogue and reconciliation: The government, civil society, and protesters should engage in sincere, inclusive, and productive dialogue to address grievances, build trust, and find peaceful and mutually acceptable solutions to the issues at hand. Reconciliation efforts should also be made to heal divisions and promote national unity.

2. Addressing economic challenges: Nigeria should implement comprehensive economic reforms to stimulate growth, reduce poverty and inequality, create jobs, and improve the standard of living for all citizens. This may involve diversifying the economy, investing in key sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology, and promoting entrepreneurship and innovation.

3. Good governance and accountability: Enhancing transparency, accountability, and good governance are essential to restoring trust in government institutions and promoting public confidence. Efforts should be made to eliminate corruption, improve public service delivery, and ensure that government actions are guided by the principles of fairness, justice, and the rule of law.

4. Social inclusivity and equity: Addressing social inequalities, discrimination, and marginalization is crucial to building a just and inclusive society where all individuals have equal opportunities and access to essential services. Policies should be designed to promote social cohesion, protect human rights, and empower marginalized communities.

5. Security and peacebuilding: Strengthening security and promoting peace and stability are vital for creating an enabling environment for socio-economic development. Efforts should be made to address security challenges, combat violence and conflict, and promote dialogue and reconciliation among diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural groups.

6. International cooperation and partnerships: Nigeria should engage with the international community, regional organizations, and development partners to leverage external support, resources, and expertise for addressing national challenges, promoting sustainable development, and advancing common goals.

Essentially, by pursuing these and other strategic initiatives, Nigeria can overcome current obstacles, build resilience, and chart a path towards a more prosperous, peaceful, and inclusive future for all its citizens. It will require collective efforts, political will, and sustained commitment from all sectors of society to realize these aspirations and achieve sustainable development and positive change.

In conclusion, the complex challenges facing Nigeria require a multi-faceted approach that combines dialogue, economic reforms, good governance, social inclusivity, security, and international cooperation. By coming together in a spirit of unity, understanding, and mutual respect, Nigerians can overcome divisions, build a prosperous and peaceful nation, and create a better future for generations to come. It is only through collective action, shared responsibility, and a commitment to positive change that Nigeria can realize its full potential and truly thrive as a vibrant and inclusive society.

Intriguingly, Senator Orji Uzor Kalu's viewpoint is one perspective core to the ongoing situation in Nigeria. In his statement, he emphasizes the need for peaceful dialogue and adherence to international laws regarding protests. He suggests that the current protest's actions are not in line with the principles of peaceful assembly and may lead to further chaos and economic harm.

While it is important to consider all viewpoints in such complex situations, the effectiveness and legitimacy of protests can vary depending on the context and actions taken by both protesters and authorities. It is ultimately up to the government, civil society, and other stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue, address grievances, and find peaceful solutions to the challenges facing Nigeria.

It is crucial for all parties involved to prioritize the well-being and safety of the people, protect human rights, and work towards a more inclusive and prosperous future for all Nigerians. By fostering understanding, respect, and cooperation, it is possible to navigate through difficult times and build a more resilient and equitable society.

Having previously dismissed the notion of protests at this juncture, citing my belief in the diligent efforts of the Tinubu administration to reshape Nigeria's trajectory towards prosperity, it is imperative to now explore the pathways forward for the nation amidst the current challenges. In light of recent events, it is evident that a proactive and comprehensive strategy is needed to address the various sociopolitical and economic issues facing Nigeria. As such, a holistic approach that encompasses political dialogue, governance reforms, social investments, and infrastructure development is essential for steering the country towards a path of sustainable progress and unity.

Perspective

ODUNAYO SANYA

In the shadows of Nigeria's bustling streets, a silent epidemic rages on, devouring the lives of our youth and shattering the dreams of families. Substance abuse has become a hydra-headed monster, its tentacles spreading everywhere, leaving in its wake a trail of broken lives, shattered hopes, and a nation in peril. The cries of mothers who have lost their children to the grip of addiction, the anguish of fathers who have seen their sons succumb to the allure of drugs, and the despair of communities ravaged by the consequences of substance abuse - these issues echo through the land, a haunting reminder of a crisis that threatens to consume us all.

The statistics are alarming; according to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Nigeria has one of the highest drug use prevalence rates in the world, with over fourteen million people using psychoactive substances. It reveals that 14.3% of Nigerians between age 15 to 64 have used drugs at least once in their lifetime. But behind these numbers lies a more poignant reality - a generation lost to the abyss of addiction, their potential, creativity, and innovation sacrificed on the altar of substance abuse. The Nigerian dream, once full of promise and hope, is fast becoming a nightmare, as the scourge of substance abuse threatens to undermine economic growth.

As we grapple with the challenges of nation-building, substance abuse poses a clear and present danger to our collective future. It is a ticking time bomb, waiting to unleash its full fury on our society, our economy, and our very way of life. And yet, we are sleepwalking into this catastrophe, oblivious to the devastation that awaits us. It is time to wake up, to confront this monster head-on, and to reclaim our nation from the grip of substance abuse. The future of Nigeria depends on it.

The consequences of substance abuse are multifaceted. It affects not only the individual but also their families, communities, and the nation at large. Substance abuse affects the mental and physical health of individuals, leading to increased cases of depression, anxiety, and even suicide. It also affects relationships, leading to family breakdowns, and social isolation. The

Corporate organisations must get involved in fight against substance abuse in Nigeria

impact on society is equally devastating, affecting productivity, leading to reduced economic output, and increased healthcare costs. Substance abuse is also linked to increased crime rates, violence, and social unrest.

The economic impact of substance abuse cannot be overstated. It affects productivity, leading to reduced economic output, and increased healthcare costs. Substance abuse also affects the workforce, leading to absenteeism, presenteeism, and reduced employee performance. According to a study by the World Health Organisation (WHO), substance abuse costs Nigeria over N100 billion annually.

As we struggle to rebuild our economy and create opportunities for our youth, substance abuse siphons off precious resources and talent. The billions spent on rehabilitation, healthcare, and law enforcement could be invested in education, infrastructure, and innovation. Instead, these resources have been disbursed to mitigate the damage caused by substance abuse. We owe it to ourselves, our children, and future generations to act decisively against this menace.

Corporate organisations in the country have a vital role to play in supporting the fight against substance abuse. One way to do this is through funding. Substance abuse initiatives require significant financial resources to implement effective prevention, treatment, and support programs.

The MTN Foundation, through its Anti-Substance Abuse Program (ASAP), is already making a significant impact in this area. ASAP is a comprehensive program that aims to reduce the prevalence of substance abuse among young people in Nigeria. By providing funding and resources, MTN Foundation is helping to support rehabilitation centres, counselling services, and public awareness campaigns.

There are alternative ways to support the fight against substance abuse, corporate organisations can lend their expertise to awareness and sensitisation campaigns and provide in-kind donations. For example, they can provide venues for community events, expertise in areas of marketing and communications, and printing and distribution services. Additionally, corporate organisations can leverage their networks

and influence to raise awareness about the dangers of substance abuse and promote initiatives aimed at preventing it.

At an internal level, corporate organisations should implement workplace policies and programs that prevent and address substance abuse. This can include employee assistance programs, drug testing, and substance abuse education and training. By creating a safe and supportive work environment, corporate organisations can help employees struggling with addiction to seek help and overcome their dependence on drugs.

In the United States, companies like CVS Health and Walmart have taken a stand against drug abuse by implementing programs to prevent opioid overdose and misuse. CVS Health, for example, has launched a program to provide naloxone, a medication that reverses opioid overdose, to patients without a prescription. Walmart, on the other hand, has implemented a system to track and prevent suspicious prescriptions, and provides disposal sites for unused medications.

In Europe, companies like IKEA and H&M are supporting the fight against drug abuse by partnering with organisations that provide treatment and support services. IKEA, for example, has partnered with the Swedish organisation, Länkarna, to provide job training and employment opportunities to people recovering from addiction. H&M has partnered with the UK-based organisation, Addaction, to provide funding and resources for treatment and support services.

Other companies, like Google and Facebook, are using their technology and platforms to support the fight against drug abuse. Google, for example, has launched a program to provide accurate and reliable information on substance abuse and treatment options through its search engine. Facebook has launched a program to provide resources and support services to people struggling with addiction, and partners with organisations to provide funding and expertise to support the fight against drug abuse.

Guinness Nigeria launched the 'Drink Responsibly' campaign, aimed at promoting responsible drinking habits and reducing the incidence of substance abuse. The company has also partnered with the Nigerian gov-

ernment and other organisations to support initiatives aimed at preventing and treating substance abuse. For example, Guinness Nigeria has provided funding and resources for the establishment of rehabilitation centres and counselling services for those struggling with addiction. These efforts demonstrate the commitment of Nigerian companies to supporting the fight against drug abuse and promoting a healthier and more responsible society.

The government, through the NDLEA, should encourage the private sector to get more involved in this fight. The agency has already shown commitment to this, even in the partnership with MTN Foundation on the ASAP programme. MTN's involvement has been substantial, including advocacy walks, stakeholder conferences, and the inclusion of white papers. In 2024, the programme reached 87,000 students and trained 1,440 teachers across Nigeria. More such partnerships are essential because this is a collective fight. There is a need to undertake more of such partnerships because it is everyone's fight.

As we confront the scourge of substance abuse in Nigeria, it is heartening to see corporate organisations stepping up to the plate. By providing funding, resources, and expertise, companies like MTN and Guinness are helping to stem the tide of addiction and despair that threatens to engulf our youth. But this is not just a moral imperative - it is an economic and social one too. For if we fail to act, we risk losing an entire generation to the abyss of substance abuse, with devastating consequences for our families, communities, and nation.

So let us salute these corporate champions and urge others to follow their lead. Together, we can create a Nigeria where our young people are empowered to reach their full potential, free from the shackles of addiction. A Nigeria where families are not torn apart by substance abuse, and communities are not ravaged by its consequences. It is a future worth fighting for, and one that we can achieve if we work together. The time to act is now - let us join forces to create a brighter, healthier future for ourselves, our children, and our nation.

.Sanya is the executive director, MTN Foundation

TUNDE RAHMAN

All hell has been let loose, and the centre can no longer hold in Kenya over the tax revolt that has been ravaging that East-African country since June. In the wake of the crisis, a part of the parliament building was razed down by arsonists. Some public buildings were touched while several companies and shops were destroyed and looted. Sensing their relative success in forcing the government to cancel the \$2.7 billion in tax hikes, the mainly Gen-Z protesters are now calling for President William Ruto's resignation.

The young people have succeeded in throwing Kenya into turmoil, and no one in that country can now sleep with their two eyes closed. The number of casualties has been on the rise in the ongoing protests. More than 50 people have been reported killed since June, according to Kenya's National Commission on Human Rights.

The Kenyan violence and destruction are reminiscent of the October 2020 EndSARS protest in Nigeria. During that EndSARS protest, several police stations were burnt with some police officers beheaded. The gory video of cannibals eating flesh from the bodies of slain police officers is still chilling. There was a jailbreak, and hardened criminals were let free in Lagos, Benin, and Abuja prisons. Critical infrastructure owned by the Lagos State Government was destroyed. Notable television station, TVC, was razed down.

It is difficult to forget how a large number of luxury buses meant to power public transportation in Lagos were burnt and left to ruins. A friend recounted to me how a distraught Governor Babajide Sanwo-olu was going through the ruins of the burnt buses at Oyingbo and tears began to cascade from his eyes over the multi-million dollar investment destroyed.

Such was the level of the destruction, the carnage, the investment gone in flames, the trauma and the uncertainty engendered by the protest. Those insisting on replicating the #EndSARS protest

Protest: Head or tail, we may all end up losers

in the country or reproducing the Kenyan moment in Nigeria do not mean well for the country and the people.

It may be argued that but protesters have a right to register their displeasure about the state of the nation, particularly with the excruciating cost of living, even in spite of government's laudable economic policies and cushioning efforts, and this may be correct. However, the planned protest does not augur well for the country and our people. This is so for a number of reasons.

Firstly, given what transpired during that 2020 protest, there is no guarantee that any protest at this time would not turn violent or hijacked by hoodlums and other dodgy characters to foist their nefarious agenda on the country. This protest, which by most accounts is politically motivated, can only result in violence, arson and looting, as is characteristic of similar demonstrations in Nigeria and most parts of Africa. The Kenyan episode is also a case in point.

In the past, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, as he then was, and other activists had deployed the instrumentality of non-violent protest or agitation to advance the democratic cause that led to the rebirth of democracy in the land, and to correct some imbalances in the operation of Nigeria's federalism, particularly during the regime of President Obasanjo.

Secondly, the sponsors and promoters of this protest, christened #EndBadGovernance protest, remain yet unknown. They are faceless and yet unidentified persons. I glimpsed an online interview with SaharaReporters's publisher, Omoyele Sowore, identifying and calling for the demonstration. Meanwhile, he and his family are in their safe harbour in New Jersey. That was the same way detained Nnamdi Kanu was giving orders from abroad, naming individuals and their properties to be destroyed in Lagos during the #EndSARS' protest.

Thirdly, it's being established that constructive

dialogue is the key to resolving issues and thrashing any misgiving or disagreement, which is bound to occur in any society. When there is a conflict between governments and groups arising from policy issues and other matters, dialogue is always the best way to resolve such disputes. In spite of the remonstrations of Organised Labour over the National Minimum Wage, eventually they still resorted to negotiations with the government during which the matter was resolved amicably and a new national minimum wage, which is over 100% of the old one, was agreed upon with even an icing on the cake as President Tinubu committed to every 3-year review, instead of workers having to wait for 5 years before wages are adjusted.

More importantly, the hashtag #EndBadGovernance being promoted by the unknown protesters is dubious and remains contentious. End to bad governance? This condensation reminds one of the rhetoric of still-disgruntled opponents of President Tinubu, who lost the 2023 presidential election at the polls and in court, and now want to unseat him and come to power through the back doors.

This is unacceptable. The nation's electoral laws stipulate how elections are won and lost and the electoral circles as well. They will do well to wait for the next election in 2027.

End to bad governance? Where is the bad governance, one may ask? Yes, these are challenging times. Current economic challenges are not peculiar to Nigeria alone. Almost all the countries around the world, including the most developed ones, are in turmoil. Nigeria is no exception. President Tinubu is applying the right medication to an ailing economy he inherited. This bears restating: the economic policies the government has embarked upon, which have been widely commended, have their gestation periods. And, though some pains may have come during the interregnum, these would be temporary. Some compensatory and cushioning initiatives are

also being embarked upon. The point is that the distribution of the palliatives to the people needs to be intensified and pursued vigorously. In this respect, states and Local governments must do better as partners with the federal government to ensure effective distribution of these palliatives.

In the meantime, there is cheering news about the economy. The country has exited the ways and means trap, which had been a cog in the wheel before and there is now growing confidence in the nation's economy. According to the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun, debt service cost has declined from 97% to 68% and government has also surpassed non-oil revenue by 30%. What this means is that government will now have more money to fund social services and infrastructural projects that will improve the quality of life of Nigerians. The economy is growing, and sooner than later, some of the challenges of today will be overcome.

Therefore, this is not the time for a violent protest. The protest does not bode well. It poses an existential threat to Nigeria and its democracy. It will not augur well for anyone. We may all be losers in the end.

In summing up this article, I cannot but paraphrase that insightful columnist, Mr. Idowu Akinlotan, in his July 21, 2024 Palladium column, because he made this point more succinctly than I would do. I quote: "In sum, everybody may end up a loser, including opposition politicians galled by the outcome of the last presidential election, politicians who promote ethnic and religious exceptionalism, ethnic groups which resent the winner of the poll, youths who would likely become cannon fodder should the crisis blow out of proportion, and the country itself whose tenuous unity and untenable political structure have triggered tectonic shifts in the body politic. Nothing is certain, and this is no scaremongering."

-Rahman is a Senior Presidential Aide

Perspective

Viewpoint

With Afo



AFOLABI ABIODUN

AI voice cloning: the good and the frightening prospects

Increasing application of AI voice cloning for crime

AI voice cloning is increasingly being used by criminals to scam unsuspecting victims. Popular Nigerian journalist and content creator based in the US, Adeola Fayehun, narrated how she was almost scammed twice this year with AI voice cloning. First, somebody used deepfake posing as her uncle to try to fleece her and another time it was her cloned voice the scammers used to try to scam a family member.

Early this year, fraudsters manipulated video footage of Aliko Dangote's appearance on a Channels TV programme and used same to promote a fraudulent investment scheme. An unsuspecting consumer who sees the video where Dangote was supposedly speaking about the scheme on a credible platform like Channels TV will immediately believe it. Channels TV caught

the use of AI voice cloning for criminal enterprise. High-quality AI software are free and easily accessible online. And, the tools are so easy to use that anyone with basic AI knowledge can generate a convincing deepfake using AI. The manipulative technique used is called Generative Adversarial Networks and it only takes a few minutes for AI to clone a voice once a sample of that voice is imputed.

We are all at risk

Everybody is at risk of these deepfakes, no matter your societal status. An angry or envious colleague at work, for instance, can use AI voice cloning to make you say unprintable things about your bosses to discredit you. Or imagine a jealous spouse AI coning the partner's voice saying some derogatory things against somebody they hold in high esteem. Someone could also clone your parent's, your children's, your

information or for virtual meetings. They rode on that using her uncle's cloned voice to get her to click on a malicious link. Companies are also victims as well as perpetrators of unethical deepfakes through the use of deepfake advertising which could be deceptive. Predictably, deepfake is also deployed in war. Recently, Russia cloned Ukrainian TV and used it to propagate misinformation.

What law protects you against deepfake?

In Nigeria, there is no robust law yet against the unethical use of deepfake; so for an aggrieved party, there is little legal recourse. However, there are laws like the Cybercrime Act of 2015 and the Nigeria Data Protection Act of 2023 that can be piggybacked on. The lack of adequate legal protection against deepfake attacks is not peculiar to Nigeria though. The US, the UK, and other developed economies are still struggling to develop a comprehensive policy against deepfakes, especially its application in politics.

Legislations that will mandate adding sources of digital content, watermarking, and or disclaimer are being considered. Social media platforms have also tried to protect users by establishing some safeguards against manipulative deepfakes. The policy on X, for instance, is that "You may not share synthetic, manipulated, or out-of-context media that may deceive or confuse people and lead to harm." However, Musk's recent posting of the Kamala video clearly contradicts that, highlighting the fact that such safeguards can easily be bypassed.

How to protect yourself against deepfake

There's very little one can do to protect oneself. However, one can take a number of steps to be less vulnerable to attacks. Be very circumspect about what you post online about yourself or your family. Be wary of accepting friends' requests from strangers or people you hardly know. Avoid suspicious-looking sites and don't give your details on little-known sites. You should have a unique identifier with members of your family; a secret code or phrase only known to you and your family that you use when you communicate. And, when in doubt, make a direct call to the person for confirmation.

AI voice cloning will continue to get advanced and unscrupulous people will continue to take advantage to scam or manipulate unsuspecting targets. Legislation, unfortunately, may give little comfort to victims. As digital content consumers, we are the first gatekeeper; we have a duty to scrutinize and probe the source and authenticity of contents before we accept them. We also need to act responsibly in the digital universe.

Somorin, former Chief Press Secretary to Governor Dapo Abiodun, writes from Ajala-Obafemi Village in Abeokuta

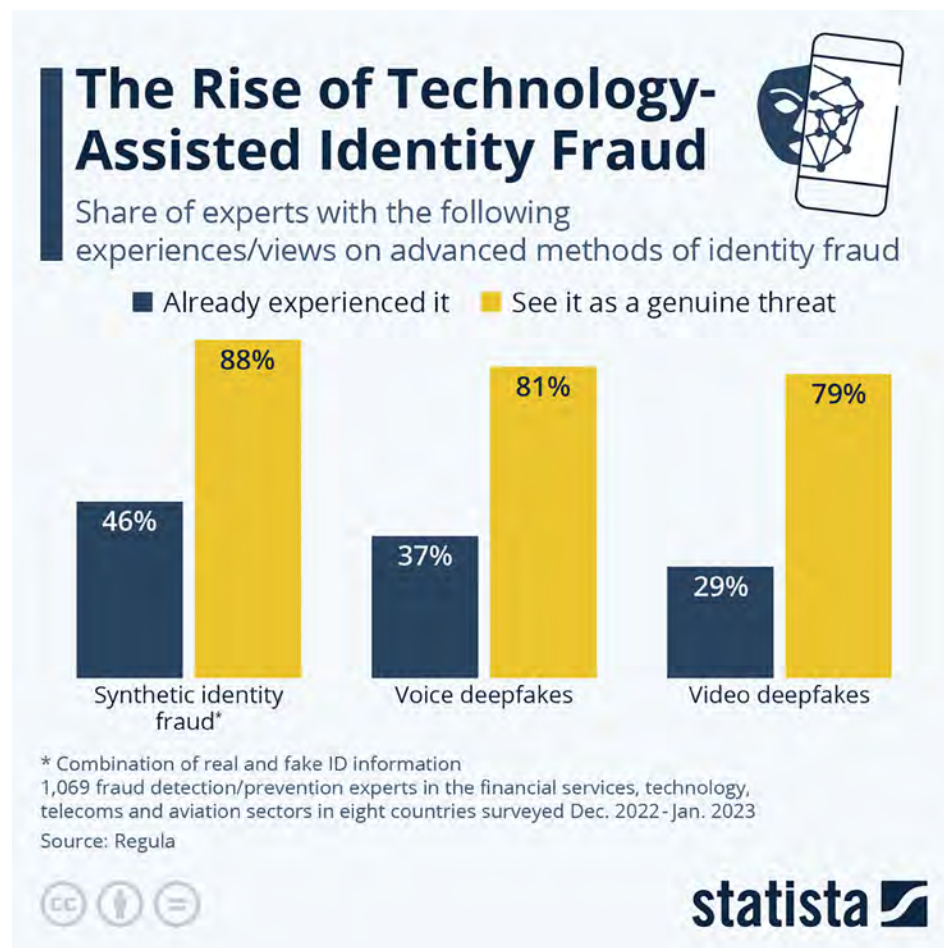
The introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) technology was hailed for its seemingly limitless application across all human fields: science, education, environment, agriculture, healthcare, religion, fashion, arts, music, politics, governance, business, and even relationships. Its dark side, its application for the commission of crime and manipulation, however, remains a frightening prospect. The development of AI voice cloning, for instance, was momentous; it offered inconceivable possibilities in everyday life, for good or for evil.

The two sides of deepfake

Two AI-related voice cloning incidents occurred in the US in the past week to demonstrate the bright and the dark sides of AI. The incidents also highlighted the increasingly blurry line between what's real and what's fake and the fact that regulators are still struggling to proffer adequate regulations to protect people. To be sure, deepfake is not new. In 2017, for instance, a Reddit user posted a manipulated video of celebrities in compromising poses. But lately, due to improvements in AI, which can produce remarkably realistic videos/audios, accessibility, and the absence of robust legislation, deepfake is on a frightening rise.

On Thursday, 25 July, Virginia Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton addressed the US House of Representatives using AI. Wexton suffers from speech difficulties due to progressive supranuclear palsy disease. But an AI voice cloning software developed by ElevenLabs gave the congresswoman "...the ability to speak as [she] once did." ElevenLabs said it hopes to give everyone a voice with the technology. A day later, on 26 July, Elon Musk reposted a deepfake video of Vice President Kamala Harris on his X handle without putting, as required by X, that it was AI generated.

AI voice cloning software was used to mimic Kamala Harris' voice in an advert where she was supposedly ridiculing her principal President Joe Biden. It wasn't until two days later on Sunday, 28 July, that Musk clarified that it was a deepfake video. In that period, between Friday and Sunday, millions of people had seen the video, and it's conceivable that many believed it was a real video. Musk is a known supporter of Donald Trump so posting such a video without the appropriate caveat is manipulative and likely intended to rile Americans who love Biden. The posting had a political undertone, with the American general elections, where Kamala will likely spar with Trump for the presidency, about 90 days away.



on to the deepfake early and released the original footage.

Fraudsters are becoming emboldened and creative in the use of deepfake AI voice cloning for investment scams, cyberbullying, smear campaigns in politics and against prominent figures, and phone scams. The 2023 general elections in Nigeria, for instance, was defined by the widespread use of deepfakes by politicians and their supporters to gain advantage over their opponents.

Reason for the rise

Accessibility is one reason for the rise in

brother's/sister's voice to defraud you. The scariest part and what makes these manipulated videos/audios sometimes believable is that the scammers are usually very thorough. They investigate their target's unique situation and tap into it.

Imagine your son is in school somewhere, and you get a deepfake call from him – the clone is 100% his voice – that he just ran into some trouble. You probably will immediately go into anxiety mode and drop whatever you are doing. For Adeola Fayehun the fraudsters knew her uncle created a WhatsApp group of family and friends where he regularly posted links to important

City File

Day gunshots, bullets rained like water in Imo

...Business activities disrupted in Owerri, environs

...Business can't thrive under insecurity - OCCIMA

...Police say 'the battle is for all'

SABY ELEMBA, Owerri

Business activities in Owerri Municipality and environs were brought to a halt as gunshots and bullets rained like water last Wednesday.

The gunshots, which were heard in most of the strategic places, were suspected to have come from some criminal elements in their efforts to instill fear in the people and gain control of the city and the entire Imo State.

Wednesday, July 31, 2024, markets were empty and people who opened their shops early were forced by the gunshots and flying bullets to close and people scamped and ran helter-skelter to hide and save their precious lives.

Apart from the markets where there were heavy gunshots, other places affected include Imo State University's back gate, Ikenegbu Layout, Wetheral Road, Amawusa, Aladinma, Alaba along Aba Road, Douglas Road, West End, Orji and Concorde axis.

An eye witness, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that he was around the



vicinity of the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) at Okigwe Road, Owerri, close to the Government House in the early hours.

"The inmates were jubilant

on hearing the sounds of gunshots, may be, the hoodlums could have succeeded to release the inmates if not the presence of the Army and Armoured Personnel Carrier

(APC) that was stationed there and other armed trucks," he said.

With regards to the disruption of business hours, coupled with the fear that has gripped

the residents of Owerri and its environs, Anthony Amadi, a lawyer and the president of the Owerri Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (OCCIMA), in

a telephone interview, said that with what is happening, business would be difficult to thrive, and that government should create conducive environment for investors to come into the state.

"The fact is that business cannot

thrive under insecurity, so whatever disrupts security disrupts business. We are not happy about the security situation. So, we call on government to take all necessary measures or actions to guarantee that the business life of the people is not disrupted. So, in every circumstance, the high premium should be placed on human lives.

"They should protect people and property for business to thrive, and this is what we have been trying to make people feel relaxed and come into the state and do business. We will continue to support government," OCCIMA boss said.

Meanwhile, a voice message sent to journalists in the state via the Police/Media Platform by Henry Okoye, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), he said: "Good morning gentlemen of the press. I can understand that you are all apprehensive but I want to assure you that the command is not folding its arms. We have deployed our men massively. In fact, the Commissioner of Police has personally led operation and we have made concerted effort in synergy with other security agencies to make sure that we as a matter of urgency, restore normalcy in this state.

"I am assuring the good people of Imo State that we will make sure that the hoodlums responsible for this senseless act of violence will all be arrested whether dead or alive. We are not relenting; we are making efforts.

"I am calling in all journalists, please and please, let us encourage Imolites to report any suspicious person or clandestine activity going on within their area to the police. The battle is not meant for the police alone, this battle is meant for all of us. And that is why we must come out now and support the police with credible intelligence."

The PPRO went further to say: "Those hoodlums have adopted a guerilla-like strategy, where they come out from their enclave and unleash a surprise attack and go back into hiding.

"It is not that they have overwhelmed the security agencies, no; they have not overwhelmed us in any way. The incident that happened at Ogbaku, was a surprise ambush attack.

"And I am telling Imolites that if they support us with credible information by reporting any suspicious activities going on within their area, we can collectively nip in the bud, the activities of these criminal gangs. And I am assuring you that we will deal with these criminal elements in such a way that they will never think of perpetrating this insecurity in this state again."

Arrest those demanding forced relocation of Igbos from Lagos, Southwest States - Atiku tells FG

INIOMBONG IWOK

Atiku Abubakar, former Presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), has called on the Federal Government to arrest and prosecute Nigerians calling for the mass relocation of Igbos from Lagos and other Southwest states.

Atiku stated this on a verified X handle while reacting to a post demanding that Igbos be massively deported from Lagos and other Southwest states beginning from August 20 to August 30.

Atiku said such rhetoric is not only divisive but also endangers our peace and security as a nation. He noted that five days after the divisive calls were

made on social media, there has been a 'troubling silence from the government.

He also said that those behind the campaign should be arrested and prosecuted so it can serve as a deterrent to others who might want to make such calls in the future.

His statement reads: "The recent call on X (formerly Twitter) for a protest under the hashtag #IgboMustGo, demanding the forced relocation of Igbo people from Lagos and other Southwest states, is deeply troubling and fundamentally opposed to the principles of unity and coexistence that define our nation.

"Such rhetoric is not only divisive but also endangers our peace and security, as our Constitution guarantees every Nigerian the right to live and

work freely anywhere in the country.

"History has shown us the consequences of allowing hatred and bigotry to fester, as seen in Rwanda. What began with inflammatory rhetoric led to devastating outcomes. We must learn from these lessons and act decisively.

"I call on the Nigerian government and relevant authorities to take immediate and strong action against those inciting such hatred and division. It is imperative to investigate, arrest, and prosecute individuals promoting ethnic discrimination and violence. The rule of law must prevail, and those found guilty of incitement should face the full extent of legal consequences.

"Nigeria's strength lies in

its diversity, and we must resist any efforts to sow discord among our people. Lagos and the Southwest have long been melting pots of cultures where individuals from various backgrounds contribute to our collective growth and development. The Igbo community, along with all other ethnic groups, is an integral part of this vibrant mosaic.

"I urge all Nigerians to stand united against this divisive rhetoric and to champion unity, tolerance, and understanding. Our future depends on our ability to live and work together harmoniously.

"The government and security agencies must act swiftly to protect this fundamental principle and ensure that every Nigerian can live free from fear of discrimination or persecution.

Lagos reacts to threat post against Ndigbo

The Lagos State Government has reacted to a post threatening Ndigbo in Lagos. Atiku Abubakar, a former presidential candidate, had also raised alarm over the threat.

In a statement sighted by BusinessDaySunday, signed by Gboyege Akosile, special adviser, Media and Publicity to the

Lagos State Governor, the government said: "Attention of

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu has been drawn to a post by LagosPedia, a social media handle on X (formerly Twitter) that calls on the Igbo to vacate Lagos and Southwest of Nigeria and brace up for a massive hashtag

#IgboMustGo protest from 20th to 30th August, 2024.

"The Governor of Lagos State and indeed, Lagos State Government wish to distance themselves from the reckless,

divisive and dangerous rhetoric, saying Lagos remains home to every Nigerian citizen regardless of their ethnic nationality."

It further stated that "Governor Sanwo-Olu views the post as not only reckless and divisive but an attempt to sow a seed of discord between the Yoruba in the Southwest and other tribes, especially those who have made Lagos their permanent place of abode.

"The Governor appeals to Lagosians not to allow any person or group of individuals to create tensions in the State, calling on the security agencies to promptly investigate those behind the handle and bring them to justice.

"Mr. Governor enjoins Lagosians to ignore the post and any post of that nature, promising to double his efforts towards ensuring lasting peace in the state."

Youths urged to shun negative use of social media

NGOZI OKPALAKUNNE

Youths have been urged to shun negative use of social media as it leads to social isolation, anxiety, depression, cyber bullying, sexuality, cybercrime, among others.

Director, King Emmanuel Progressive College (KE-PROC), Lagos, Baiyewu Anthony who made the call during the graduation ceremony hosted by his school, explained that social media platforms which include Whatsapp, Facebook, Tik-tok, Twitter, YouTube, among others have negatively impacted the lives of the young ones in society.

Anthony regretted that many school children now pay more attention to the negative aspect of the social media than studying their books and doing home works given to them by their school teachers.

Some of the youth he said now see education as a scam, and therefore, are no longer interested in furthering their education.

He frowned at parents who buy android phones for their under-age children and added that such exposes them to crime and other vices.

He however, appealed to parents to monitor the activities of their children on social media and ensure they

do the right thing. Also, he stressed the need for parents and guardians to monitor the movement of their children both in and outside the school as well as watch the company they keep, adding that bad company spoils good manner.

"The impact of social media

on the youth is grievous; it has eroded away morals and values from the lives of the young ones, they no longer read their books, they can spend a whole day on the internet, charting and viewing things that are detrimental to their souls, parents and

guardians should wake up and ensure proper monitoring of their wards' activities, by so doing, their negative activities will be checkmated.

He also advised that parents should avoid over-pampering their children and that a good number of youths had

lost their lives untimely or had missed their targets in life as a result of over-pampering by parents, especially the affluent ones.

He commended the graduating students and urged them not to lose focus on the sound, true and meaningful education which has been given them.

Additionally, he said: "We have given you all it takes to enjoy the dividends of education as a channel to attain future greatness and relevance to your environment and the various situations that may present themselves in your pilgrimage on earth.

"Education, be it of any type, basic, applied, scientific technical and technological without a very sound moral pattern as its platform is comparable to tea without sugar. Such a system of education will never taste well. It is going to be a sour commodity. It will be tasteless and worthless instead of paving a way to future greatness. It will serve as an architect and engineer of various forms of misdemeanor.

"Never stop learning, embrace challenges and remain true to your values and passions; you are the future leaders, innovators and change makers."



A cross section of the graduating students of King Emmanuel Progressive College.

Educational consultant debunks scamming allegation, assures clients of fair play

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan

First Choice Educational Consult, the company that helps students from around the world achieve their dream of studying overseas at university level, has assured clients of fair play in all transactions.

Senior Consultant, Adedeji Oshin, while denying allegations against him over consultancy services his company rendered to clients, insisted he was not declared wanted by any agency.

Oshin, who explained what transpired between his organisation and the clients, said: "In February 2023, my firm of which I am the director, had a business partnership with a United Kingdom-based consultancy firm named Waikan Consulting, who are in the business, as they claimed, of getting people care giver jobs in the United Kingdom.

"After background checks, especially through their website we deemed it appropriate to work with them as a third party. Our clients were charged between N2.9million

and N3.2million (based on exchange rate at that time) for consultancy, administrative charges, logistics and training which all of them participated in and the whole process was four months which we relayed to our clients who also interfaced with the third party (Waikan Consulting).

"Four months later, precisely around June 2023, the UK firm remained non-forthcoming and of course, our clients became agitated.

"Premising on this, we instituted an interface with Waikan who claimed incomplete and unverifiable documents were submitted

by applicants as a hitch to profiling our clients and this was relayed to the clients by the third party (Waikan).

"Unknown to our firm, some of these clients further sent enquiry and report to the third party demanding transactional details of our firm with the third party

(Waikan). This led to a suspension of our partnership with Waikan Consulting based on an overcharge by our firm upon discovery that some freelance agents who referred some of these clients charged the clients up to N7million to N9million or more."

In a statement made available to journalists in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, the educational consultant said: "Our clients were charged between N2.9million and N3.2million (based on exchange rate at that time) for consultancy, administrative charges, logistics and training which all of them participated in.

Oshin reiterated that his firm did not charge more than N3.2m from these clients, adding that, "this was made known to the clients at an interactive meeting and further correspondence with the clients. Since July 2023 and now, over 50 of these clients have been refunded and we are actively processing refunds for

others."

He assured the clients involved, that, "our firm in her over eleven years of operations has never been involved nor mentioned in any form of financial scandal and that they will get their refund in due time, as we are also pursuing our refund from the company and other individuals involved."

The director of First Choice Educational Consult said he had reported to relevant authorities, the constant defamation, cyber bullying, blackmailing, cyber-stalking and threat to his person, and necessary legal actions shall be taken against the individuals and groups involved in this act.

"The incident has also been reported to the United Kingdom Action fraud department to investigate and recover funds. We will pursue all legal avenues to protect our company's reputation and ensure all clients receive their due funds," he said.



The Worshipper

Church leaders call for caution over state of the nation

...Says the Church must be nation's conscience

Stories by JOHN SALAU

Some Church leaders have called for caution on the part of protesters and the government over the state of the nation that led to the #EndBadGovernance protests nationwide.

They also warned that the Church in Nigeria must not lose its place as the conscience of the nation.

Chidi Anthony, president, Pentecostal Ministers' Forum (PMF), said that protest was not wrong in itself because it is a constitutional right of every citizen when they feel things are not working well in the country. He further said that the level of hunger in the country is high and that religious institutions would have to take up the challenge to drive behavioural change among the people.

"But the only problem we have here in Nigeria is that when protests are being carried



Chidi Anthony, president

on; before you know it, some hoodlums will hijack it, and it will affect the citizens because some infrastructures and other things in the country will be destroyed by these hoodlums,"

he said.

Anthony, who is also the general overseer of Kings in Christ Power Ministries, said that the current situation of the country is very painful

where political leaders ask the citizens to tighten their belts without taking corresponding actions.

"It's very painful that the education system of Nigeria keeps going down every day, and the sons and daughters of the politicians are abroad schooling where they have good education."

However, he called on the protesting youth to reconsider their position and give peace a chance by embracing dialogue so as not to throw the country into further hardship.

"The church has a very big work to do. Most of the big politicians we are talking about that embezzles the resources of the country are members of the churches; most of them are pastors in churches."

He said that the Church has failed to speak truth to power. "Instead of preaching the message that will change them; we now change our message to suit them."

"I wish that when they go to the Mosque, they will tell them

the truth. When they come to the Church, they tell them the truth - everywhere will be ungovernable for them, and they will have no alternative than to change," he said.

Babatunde Ilesanmi, chairman, PFN, Ikeja province, said the church should pray for peaceful protest, advise the government not to resist protest, and advise their members to participate. According to him, the Church and Christians by extension should pray that the protest will touch the hearts of those in government to do the needful.

Ilesanmi also urged the protesters not to be violent or destructive in their procession, and advised the police and other security forces to join the protest instead of attacking unarmed citizens.

"As Nigeria faces a critical test of its democracy, many are asking, 'Where does the church stand?' We recently addressed this question and more during an Ask Me Anything session at our Elevation NG staff

meeting.

"The church must be the nation's conscience, holding our leaders accountable by speaking truth to power. This role is crucial, especially now. We must evaluate our leaders' actions against godly principles and expectations," Godman Akinlabi, senior pastor, The Elevation Church (TEC) posted on his verified Facebook page.

According to him, the meeting also affirmed the right to peaceful protest, which is considered a fundamental aspect of democracy. "We encourage orderly and conscientious conduct. Beyond politics, we discussed relationships, marriage, and leadership."

He further disclosed that a key takeaway from the meeting was that leaders should create space for their team members to ask questions and share concerns outside of their tasks. "Leadership shouldn't always be top-down; be accessible, transparent, and inclusive."

MFM celebrates 35 years of God's faithfulness

The Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM) is set to celebrate 35 years of God's faithfulness and goodness to the ministry and annual convention starting from August 16 - 18, 2024.

"This August 2024, The Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries will be 35 years old and we believe it is a landmark worthy of celebration and rejoicing, to the glory of God who doeth wonders," Daniel Olukoya, founder and general overseer, MFM, stated during a recent press conference held at the

international headquarters of the church in Onike-Sabo, Yaba, Lagos.

Olukoya, who was represented by Kehinde Adegbolahan, assistant general overseer (AGO) ministerial school, disclosed that the anniversary ceremony which will be held at the Prayer City, Kilometre 12, Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, is themed 'Power from on High.'

He further disclosed that a lot of preparations have gone into the entire Prayer City to make it wear a new look and accommodate a larger number of participants for the

anniversary celebration and annual convention.

"Friday is for the arrival and registration of the guests, Saturday is the main day, when most of the activities will be held, till the wee hours of the next morning, while Sunday, thanksgiving service will be held, to thank God for his kindness to the Ministry in the past 35 years."

"God has really manifested himself in the lives of MFM members and used the ministry to bless so many other believers, who have been sharing outstanding testimonies of God's kindness," he stated.

Clement Umoru, senior regional overseer and vice-chairman, convention planning committee, said that the anniversary celebration would focus on meeting and deepening the spiritual needs of the participants. "...because this is a spiritual practice, the emphasis will be on teachings, music, and prayer."

He also disclosed that concerts would be held during the three-day programme, with special presentations from the youth and children ministry, while awards will be given to deserving members and regions of the church.

Ministry launches initiative to support early childhood development

The Caring Hearts Initiative (CHI) of the International Church of Christ (ICOC) Nigeria has launched a new initiative tagged, 'Heroes of CHI' to help raise funds for its early childhood development (ECD) programme.

Imagbe Igbinoaba, board chairman of the ministry, stated that the launch of 'Heroes of CHI' project will help the ministry raise funds to inspire hope and foster connections among vulnerable members of the society.

According to him, every contribution, no matter how big or small, is a step towards achieving the goals of the initiative and creating a positive impact in the world. "We are gathered here not just as individuals, but as a community with a common purpose to further drive the aims and objectives of CHI."

Igbinoaba highlighted some of the key focus, which includes provision of support for over 123 vulnerable children in nursery and primary schools, bursaries and scholarships for 32 students of tertiary institutions and essential monthly drug and food support for 950 vulnerable children from 360 households.

Reflecting the theme of the

event, 'Champions for Children Raffle,' Igbinoaba emphasised the collective commitment towards making a difference in the larger society. "Your presence here is a testament to your dedication and support which plays a crucial role in turning our vision into reality."

Anthony Osakwe, board member, Caring Hearts Initiative, stated that the importance of the early child development program is geared towards a holistic development of children from prenatal to age six/eight, to include their physical, cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, and spiritual growth.

Sola Scott, CHI coordinator, disclosed that the goal is to raise at least N30 million through the sale of 30,000 tickets, structured into booklets containing 20 tickets each. He disclosed further that the raffle draw is scheduled for November 13, 2024.

According to him, the funds raised will support the early child development program's various initiatives. "An innovative aspect of this fundraising effort is the all-digital payment method, allowing contributions from Nigeria and diaspora in any currency, with cash payments not being entertained."



L-R: Akin Olawale, director of admin; Clement Umoru, senior regional overseer and vice-chairman, convention planning committee; Kehinde Adegbolahan, Assistant-General Overseer (AGO) ministerial school; Lawrence Olaseinde, AGO in charge of African countries, and Abiodun Ladejola, chairman, convention planning committee, during the 35th anniversary & convention press conference held recently in Lagos.

The Worshipper

Austin Ukporhe



Leadership by example: The Jesus model

earth, there are billions of Christians, a name coined from observation of people whose lives reflected Christ in character and power. His teachings have formed the basis for civilisations and His followers have shaped nations through the ages. His unique leadership by example stands Him out eternally, and it is worth learning and imbibing.

Before we delve into looking at the Lord's leadership style, let's look at the principle of leadership by example generally.

Throughout history, the principle of leadership by example has inspired countless individuals. It's a simple yet profound concept: leaders who model the behaviour and values they expect from others can inspire loyalty, trust, and excellence in their teams.

Leadership by example has many benefits. Some are obvious, others are not but they are all profound. Here are four obvious benefits of leadership by example.

1. Leading by example helps you build trust. When leaders walk the talk, they demonstrate their commitment to their values and vision, earning the trust and respect of the people they lead.

2. Leading by example inspires loyalty. Leaders who lead by example create a sense of belonging and purpose, fostering a loyal and dedicated team. When people know that you do what you say, they are more likely to stick with you because of the integrity of your life in speech and deed.

3. Leading by example encourages accountability. By holding themselves to high standards, leaders inspire their team members to do the same. When the people you lead see you own up to your mistakes and learn from them, they are encouraged to own up to theirs. This builds a culture of transparency and accountability.

4. Leading by example promotes a positive culture. Leadership by example sets the tone for a positive, productive, and inclusive work culture. The best way to get people to be positive is to be positive yourself as a leader.

Jesus' leadership includes all of these and more. To understand the way Jesus led, you must first understand what He said about leadership.

In verse 20 of Matthew chapter 20, the mother of two of his 12 disciples, James and John, came to Jesus with her sons to ask for a favour. It was a political one. She believed Jesus was going to reign as king and wanted to secure good positions for her sons.

"Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom," she said.

Jesus made it clear that she didn't know what she was talking about and told them that those positions "belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

As expected, when the 10 heard about the political move, they were angry with the two brothers. That situation provided the context for Jesus' most profound teaching on

leadership.

The Bible recorded that Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." [verse 25-28].

The notion of leaders serving followers is alien to the world. The Lord Jesus didn't just teach it in speeches He modelled it in deeds. Jesus taught theories and did practicals.

He served His disciples all through His ministry. He laboured more than them all. He always went to pray in a solitary place way before dawn, hours before His disciples woke up. On at least one occasion, He asked His disciples to leave Him at the crusade venue to wrap up things. He was a hands-on leader, not the type that barks out orders while slouching on a couch.

Towards the end of His ministry, He did something that left an indelible mark on the hearts of His disciples, an example they were to follow.

In John chapter 13, from verses 3 to 17, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given Him all things and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the

disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

When He was done, He sat down and began to speak to them. I can imagine how surreal that experience would have been and the awe in the eyes of the disciples.

He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

That demonstration and the explanation are central to Jesus' teaching on leadership. As He concluded, it is one thing to know these things. It is something completely different to do them. Dear Christian leader, be a doer of these, not just a hearer.

May the Lord bless us all.

Reverend Ukporhe is the Senior Pastor at Remnant Christian Network, Lagos. Raised in Sokoto, northern Nigeria, he was trained in peculiar firebrand evangelism and was ordained as a pastor in 2001. He has experienced countless and diverse workings of the faithfulness of God over two decades and has developed a passion to see God's will for Nigeria become a reality. He can be reached on +2348060255604.

On the first day of August 2024, many Nigerians stormed the streets to protest bad governance, economic hardship and the rising cost of living.

The protests, held in many cities and towns across the country, turned violent in some places. Properties were destroyed, people injured and lives lost. The protests could have been avoided. They signal a failure in leadership. This underscores the importance of the topic of leadership by example.

History is dotted with scores of remarkable leaders in various climes. Many of them are celebrated, others venerated, but none is in the class of our Lord, Jesus Christ, not because He is God, but because of the enduring impact of His leadership.

Over 2,000 years after He left this

News

We aim to inspire transformative approach to leadership in Africa – Salami

JOHN SALAU

Abiola Salami, convener of Dr. Abiola Salami International Leadership (DASIL), has said that the second edition of the annual event is aimed at inspiring a transformative approach to leadership beyond mere professional growth across Africa.

He stated further that the bootcamp's goal was to help leaders make the most of their time to positively influence those they lead, and that it was designed to enhance participants' leadership skills beyond the boardroom.

The host emphasised that the DASIL bootcamp aims to continue providing a unique platform for senior leaders to reflect, re-strategise, reskill, rejuvenate, connect, and be inspired to deliver peak performance.

"This approach allowed partici-

pants to engage deeply with the material while also having time to reflect and apply their insights in a more relaxed environment," he stated during the DASIL bootcamp 2.0 held recently in Mombasa, Kenya.

He disclosed that the bootcamp engaged participants in a variety of workshops focused on transformational leadership, leveraging tact and empathy, executive leadership, innovative problem-solving and productive communication.

Salami stated further that building on the success of its inaugural edition held in Nairobi last year, the week-long bootcamp was carefully crafted to foster leadership skills while providing a holistic experience for comprehensive positive changes in leadership.

"By combining intensive learning with personal development and

relaxation, the bootcamp aimed to create well-rounded leaders capable of fostering growth and maturity consistently in their teams and organisations," he stated.

Stressing the importance of consistent actions in leadership, Salami stated that, "It is more of what we do consistently that impacts those we lead." According to him, this philosophy underscores the bootcamp's focus on developing sustainable leadership practices that can create lasting change in organisations and communities.

Mosun Belo-Olusoga, guest speaker at the bootcamp underscored the importance of authentic leadership. "You don't know who is watching or who your actions are motivating. It's about consistency. Be your authentic self. Let people know who you are."

Dana Born, Harvard University Professor urged participants to adopt a learning mindset to stay ahead of the curve in the global marketplace. She also emphasised the importance of continuous learning and growth in leadership.

Born urged the business leaders to adopt a learning mindset rather than categorising themselves as simply 'good' or 'bad' leaders. "Don't just think about yourself as a good leader or a bad leader. You should be a learning leader."

How PalmPay is empowering businesses, enriching lives

MODESTUS ANESORONYE

The banking sector is experiencing a significant and positive shift, with PalmPay leading the charge. As a prominent fintech innovator, PalmPay is making waves in business banking solutions and agent banking. Boasting a robust network of over 1.1 million Agents and Merchants, PalmPay is committed to enhancing financial accessibility across Nigeria.

PalmPay is celebrated for its secure digital payment solutions, offering a comprehensive range of tools such as the PalmPay Business app, Point of Sale (POS) machines, and Pay With Transfer. These tools simplify payment acceptance and business management for enterprises of all sizes, providing exceptional ease and security.

Agents and Merchants have recounted the fact that PalmPay has one of the best POS networks, which boasts a 99.5 percent success rate and ensures same-day settlement of transactions. This reliability supports efficient, high-quality, and secure service, underscoring the adage that time is money. As a result, businesses benefit from more successful transactions and increased revenue.

The Pay With Transfer feature has particularly resonated with MSMEs, contributing to a high user retention rate of 75 percent, with over 40 million Nigerians—about one in five—relying

on PalmPay for their monthly shopping and utility payments.

To foster MSME growth, PalmPay has launched an initiative where Merchants receive a complimentary POS device upon achieving a minimum monthly sales volume of 5 million. This scheme provides a valuable payment channel at no cost to business owners.

PalmPay's transparent fee structure, based on daily transaction volume, ensures fairness. For withdrawals between N1 and N20,000, a 0.5 percent fee applies, while transactions above N20,000 incur a flat fee of N100. Transfers between PalmPay agent accounts are free, and transfers to other banks are subject to a flat fee of N20, with the added benefit of up to N6 cashback per transfer.

PalmPay's business suite stands out with industry-leading cashback rates of 0.1 percent on every transaction. For example, a N20,000 withdrawal yields a N20 cashback, effectively reducing the fee rate to 0.4 percent and the actual cap fee to N80. Furthermore, the proactive approach to supporting community businesses includes a dedicated team of relationship managers who offer swift resolution of transaction issues and valuable guidance to promote business growth.

PalmPay's advancement in business banking exemplifies innovation and inclusivity. It is dedicated to facilitating smooth payments, advancing local business growth, and enhancing consumer experiences.



Feature

Why we are not keen on students' loan scheme – Undergraduates

...In Nigeria, such loans are Greek-gift - Alabi

...Must not be debt trap for students – Governor Adeleke

CHARLES OGWO

THE air around the Student Loan Act as signed by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is still hazy as many Nigerian students and parents seem confused on what the piece of legislation stands to offer them.

Some Nigerians seem to entertain fears that on the surface the Student Loan Act looks juicy by providing indigent students with interest-free tuition loans, but are worried that the scheme is a mirage going by the body language of the government and its agency.

According to Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND), the agency in charge of the disbursement of the loan, the fundamental aim of the fund is to ensure educational equity, providing an opportunity for financially disadvantaged students to start and complete their studies, just like their counterparts from more affluent backgrounds.

The goal is to prevent underprivileged students from dropping out due to financial constraints during their research.

However, in the face of this supposedly lofty opportunity, some Nigerian university undergraduates have spoken up about their unwillingness to apply for the students' loan.

Adebayo Olatunde, a student of the University of Lagos, said though the loan scheme is important for students who are unable to pay their fees, students are shying away from it because of requirements embedded in getting it.

"Some students are probably shying away because of the requirements to access the loan, or they think it isn't worth the problem; and they are better off without it," he said.

A male student of the University of Lagos (UNILAG), who spoke to BusinessDaySunday on condition of anonymity, said he and his friends were



skeptical about the students' loan.

"In fact, initially, some of my friends and I wanted to apply, but at a point we were discouraged because of some of the conditions attached to the loan. The most discouraging aspect is the N20,000 a month for feeding that will be paid into the student's account. Twenty thousand naira (N20,000) is too small an amount that can hardly do anything. And to think that if one signs on it, one may not know how much one would accumulate over

time to be a huge debt on one's neck at the end of the day. So, why accumulating huge debt for tomorrow?

"Again, the school fees are expected to be paid back two years after the national youth service. The downside there is that in our country, there is no automatic employment after youth service, we have graduates of many years still roaming the streets. So, except those who believe that the loan is a dash (free money) in the real sense of it, because they are not going to pay back,

but for some of us that have conscience, I don't want to go into something that will not give me rest of mind after leaving school. Do I need the help, the answer is yes, but I am cautious," the undergraduate said.

Rebecca Alabi, a student of the University of Benin, in Edo State, described the loan offer as a debt trap which she is not willing to venture into.

"The student loan for me is a no, no! Why would I jump into debt that will leave me in penury for years to come? I don't think I want to be in the list of the

government's debtors, there's no need for that; I can cope without their 'Greek-gift,'" she said.

Mary Abraham, a student of the University of Lagos, said she does not need the student loan because her parents are capable of footing her bills.

"I decided not to take the loan because I don't need it. My parents have the capacity to pay for my school fees and my parents also saw that it wasn't needed for us to take it," she said.

Chinonso Anthony, a student of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri believes the loan comes with a hidden agenda, and would not want to be associated with the Federal Government's proposed offer.

"The reason I didn't want to take the loan is because I think it's something that comes with some hidden conditions which the government would begin to unfold as time goes by," he said.

Iniamah Enoch, a student of the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, expressed concerns that the Act has the potential to create serious challenges for beneficiaries.

"I'm not comfortable with the Act, especially,

when initially the provision was highly contradictory, and had the potential to create serious challenges for intended beneficiaries of the loan.

"Though, they claimed to have rectified that, we're all in Nigeria, where one thing is said and another is done; I don't trust this government," he said.

The NELFUND explained that the repayment of the loan will commence two years after the completion of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme, and the repayment amount will be deducted directly from the beneficiary's salary at a rate of 10 percent by the employer, while self-employed beneficiaries will remit 10 percent of their total monthly profit to the designated students loan account prescribed by the bank.

However, many Nigerians are worried that the students' loan scheme is designed to enslave many and subject them into poverty even after graduation.

Ademola Adeleke, Osun State governor, recently called on the Federal Government and other stakeholders to ensure that the students' loan scheme does not become a death trap for the beneficiaries.

"We must as a nation avoid a similar debt trap. As we have the grace to understudy other nations operating similar funds, we must avoid the pitfalls. Our new system must integrate mechanisms to prevent similar experiences like what is happening in the US.

"I task the management of NELFUND to innovate within its mandate on how to make its operations sustainable. Debt trap must never be experienced in Nigeria's students' loan operations," he said.

In the same vein, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Ebonyi State University chapter, has chided the Federal Government over the loan scheme, saying its realisation and viability were not sustainable.



Feature

Nigerians struggle for survival despite govt's deployment of palliatives

KENNETH ATHEKAME

For several weeks, the Federal Government has said that it has dispatched 740 trucks of rice to the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

Twenty (20) trucks containing 1,200 bags of 25kg of rice were meant to reduce the hunger in society. But observers have insisted that the largesse amounted to a drop of water in an ocean, as the palliatives were so paltry that they cannot even scratch the surface of suffering the people are going through.

Modupeola Morris, a Nigerian mother, has been weaving bags, sandals and jewellery earning enough money to feed her son and send him to school. But since November, she has fallen on hard times as customers have stopped coming and she and her son routinely go to bed hungry.

She is among millions in Africa's largest economy, grappling with the worst cost-of-living-crisis in decades, which has deepened since President Bola Ahmed Tinubu introduced bold but unpopular economic reforms after he assumed office last May.

A major challenge for the Nigeria economy was its macroeconomic volatility driven largely by external terms of trade shocks and the country's large reliance on oil export earnings.

Last year, Morris could easily make N30,000 a week but now she will be lucky to get N5,000, she said.

"People used to place orders. I'll design for them, sometimes even (for) weddings I'll make souvenirs for them, but now those orders are not coming," said the 29-year-old Abuja resident.

"It has been very, very difficult, especially since I have a son and he needs to go to school; he needs to eat."

Tinubu inherited an economy that was already struggling with record debt, high unemployment, low oil output, subsidies that drained government finances and power shortages that crimped growth.

Nigeria imports food and fuel. The Russia-Ukraine war has also impacted the country negatively as it has affected imports of certain commodities. Nigeria is also among some other nations yet to recover from the devastating effect of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Tinubu, who campaigned on a "Renewed Hope" slogan, removed a costly petrol subsidy and foreign currency controls, in an effort to improve government finances, restore credibility with investors and kick-start the economy.

But inflation has soared to its highest in three decades and the naira currency is slumping to record lows, pressured by acute dollar shortages. Prices of food, cooking gas, medicines, fuel, and public transport have shot up, squeezing household budgets.

"With about 8 percent of Nigerians deemed food insecure, Using the



September 2018 to October 2019 household survey of expenditures, the cost of achieving 2251 calories per day (age-weighted caloric need for food security), is about N82,000 per person per year. Based on this survey, about 40 percent of the Nigerian population is identified as food insecure. Addressing rising food insecurity is the immediate policy priority," the International Monetary Fund said on March 4, 2024.

At Mile 12 market in Lagos is unusually quiet for the time of day when there is often a cacophonous din of traders and customers haggling over prices.

A basket of tomatoes now costs N120,000 -N140,000 – about double the national minimum wage approved recently. With the promise of a review every three years, the Federal Government and organised labour have settled for a new national minimum wage of N70,000 monthly. This is an increase of 133 percent over the former N30,000. It has been a long-drawn battle.

Dalhatu, a tomato seller at Mile 12 market, Lagos, said that the high cost of tomatoes has forced many of his friends to quit the business.

"They are just trying to find what they can eat now and not do the



tomato business," he said, pointing to several empty stalls.

Escalating food prices, agric and non-agric output, rainfall, insecurity are the major drivers of inflation.

Widespread insecurity in food growing areas, including abduction for ransom by armed gangs, a long-running Islamist insurgency and farmer-herder clashes, is adding to the woes by keeping many farmers away from their fields, Musa Yusufu, a farmer in Yobe State, told our reporter the cost he incurs to plant and harvest its products is extremely high. He said that he has to pay the bandits while planting his crops and harvesting its produce just for his safety.

"We have an emergency on our hands in terms of the social consequences of this reform, in terms of this food insecurity," Muda Yusuf, an economist and immediate past director general of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), said recently.

Labour unions led some protests a couple of months ago and have threatened to shut down the country to demand a tenfold rise in the minimum wage.

In response, the government started national consultations on a new monthly minimum wage, which had been pegged at N30,000 since 2019, but increased recently to N70,000.

The Federal Government said it has dispatched 20 trucks of rice to each of the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

It also said that the new move was part of measures to ease the economic burden of Nigerians.

Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, disclosed this to State House correspondents at the end of the Federal Executive Council meeting presided over by President Bola Tinubu at the Aso Rock Villa, Abuja recently.

Idris said each state has received truckloads of rice, each containing 1,200 bags of 25kg rice for onward distribution to the most vulnerable persons and families.

Unions however, said that this was not enough and that focus should be on "substantive issues" that have been under discussion with the government since June 2023.

"These include critical matters such as wage increases, social welfare programmes, infrastructure development, and the revitalisation of key sectors such as education and healthcare," the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) said in a statement.

Unfortunately, the palliatives released by the government are said not to be getting to the people, they are being "cornered" by those expected to share them to the target citizens.

Observers said that the state has become so predatory that anyone that gets hold of such palliatives meant for the poor citizens corners such items as his/her own share of the massive loot allegedly going on in government.

Feature

How VisionSpring empowers Nigeria's artistry community with clear vision for creativity

JOHN SALAU

In the vibrant streets of Nigeria, creativity knows no bounds. From the intricate patterns of Adire textiles to the soulful melodies of Afrobeats, the country's artistry community is a treasure trove of talent and innovation.

However, for many Nigerian artists, a lack of access to proper eye care can hinder their creative potential. That's where VisionSpring comes in - a social enterprise dedicated to providing affordable eyewear and eye care services to those who need it most.

By empowering Nigeria's artistry community with clear vision, VisionSpring is not only improving lives but also unlocking a world of creativity and possibility. VisionSpring and Nike Art Gallery partnered to celebrate the intersection of art and vision in a special art exhibition themed, 'Artistry, Creativity, and Innovation for a Thriving Nigeria.'

The initiative highlighted the importance of creativity and artistry in Nigerian culture, while also introducing the challenge of limited access to eye care and how VisionSpring is addressing the issue.

The exhibition provided a glimpse into the positive impact of VisionSpring's work and hints at the inspiring stories of Nigerian artists that have been impacted since 2016, when VisionSpring started intervening in Nigeria's low-income communities with eyeglasses as a social enterprise.

"Our biggest challenge in the art industry is our sight. Without our eyes, we can't do anything," said Nike Okundaye, director, Nike Art Gallery.

According to her, many artists do not pay attention to their eyes, which is why the gallery and the creative community partnered with the initiative to help restore sights for artists. "When I met VisionSpring, I said you are our God sent because a lot of our artists have lost their eyes."

It was disclosed that many artists in Nike's network are experiencing age-related vision loss, which is affecting their capability to create and make a living. Hence, the art exhibition highlighted some of the most talented artists in Nike's network, demonstrating how important vision correction is in preserving cultural heritage.

Gabriel Ogunyemi, Africa regional director, VisionSpring, said that clear vision is essential for artists to bring their ideas to life. However, many Nigerian artists struggle with vision problems, hindering their creative potential.

According to him, the partnership between VisionSpring and Nike Art Gallery is an initiative that addresses the issue of blurry sight, by providing access to eye care and eyewear, enabling artists to see their work with clarity and precision.

He disclosed that VisionSpring's impact is evident in the stories of Nigerian artists who have benefited from their services. From painters



Francis Jide, artist, presenting his painting to Gabriel Ogunyemi, African regional director, VisionSpring, after a life painting exercise during the exhibition.



VisionSpring management team led by Gabriel Ogunyemi, African regional director; Oteri Okolo, national coordinator, national eye health program, Federal Ministry of Health and Nike Okundaye, director, Nike Art Gallery (middle) leading other artists from the gallery to the exhibition

to sculptors, musicians to writers, VisionSpring has empowered artists to create with confidence and precision. With clear vision, artists can focus on their craft, pushing the boundaries of creativity and innovation.

According to him, VisionSpring's innovative approach to eye care has made it possible for artists in rural and underserved communities to access eyewear and eye care services. By partnering with local organisations and leveraging technology, VisionSpring has expanded access to eye care, reaching artists who would otherwise be left behind.

"In six years' time, we have corrected the vision of more than 350,000 Nigerians through eyeglasses. We are especially committed to Nigeria's artisans and low-income workers who use their hands for detailed tasks," Ogunyemi said.

According to him, artists are now able to experiment with new techniques, explore different mediums, and bring fresh perspectives to their work. He said further that by providing clear vision, VisionSpring is fostering creativity and innovation in Nigeria's artistry community, which

in turn, is contributing to a vibrant and dynamic art scene, showcasing Nigerian talent to the world.

While VisionSpring's work is making a significant impact, challenges remain. According to Ogunyemi, limited awareness, lack of infrastructure, and affordability constraints hinder access to eye care. However, VisionSpring sees these challenges as opportunities to innovate and expand its reach in Nigeria, and by extension, Africa.

"More than 70 million Nigerians have uncorrected blurry vision. In other words, about one in three Nigerians just need a simple pair of eyeglasses to see clearly," Ogunyemi said, disclosing that most of those who need eyeglasses and do not have them are in low-income communities.

According to him, clear sight has a profound effect on many aspects of human lives, including ability to work, read, and create. He said further that blurry vision is an easily solvable problem that can have an outsized impact on both an individual's earning capacity and quality of life.

"In April, VisionSpring published findings from THRIVE, a randomised

controlled trial conducted with Queen's University Belfast and BRAC. The study, carried out in rural Bangladesh, found that participants who received reading glasses experienced a 33.4 percent boost in median monthly income compared to the control group," Ogunyemi said.

He disclosed further that VisionSpring is driving the awareness campaign in Nigeria among people living in rural communities, especially those losing their sight due to an age-related disease caused by blurry vision.

"So, we are just starting from here to use these artists as a point of contact to get many other occupations that are near vision intense and they cannot see things that are very close. We try to use artists as a pivot to raise awareness and then launch into the other occupation space over time."

Ogunyemi also urged other corporate organisations to deepen their CSR initiatives to include and focus on age-related diseases like presbyopia. "So, we are raising awareness so that corporate organisations can know that this problem is big and it takes support

to solve it. We want them to support us in our programs, either through donation, through financial support, or through philanthropic giving so that they can partner with our organisation to reach more people."

Oteri Okolo, national coordinator, national eye health program at the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, said that the federal government is interested in helping Nigerians better their capacity to earn and improve their livelihood through the national eye health initiative.

"In that initiative, VisionSpring is one of the partners that support us, and that initiative is to ensure that at least 5 million Nigerians over 40 get a pair of reading glasses to be able to improve their productivity. Now, when I say reading glasses, I don't mean that the glasses are for reading only. They are for anything near work, so you can imagine the importance of reading glasses in the creative and innovative sector."

She disclosed that President Tinubu's goal is to ensure that Nigerians have increased access to reading glasses, and other support systems to improve the productivity of Nigerians, especially for people who are in the rural areas.

"Like we know, 70 percent of Nigerians reside in the rural areas, yet they do not have access to a simple pair of glasses. So basically Mr. President wants to ensure that 5 million of those Nigerians have access to a free pair of spectacles to improve their productivity and their well-being."

Abimbola Ogundirahun, country manager, VisionSpring Nigeria, said that the intersection between art and vision correction aimed at supporting the Nigerian artistry community, especially those experiencing drop in productivity due to age-related blurry vision.

"For you to be able to perform art, for you to be able to draw, you need your eyes; so, this is why we are creating awareness and advocacy today - so that we can have everybody work and partner with us to give people that need vision correction the correction they need."

According to her, VisionSpring's empowerment of Nigeria's artistry community with clear vision for creativity is a testament to the transformative power of access to eye care. She said that by unlocking the creative potential of artists, VisionSpring is contributing to a more vibrant, innovative, and inclusive art scene.

"This is under the program called 'See-to-earn'. You have a lot of people, the underserved communities, artisans, farmers, artists who need their eyes to earn a living and they are not able to afford the glasses they need to preserve their eyes. So, we are creating awareness around the need for eye tests and the need to have glasses."

Ogundirahun disclosed further that as VisionSpring continues to expand its reach, the possibilities for Nigerian artists are endless, and the world will undoubtedly be inspired by the creativity and talent that emerges.

Feature

From streets to classrooms: How Nigeria can harness 'street language' for education

JOHN SALAU

Nigeria is home to over 20 million vulnerable and neglected children. Many of these children have become disillusioned with society and have turned to the 'streets' as a means of survival.

However, media specialists believe their language and culture can be a powerful tool in reconnecting them with society, especially back into the schooling system.

Street/Gang language is a unique dialect that is used by gang members to communicate with each other. It is a language that is often shrouded in mystery and is exclusive to those who are part of the gang.

Out-of-school children often feel neglected and disconnected from society and are more likely to be swayed by the allure of gangs. However, by using gang language, social workers and counselors can connect with these children on their own terms. This language can be used to build trust and establish a rapport with these children.

Similarly, the government can leverage street language to empower neglected and out-of-school children.

According to media specialists, by teaching them how to express themselves in a positive way, society can help them to build confidence and self-esteem, which can also be a powerful tool in helping the neglected and out-of-school children to break free from the cycle of poverty and neglect.

According to a media specialist who spoke on condition of anonymity, this language can also be used to empower neglected children and help them to build confidence and self-esteem.

"Let us harness the power of gang language to make a positive impact on the lives of neglected and out-of-school children in Nigeria."

Chukwudinma Taiwo Okoji, lecturer, Department of Mass Communication, Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, told BDSunday that the Ministry of Education should see to it that the authorities in departments of linguistics and languages come up with an indigenous dictionary that will accommodate every jargon, slang and street register.

According to him, disparaging every street language, even 'swear words' should stop. Rather, neglected and out-of-school children should be taught how to use these words in a constructive manner.

"We have the western words categorising some words into what they refer to as 'F' words and kids, as soon as they are old enough to talk, are taught how forbidden such words are. This can be done in Nigeria as well," Okoji said.

Speaking further, Okoji said that children, in-school, as well as out-of-school; need to have a feeling of inclusion in the programme of every nation. He said this will go a



long way in the reconnection programme.

"Language register has been a unifying factor among different people as well as different bodies of occupation. Medical language, legal language, language of journalism, street language and so on. These are terms and words a specific group of people use. Others might find them difficult to understand," Okoji said.

He further said that there are many ways Nigeria can leverage street/gang language as a bargaining chip to bring back and reconnect neglected and out-of-school children back into the society.

According to him, identifying with neglected and out-of-school children by using some of their 'jargons' in education and in rehabilitation centres will not only make them feel relaxed, but will also bring smiles to their faces as they will feel loved, which will displace the feeling of rejection that they have had for a long time.

Ezekiel Olajimbibi, Nigerian linguist based in Luneburg, Germany, told BDSunday that findings from his recent study revealed that neglected and out-of-school children frequently use linguistic strategies to evoke sympathy, downplay the severity of their actions, and highlight shared struggles.

According to him, these strategies enable them to rationalise their behaviours within the context of survival and adaptation to street life.

Olajimbibi told BDSunday that his pivotal research project at the Institute of English Studies, Leuphana University, supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation as a George Forster Research Fellow, focuses on decoding the linguistic codes of street gangs in Nigeria.

He said that the study aims to re-engage with the over 20 million out-of-school children in the country who often turn to street life and gangs for identity and survival. According to him, the research employs participant observation and interviews with 104 street children, utilising Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to uncover the narratives

and ideologies within their conversations.

Olajimbibi's research aims to uncover how Nigerian street children use language to construct their identities and navigate their harsh realities. According to him, his previous work at Federal University Lokoja highlighted the importance of gang-specific linguistic codes in maintaining covert communication, identity, and solidarity within these groups.

By deciphering these codes, Olajimbibi believes that it is possible to bridge the communication gap, providing a pathway to reach and rehabilitate the over 20 million out-of-school children in Nigeria.

Speaking further, he disclosed that a significant portion of the study examines the Yoruba cultural context, which traditionally holds high expectations for child upbringing and moral behavior.

Olajimbibi contrasts these cultural norms with the harsh realities faced by street children, who often view their actions as necessary responses to societal neglect and inequality. According to him, the study highlighted how the children's discourse reflects their cognitive processes and social realities, revealing a deep sense of marginalization and a struggle for survival.

The linguist said further that while many studies have focused

on sociological, clinical, anthropological, and psychological aspects of street children, few have delved into the specificities of their language. The study argues that it is necessary to interrogate the language use of street children. "Our inability to understand the implicit meanings of their discourse and belief system may foster the persistence of streetism in Nigerian society."

Olajimbibi's discourse analytical tool addresses this gap by examining the linguistics of deviance and street identities these children construct that characterise and contextualise their socio-cultural experiences and their ideological implications. His research emphasizes that understanding these linguistic elements is crucial for creating effective intervention programs.

According to him, the research underscores the need for a broad understanding of the cognitive and social processes that shape the lives of street children. He said that by analyzing their discourse, the society can adopt more effective and empathetic policies and interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of deviance and providing support for the reintegration of street children into society.

Olajimbibi said that the study emphasised the importance of culturally sensitive approaches that consider the lived experiences and perspec-

tives of the children. Accordingly, the research includes detailed case studies that illustrate the various ways street children navigate their environments and construct their identities.

"For instance, children often discuss their involvement in petty theft or begging as means of survival, highlighting the lack of alternative opportunities and support systems. These narratives provide a compelling insight into the daily challenges and coping mechanisms of street children, offering valuable information for policymakers and social workers," he said.

Olajimbibi's research is not only vital for Nigeria but also holds significance for other societies facing similar challenges with out-of-school children. He said that by decoding the linguistic codes and understanding the constructed identities of the children, the study aims to reduce crime and promote a peaceful, inclusive society.

"The findings will offer valuable insights into the socio-cultural experiences and ideological implications of street children, contributing to global efforts in addressing this pervasive issue."

He disclosed further that the study advocated for a comprehensive approach to addressing the issues faced by out-of-school children, including improved access to education, healthcare, and social services.

The research, according to him, suggested that interventions should not only focus on immediate needs but also aim to create long-term solutions that address the underlying social and economic factors contributing to child homelessness and deviance. "By fostering an environment that supports holistic development, the study highlights the potential for significant positive change in the lives of street children," Olajimbibi said.

Accordingly, he disclosed that the research offers a profound look into the lives of street children in Southwestern Nigeria, highlighting the critical need for informed and compassionate responses to their plight.

"By understanding the ideological construction of deviance in their discourse, the study provides a foundation for developing effective strategies to support and reintegrate street children, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society.

"This research not only adds to the academic discourse but also calls for practical actions to improve the welfare and future prospects of street children in Nigeria," Olajimbibi said.

The effects of gang/street language in Nigeria's education sector are far-reaching and have significant consequences for academic performance, social mobility, and community relations. Similarly, it is essential to address the use of gang language in schools and promote a culture of respect, empathy, and inclusivity.



Tribute

The calamity of 3 deaths in South East ...As zone loses Iwuanyanwu, Ubah, Onwenu in one month

GODFREY OFURUM

PEOPLE of the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria are currently in grief, following the sudden death of Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, president, Ohanaeze Ndigbo; Ifeanyi Uba, a senator who represented Anambra South Senatorial zone, in the Senate, and Onyeka Onwenu, an accomplished journalist, musician and actor, all in July, 2024.

Iwuanyanwu died on July 25, 2024 at the age of 82, followed by Ifeanyi Uba, who died in London on July 27, 2024 aged 52, while Onyeka Onwenu passed on in a Lagos hospital on July 30, 2024 at the age of 72.

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State, expressed shock over the sudden death of these prominent personalities from Igboland, stressing that the vacuum they left, would be difficult to fill.

Announcing the death of Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, his family expressed their deep sorrow over the loss of their patriarch, fondly referred to as "Ahaejigamba Ndigbo."

The statement read: "The Iwuanyanwu family of Umuhii Atta, in Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State announces the demise of our patriarch, Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Iwuanyanwu—Ahaejigamba Ndigbo. Iwuanyanwu died on Thursday, July 25, 2024, after a brief illness. He was aged 82."

Iwuanyanwu's passing marks the end of a notable career in public service and leadership. He served as the President General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide, an influential socio-cultural organisation representing the Igbo people, and was also the President of the Owerri Peoples Assembly. His roles in these capacities were marked by a commitment to the unity and progress of the Igbo community.

The family noted that Iwuanyanwu is survived by his wife, Frances Iwuanyanwu, as well as numerous children and grandchildren, including Nwadiuto Iheakanwa, managing director, Champion Group of Newspapers.

They also said that burial arrangements would be announced following consultations, indicating respect for traditional protocols and the community's involvement in the process.

Iwuanyanwu's legacy extends beyond his leadership roles. He was a successful engineer, businessman, and philanthropist. He established one of Nigeria's first indigenous construction companies, Hardel and Enic Construction Company, which played a pivotal role in the nation's infrastructure development. His ventures also included investments in media, sports, and education, reflecting his diverse interests and commitment to national development.



Emmanuel Chukwuemeka Iwuanyanwu

As a philanthropist, he supported numerous educational and healthcare initiatives, earning him widespread respect and admiration.

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State, described the death of the leader of Ndigbo Worldwide, as a great loss to the Igbo nation and the entire country. He described Iwuanyanwu as a great patriot, lover of his people, a successful leader and an outstanding professional, businessman and leader.

The Abia State Governor in a statement, signed by Ukoha Njoku Ukoha, on behalf of the Government and People of Abia State, commiserated with the family of the late elder statesman, Imo State Government, the South-East, the Igbo nation across the globe and the country at large.

Duru Mike Ejiogu, a community leader, from Mbano, Imo State, stated that the lives of great people would always remind us that a good name and life lived in the fear of God and service to humanity will always be remembered.

"Our late sage, Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, (Ahaejiejemba Ndigbo) and the President General, Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide, lived a fulfilled life, as a devoted christian, statesman, community and national leader, great philanthropist and industrialist.

"He passed away in active service at 82, repositioning our region to take her rightful place in power dynamics of Nigeria. And with other ethnic nationalities in building a peaceful nation

"Nwa Nwa Ndi Isialala Mbano, you were

phenomenal in every sense of the word, on behalf of myself, family and Anara Ancient Kingdom, I pray for the peaceful repose of your soul in the Lord. Amen."

Goodluck Ibem, president general, Coalition of South-East Youth Leaders (COSEYL), described Iwuanyanwu, as a great philanthropist, an engineer of great repute, an enigma of sort, a trailblazer, a problem solver, a goal getter and a man with an overflowing zeal to be a blessing to his people and his generation. He expressed sadness over Iwuanyanwu's death, especially at a time that his positive contribution to national growth and development is greatly needed, stressing that his departure has left a big vacuum in the political journey of Ndigbo.

He commiserated with the immediate family, the good people of Imo state, Ndigbo all over the world and Nigerians in general over this great loss and prayed that God Almighty will give the family and his loved ones the fortitude to bear this irreparable great loss.

Onyeka Onwenu's death very shocking
Onyeka Onwenu, legendary Nigerian singer/songwriter, actress and politician, reportedly died at the age of 72.

According to reports, she died last Tuesday night at the Reddington Hospital in Lagos after slumping at the birthday party of Stella Okoli.

"It is very sad. Onyeka Onwenu just performed at the birthday of Stella Okoli today (Tuesday, July 30, 2024), and after performing,



Ifeanyi Uba

she slumped.

"She was taken to Reddington Hospital and she couldn't make it," an eyewitness said.

Onwenu was also a human rights and social activist, journalist, politician, and former X Factor series judge. Dubbed the "Elegant Stallion" by the Nigerian press, she was a former chairperson of the Imo State Council for Arts and Culture

Onwenu will be remembered for her music albums, such as 'In The Morning Light,' 'Dancing In The Sun,' and 'One Love.'

Governor Alex Otti of Abia State, expressed shock over the death of Onyeka Onwenu, describing her as one of the most outstanding songsters to emerge from the African continent, who blessed several generations with countless soul stirring lyrics, and most importantly, teaching people important lessons in life, love and service.

"Her longevity in the industry, and relevance, even at her hour of departure, points to the great gift and talent she really was.

"I have been trying to make sense out of the events of the last few days with limited success. My Sister Onyeka Onwenu was not even on the list to perform.

"She was not expected as she was said to be outside the country. She gets back and hears about my other sister's (Stella Okoli's) 80th birthday celebration. She rearranges things quickly and shows up to the surprise of everyone.

"The boisterous Onyeka, would not be there and not sing at Sister Stella's birthday. She would do just two songs and take her seat. Two songs became three, four and more! I have watched Onyeka several times perform on stage. But this was her best performance that I saw.

"Little did I know that this was going to be the last! I

while the rest of us stayed back.

"It was not until around midnight that I got a message that all was not well. On getting to the hospital, I got the shocker of my life. My Sister had just passed. She was said to have had a heart attack!

"Is this how people die? Can such a lively and, to the best of my knowledge, very fit and healthy person just die like that? Is the line of distinction between life and death this thin? Did she know this was her last performance that she held the audience spell bound for the duration of her appearance? Was there anything one could have done to save the situation? Was it time for God to call her back? Questions and questions without answers.

"Onyeka Onwenu was one of the most outstanding songsters to emerge from the African continent, blessing several generations with countless soul stirring lyrics, and most importantly, teaching us important lessons in life, love and service.

"Her longevity in the industry, and relevance, even at her hour of departure, point us to the great gift and talent she really was.

"So much has been said and written about Onyeka the musician, the movie star, the broadcaster, communication specialist, administrator, politician and public figure. What many have however missed is Onyeka's passion, energy and the untiring spirit she brought to anything she committed herself to.

"She was one, who made no accommodation for half measures, because she clearly understood her mission, as a pathfinder, and inspiration to several generations of women.

"Onyeka's life from her early age was one of

was still in awe of the raw energy and poise that she exuded on stage, when I heard someone ask 'do we have a doctor in the house?'

"Something told me to check and find out what had happened. Lo and behold, it was my sister on the floor! She had slumped and was gasping for breath. Help came quickly and off to the hospital she went. Peter Obi, offered to drive behind the ambulance,



Onyeka Onwenu

beating the odds, overcoming setbacks and rising to set standards that will define excellence for peers and observers.

"Cry, we certainly will, but we must be comforted by the fact that Onyeka lived joyfully and departed in grace, bringing joy to many, even as her last hours approached.

"Our best tribute to her will be to remind ourselves each day that like Onyeka's, our impact will be measured by how well we do the things that uplift others, offer hope to the desolate, and leave positive marks that will outlive our mortal frames.

"My last word to Onyeka will be one of gratitude. Thank you for being my sister, even though that visit to Abia did not happen after all! Thank you for touching lives, for being true and brave, and for teaching us that our lives can only be full and impactful when we make the most of the abilities and resources that have been availed us.

"To Onyeka's sons, Abraham and Tijani, do please accept my sympathies on the demise of your dearly beloved mum. We must now take courage in the fact that our dear Onyeka left us indelible lessons in overcoming setbacks and reaching for the stars.

Good night Sister. Ka chi foo!

Chijioke Ogbodo, an accomplished journalist/broadcaster in a tribute, described the recent passing of Onwenu, as a monumental loss to Nigeria and the world, as we reflect on a legacy that transcends the boundaries of art and civic duty.

According to Ogbodo, "in the vast landscape of Nigerian music, film, and public service, Onyeka Onwenu stood as a beacon of talent, grace, and integrity. Known affectionately as the "Elegant Stallion," her presence graced our lives for decades, leaving an indelible mark on the nation's cultural and political fabric."

Going down memory lane, he said that Onyeka Onwenu's journey began in the early 1980s when she burst onto the music scene with a voice that resonated with power and emotion.

Her songs, infused with themes of love, unity, and social consciousness, quickly made her a household name. Tracks like "One Love," "Iyogogo," and "You and I" became anthems, not just for their melodic beauty but for the profound messages they carried. One of her songs influenced the name of my son, Chibuzo. Onyeka's music was a soothing balm and a call to action, urging Nigerians to embrace peace and togetherness.

Her influence extended beyond music. Onyeka Onwenu was a trailblazer in the Nigerian film industry, taking on roles that showcased her versatility as an actress. She brought depth and authenticity to every character, whether in Nollywood classics or contemporary films. Her performances were a testament to her dedication to the craft and her desire to tell stories that mattered. She wasn't just acting; she was living

the experiences of the characters, making their struggles and triumphs her own.

Onyeka's artistic endeavours were complemented by her foray into public service, where she continued to advocate for social justice and equality. She held various political positions, using her platform to champion the rights of women and children, and to promote good governance. Her tenure in public office was marked by a commitment to transparency and accountability, qualities that earned her respect and admiration from colleagues and constituents alike.

Ifeanyi Uba's exit, a 'flash in the pan'

Ifeanyi Uba, a senator, represented Anambra South in the National Assembly until his death in London on July 27, 2024, few days after the death of Iwuanyanwu.

A close family source said he died in a UK hospital, where he went for surgery. He would have been 53 on September 3.

Ubah had defected to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) from the Young Progressives Party (YPP) last year.

He was later re-elected to the 10th Senate under the Young Progressive Party (YPP). The late Senator was billed to seek APC's ticket ahead of the Anambra State governorship election. A source claimed he made a monetary donation to Anambra APC two days before his death.

The chief executive officer (CEO) of Capital Oil had survived an assassination attempt in September 2022.

Leadership of the Senate in a statement, described Ubah, as an exemplary leader.

"Senator Uba was an exemplary leader, a committed public servant, and an indefatigable advocate for his constituents. His untimely departure represents a significant loss to the Senate, his community, and the nation at large," the Senate spokesman Yemi Adaramodu said in the statement.

"Throughout his tenure in the Senate, Senator Uba demonstrated unwavering dedication to the progress and development of Anambra South and Nigeria, as a whole.

"He was a beacon of hope, a champion of economic empowerment, and a steadfast supporter of legislative reforms aimed at improving the lives of all Nigerians."

President Bola Tinubu also condoled with Ubah's family and the Senate over the demise, saying the business tycoon's death is a "sad loss."

"President Tinubu commiserates with the friends and colleagues of the late Senator, the National Assembly, and the government and people of Anambra State over this sad loss," Tinubu's spokesman Ajuri Ngelale said.

Ifeanyi Uba, an accomplished business mogul, also invested in Sports and Newspaper publishing.



My Book Shelf Prof Ben U. Nwanne

Reading expands horizons and increases knowledge in many areas

Ben U. Nwanne is a professor of communication, author, researcher and reader.

He trained first as an educationist before pivoting to reading Mass Communication at the University of Nigeria and then at the University of Lagos. He persisted and earned a doctorate.

Prof Ben Nwanne has broad communication experience in journalism and public relations.

His books include *Media, Environmental Sustainability & National Development in Nigeria (2014)*, *Essentials of News Reporting and Writing (2008, 2016)*,

Functional Public Relations (2015) and *Strategic Advertising (2022, Tetfund)*.

• What are you reading currently?

I am currently reading *Why Nations Fail* (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013)

• What informs your choice of a book to read?

My book choice is informed by such materials' currency, relevance, and intellectual and literary quality.

• Which books rate as the Top Ten in your reading experience?

My top 10 books are:
i. The Trouble With Nigeria (Achebe, 1983)
ii. Gifted Hands (Carlson, 1990)
iii. The Odyssey of Emmanuel Onyeike Efeizomor II (Ukala and Nwanne, 2018)
iv. Talent is Never Enough (Maxwell, 2007)
v. Long Walk to Freedom (Mandela, 1994)



vi. Success Habits (Hill)
vii. Born to Run (Olojede, Adinoyi-Ojo)
viii. The Audacity of Hope (Obama)
ix. Seven Habits of Highly Effective People
x. The Concubine (Elechi Amadi).

• Which books would you return to again and again?

I will always return to *The Trouble With Nigeria* and *The Concubine*.

• Please suggest five es-

sential books and five general interest books for young people.

Five general books for young people:

- Dare to be a Success* (Robert Tilton)
- Success Habits* (Hill, 2022)
- The Trouble With Nigeria* (Achebe, 1983)
- Talent is Never Enough* (John Maxwell, 2007)
- Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (Stephen Covey, 2004)

• What role did being a bibliophile play in your career?

Being a bibliophile has encouraged me to work hard and try to achieve something worthwhile in my little way.

• Do you prefer hard copy or digital texts?

I prefer hard copies.
 • Any preference between fiction and non-fiction?

I prefer a judicious combination of both fiction and nonfiction.

• What is your view of the notion that Nigerians do not read?

Yes, indeed, many Nigerians do not read. The struggle for survival often diverts attention from reading. They also believe, with more than a pinch of salt, that reading does not make anyone rich, especially as many graduates of tertiary institutions lack jobs.

• What are your general thoughts on the benefits and disadvantages of reading?

Reading expands one's horizons and increases knowledge in many areas.

Reading encourages thoughtfulness, reasonableness and even godliness.

The Ford Foundation's new manifesto for philanthropy

Darren Walker (2023), From Generosity to Justice: A New Gospel of Wealth. NY: Disruption Books.



This definitive book by the President of the Ford Foundation's core message is higher and better. It follows in the mould of Stephen Covey's *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* (2004) and Robert Greene's *Mastery* (2012).

Walker has penned a new manifesto for philanthropy that goes beyond the United Nations Global Compact stipulations. The Global Compact is a non-binding United Nations pact to encourage businesses and firms worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies and report on their implementation.

Concern with growing global inequality is the primary trigger for this comprehensive interrogation of the spectrum of poverty to wealth. It started as a heartfelt 2020 New Year's message from Walker, who "anticipated a difficult year ahead." His hunch was correct, as COVID-19 brought to the forefront the economic challenges of the world and its impact on humankind.

Walker: "Our converging crises of extreme inequality, racial injustice,

and autocratic, anti-democratic impunity -multiplied not just by each other, but also by a pandemic that has claimed more than 6.5 million lives (and counting) pose grave peril to our survival, as does a changing climate that is pushing our life-sustaining ecosystems to the brink of collapse. The droughts and floods, the storms and fires, all are worsening. Further, the distortion of our capitalism and the inequality it continues to produce have overloaded this burden onto the backs of the poor, the marginalised and the vulnerable.

We are staring down existential risk -and as a global and national community our window to act is closing. If we only do what we have always done, the trauma of these last few years will be only the beginning."

Walker draws on the vast historical experience of The Ford Foundation to outline a new agenda for philanthropy. He enrolls many players across fields and disciplines to offer a rich bouquet of solutions. He interviewed philanthropists, philosophers, capitalists and social workers.

Contributors include Elizabeth Alexander, Ikal Angeleli, Laura and John Arnold, Laura Arrilaga-Andressen, Connie Ballmer, Steve Ballmer, Ken Frazier, Nick Hanauer, Carly Hare, Melody Hobson, George Kaiser, and the African Strive Masiyiwa. Others include Ai-Jen Poo, Laurene Powell Jobs, Jeff Raikes, Tricia Raikes, David Rockefeller Jr, David Skorton, Jon Stryker, Laurie Tisch, and Alice Walton.

Walker's thesis is that philanthropy should be a catalyst for achieving economic, social, and political justice. The book tackles these core themes and arguments.

• First is a critique of tra-

ditional philanthropy: Walker challenges the notion of philanthropy as mere charity, arguing that it should be a force for systemic change.

• He then articulates the need for a new "Gospel of Wealth": Inspired by Andrew Carnegie's original work, Walker proposes a modern framework for philanthropy that prioritises justice and equity. Carnegie wrote *The Gospel of Wealth* in 1889. Experts consider it the foundation of modern philanthropy. Carnegie believed in giving wealth away during one's lifetime. He stated, "The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth so that the ties of brother-

hood may still bind together the rich and poor in a harmonious relationship. The conditions of human life have changed and revolutionised within the past few hundred years. In former days, there was little difference between the chief's dwelling, dress, food, and environment and those of his retainers."

• The role of philanthropy in addressing social issues: The book explores how philanthropy can tackle pressing challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and racial injustice.

• The importance of collaboration: Walker emphasises the need for collaboration between philanthropists, the government, and the private sector to create a lasting impact.

Walker defines the roadmap in "The Tenets of a New Gospel". He asks stakeholders to remember to

• Recognise the privilege of perspective by seeing and sharing access and opportunity.

• Adopt the awareness of ignorance by learning what we don't know.

• Take ownership of selflessness by giving with humility.

• Work to raise the roots by addressing causes, not consequences.

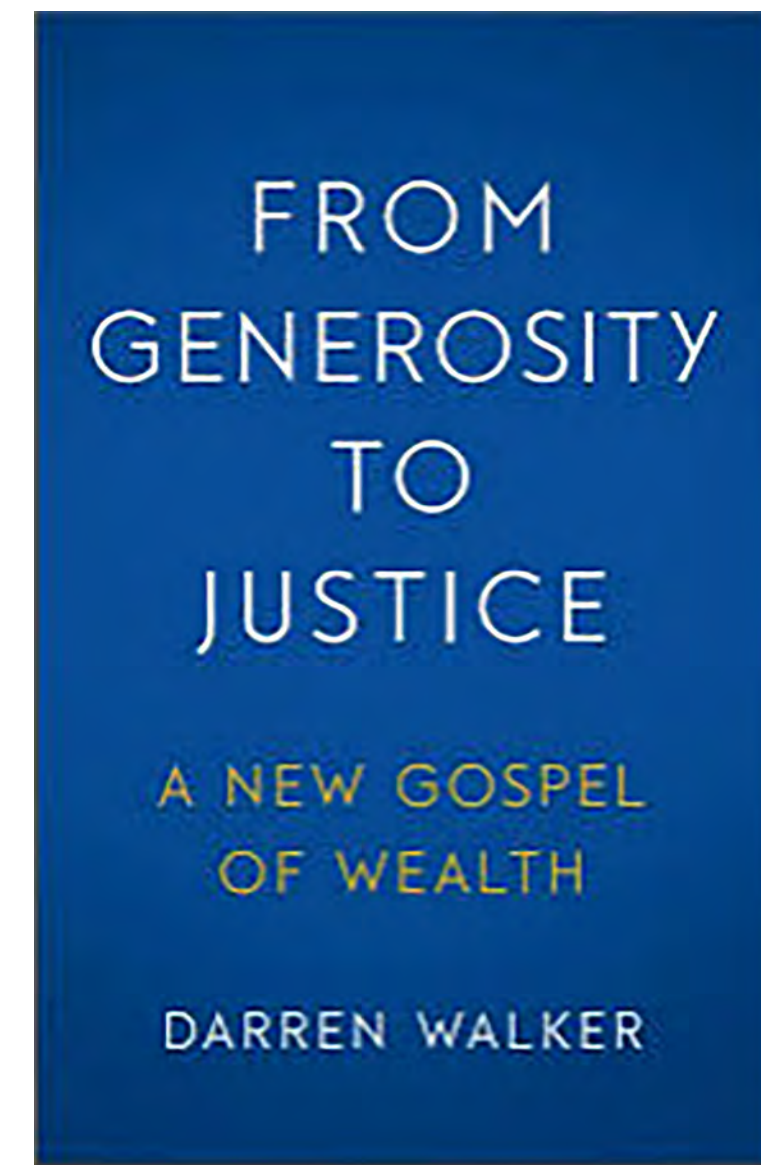
• Harness the power of proximity by valuing both expertise and experience.

• Exercise the courage of conviction by standing up and speaking out and

• Promote the democracy of justice by recognising that our liberation is bound together.

From *Generosity to Justice* runs through a preface, introduction, eight chapters and a conclusion. It is an invaluable look at core issues around the new bases, motivation for giving, and what it should seek to accomplish.

Walker says no more tokenism. Philanthropy should be more strategic and do more and better.



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Book Review

The Next Fifty Things That Made the Modern Economy

Published in Great Britain in 2017 by Little Brown

Author: Tim Harford

Pages: 330

Reviewer: Athekame Kenneth

Tim Harford is an English economist and journalist. He has written four books on economics, and writes the Financial Times column, 'The Undercover Economist' on the economic ideas behind every-day experiences. This book, a short summary of 50 inventions that shaped the modern economy, shows how some inventions shaped, and still shape our lives in profound and unpredicted ways.

Many inventions create winners and losers, so while solving a problem for someone, they're often creating a problem for others. The original Luddites, for example, were weavers and textile workers who smashed mechanical looms in England 200 years ago. They did this because they rightly feared that machines would devalue their skills and make them poorer.

"Whenever a new technology emerges," Harford notes, "it's worth trying to ask who will win and who will lose out as a result. The answer can often surprise us."

Some inventions change how we live, the systems we use to cope, the ideas we hold, and more.

Fifty Things That Made the Modern Economy It's a book you can dip in and out of as its divided into chapters for each 'thing' that are relatively

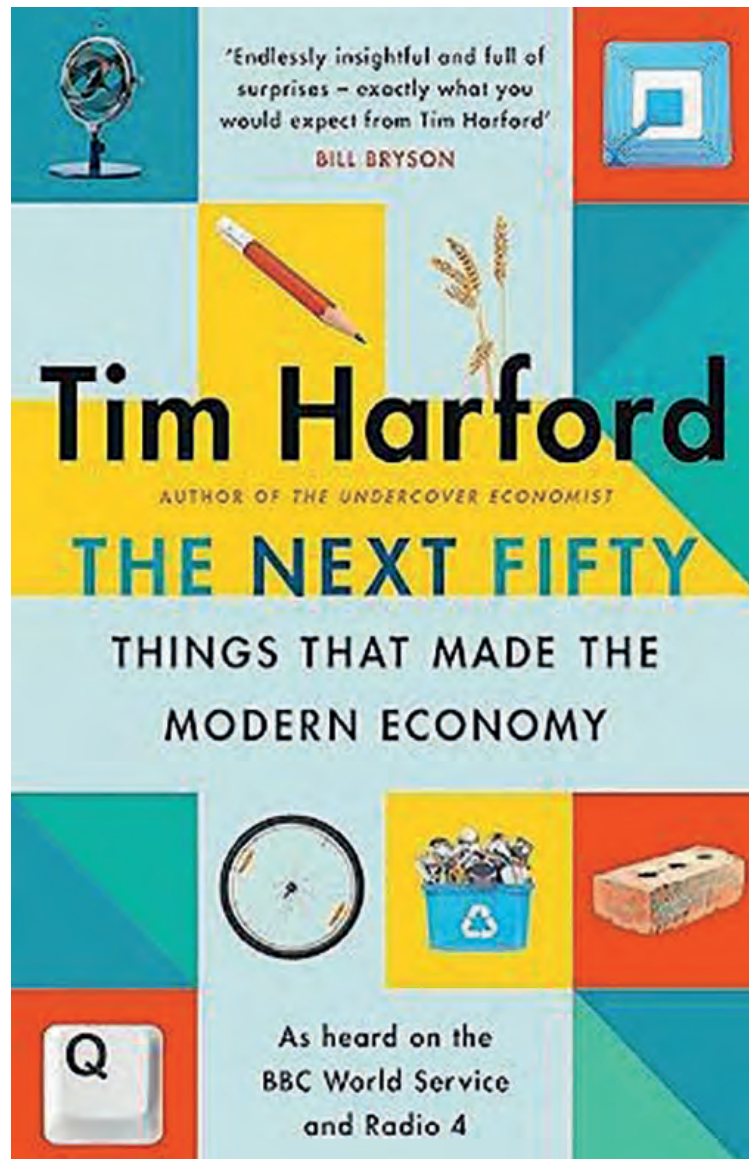
short.

However, it can't be disputed that Tim Harford and his team have put a lot of work into summarising the invention, problems and impact of each item that had an impact on the modern economy. These range from the light bulb to radar, Google to the S bend. Each item makes you pause and think about how it has revolutionised the world for good or not so good (e.g., leaded petrol). It's also a good taste of items you might want to read more about. For me I wasn't aware that the inventor of TV dinners was a woman. Nor was I aware of the financial issues of the inventor of the diesel engine, who has saved me money on fuel economy!

Overall, it's an interesting idea in a book format that's good to read in small chunks as there's no real need to remember the chapters before. Harford writes clearly and concisely; subjects are explained in more depth. A fascinating book that educates, informs, and introspects (some) of the best ideas that have shaped our lives!

Amazing ideas that struck me: Barbed Wire, The Shipping Container, Department Stores, Diesel Engines (shocking), M-Pesa (fascinating), Index Funds (my best), Concrete.

More than half the new jobs created since the 2008 financial crisis are in



the self-employed sector in the UK.

On TV Dinners: The data is precise that the washing machine didn't save a lot of time because we didn't wash clothes very often before the washing machine. When it took all day to wash and dry a few shirts, people would use replaceable collars and cuffs or dark outer layers to hide the grime. But we cannot skip many meals in the way that we can skip the laundry. When it took two or three hours to prepare a meal, that was a job that someone had to take the time to do. The washing machine didn't save much time, and the ready meal did because we were willing to stink, but we weren't willing to starve.

On The Pill - The answer is that by giving women control over their fertility, the pill allowed them to invest in their careers. An economist demonstrated that if a woman in her twenties were able to delay motherhood by one year, her lifetime earnings would rise by 10 percent.

Where Ford offered cars in a single shade of black, Google famously tested the effect on click-through rates of forty-one slightly different shades of blue.

Selfridges was the 1st to introduce ladies' lavatories in his dept shops and struck gold.

The biggest enabler of globalisation isn't a free trade agreement but a simple invention: a corrugated steel box, 8 feet wide, 8.5 feet high and 40 feet long. A shipping container.

In Hungary in 1946, prices trebled every day. Walk into a Budapest café back then, and it was better to pay for your coffee when you arrived, not when you left.

Oluyinka Davids to release books on healing, finance, relationships

KENNETH ATHEKAME

Oluyinka Davids, a film director, cinematographer, author, and counsellor, is set to unveil a collection of books focusing on healing, life's pivotal moments, financial wisdom, and the art of meaningful connections on August 5, 2024.

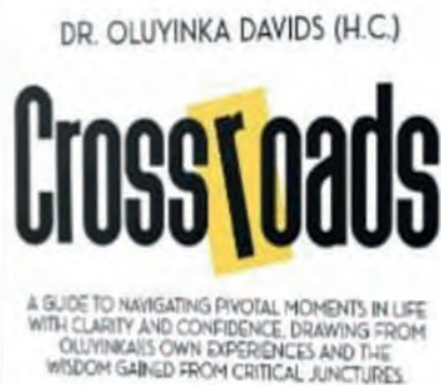
Based in Dallas, USA, Davids has long been celebrated for his storytelling prowess, both in film and literature.

Recently, he bagged the US President's Lifetime Achievement award for his service and dedication to both local and international communities.

The first book, 'Breaking the Cycle of Hurt: Shift Your Focus, Find Your Freedom,' offers a deeply personal exploration of overcoming emotional pain.

Drawing from his own experiences, Davids provides practical steps and spiritual insights for those seeking to break free from past hurts and embrace a life of peace and fulfilment.

In Crossroads, Davids guides readers through the critical decisions that define their lives. Using his own journey as a backdrop, he shares tools to navigate life's inevitable turning points



with clarity and confidence. This book is a call to embrace change and move forward with courage.

For those looking to gain control of their finances, How to Budget and Manage Your Finance is an essential read. Davids simplifies complex financial concepts, offering practical advice that empowers readers to take charge of their financial futures.

Finally, The Art of Connection: Mastering Marital, Friendship, and Professional Relationships provides insights into managing various relationships with empathy and understanding. Davids in a recent virtual press conference to unveil the books emphasised the importance of communication, conflict resolution, and balance in building healthy, fulfilling connections.

He disclosed that his role model in the film industry is the American filmmaker, Tyler Perry; said further that his mission is to inspire and empower others, blending personal wisdom with universal truths.

According to him, the latest collections will resonate deeply with readers, offering them tools to navigate life's challenges and achieve personal growth.

Interview

Scaling through in media marketing requires skills and adaptability - Uchechukwu

Digital marketing in Nigeria has seen significant growth in recent years, driven by increasing internet penetration, mobile phone usage, and a youthful, tech-savvy population. Here, Favour Nmesoma Uchechukwu, a digital marketing expert, in this interview with ANTHONY NLEBEM, spoke on the projection for media marketing in Nigeria's landscape, challenges and solutions. Excerpts:

What is your projection for media marketing in Nigeria, say ten years from now?

In the next ten years, the Nigerian media landscape will undergo a profound transformation. Driven by rapid digital adoption, marketers will increasingly rely on data-driven strategies to reach a sophisticated and discerning audience. Video content will reign supreme, with short-form platforms driving engagement. Influencer marketing will evolve, with micro-influencers and authentic partnerships becoming the norm. AI and automation will optimise campaigns, freeing marketers to focus on creativity and storytelling.

However, the Nigerian market is diverse, and marketers must tailor their strategies to regional nuances. Local content will flourish, resonating with audiences on a deeper level. As the country progresses, media marketing will play a pivotal role in driving financial inclusion and sustainable development. Emerging technologies like the metaverse and Web3 will present new opportunities and challenges. Marketers who prioritise data privacy, ethics, and sustainability will gain a competitive edge. The future of media marketing in Nigeria is bright, promising innovation, growth, and impact.

What specific media marketing campaigns have you worked on, and what were the outcomes?

My experience spans various industries, each contributing to my skill set and providing valuable insights.

At Heels and Tech, an Ed-Tech company, I spearheaded a Facebook advertising campaign aimed at new and stay-at-home mothers, with the goal of helping women, especially mums with no tech background, transition into non-code tech roles. By conducting in-depth audience research and creating highly targeted ad creatives, I successfully increased conversions and click-through rates (CTR). A retargeting campaign complemented this effort, yielding impressive results with higher click-through rates and lower costs per click.

Currently, at Prospa Technology, I'm leading performance marketing initiatives. A key accomplishment was boosting app installs by an impressive 1100% within a month through rigorous A/B testing and funnel opti-



misation. Additionally, I've implemented new email marketing tools to nurture partnerships and expand our member base. By consistently monitoring performance metrics and staying updated on industry trends, I contribute to data-driven decision-making and overall campaign success.

How do you stay updated with the latest trends and changes in media marketing?

To stay at the forefront of media marketing, I employ a multifaceted approach. I consistently monitor industry trends through a combination of platforms and strategies. This includes following influential thought leaders on social media, attending industry conferences and webinars, and subscribing to relevant publications.

Moreover, I actively participate in online communities and forums to engage with colleagues and exchange knowledge. By conducting regular competitive analysis, I identify emerging opportunities and potential threats. My aspiration to assume a CMO role in a global company fuels my relentless pursuit of knowledge. I believe that by not only staying updated but also proactively shaping industry trends, I can position myself as a strategic leader.

What can you say about the

growth of the media marketing landscape in Nigeria?

The media marketing landscape in Nigeria is experiencing rapid growth, fueled by increasing digital adoption and a growing middle class. There's a rising demand for data-driven strategies and content marketing. However, challenges such as limited digital infrastructure and measurement limitations persist. To fully capitalize on the growth potential, there's a need for investment in digital skills and infrastructure.

Any challenges and solutions to drive the growth of media marketing in Nigeria?

Key challenges include limited digital literacy, measurement challenges, and a fragmented media landscape. To drive growth, we need to invest in digital education and training, develop robust measurement frameworks, and foster collaboration among industry stakeholders. Additionally, supporting local content creation and promoting digital advertising will contribute to the overall ecosystem's development.

Is the media marketing business well-regulated in Nigeria?

While there are some regulations in place, the media marketing industry in Nigeria is still evolving. Self-regulation and industry standards play a crucial role in main-

taining ethical practices. There's an opportunity to develop a more comprehensive regulatory framework to protect consumers and ensure fair competition.

How do you determine the target audience?

Determining the target audience involves a combination of market research, customer segmentation, and data analysis. I use demographic, psychographic, and behavioral data to create detailed audience profiles. Understanding their needs, preferences, and online behavior is essential for developing effective media strategies.

How will media marketing help boost brand penetration and awareness?

Media marketing plays a vital role in building brand awareness and penetration by increasing visibility, reaching target audiences effectively, and creating compelling brand stories. Through strategic media planning and execution, we can generate buzz, drive engagement, and ultimately build a strong brand presence.

What are some common challenges you face in media marketing, and how do you overcome them?

Common challenges include budget constraints, ad fraud, and measuring ROI. To overcome these, I focus on optimizing media spend through data analysis, implementing fraud prevention measures, and setting clear KPIs. Collaborating with clients to align expectations and demonstrating the impact of campaigns is crucial for building trust and securing budgets.

What are the biggest trends shaping the future of media marketing?

AI and machine learning are revolutionizing media marketing by enabling hyper-personalization, automated bidding, and predictive analytics. The rise of programmatic advertising and influencer marketing are also reshaping the industry. Additionally, privacy regulations like GDPR and CCPA are forcing marketers to adopt data-driven strategies that respect consumer privacy.

How do you see the role of traditional media evolving in the next few years?

Traditional media will continue to play a role, especially for build-

ing brand awareness and reaching specific demographics. However, the focus will shift towards digital integration and cross-platform campaigns. Traditional media outlets will need to adapt to changing consumer habits and embrace digital technologies to remain relevant.

What informed your decision on your career path?

Growing up as the second child of an Igbo businessman, I was immersed in the world of commerce and I loved every second of it. Witnessing the transformative power of digital platforms on family businesses, such as the shift from physical stores to online marketplaces, ignited my passion for understanding how technology could reshape industries.

My innate curiosity about consumer behavior and the mechanics of online marketplaces led me to explore various marketing strategies. From dissecting successful campaigns of global brands to analyzing local market trends, I developed a keen eye for identifying opportunities and crafting compelling narratives. This combination of business acumen and creative flair naturally propelled me towards a career in media marketing, where I could leverage my skills to drive growth and innovation.

How have you been able to scale through?

Scaling through in media marketing requires a combination of skills and adaptability. I've consistently upskilled myself through constant learning, leading to certifications, workshops, and online courses. Building strong relationships with clients and stakeholders has also been crucial. Moreover, staying updated with industry trends and leveraging data-driven insights has helped me navigate challenges and achieve success.

What new technologies or platforms are you most excited about in the media marketing space?

I'm particularly excited about the potential of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) for immersive brand experiences. Voice search and chatbots are also transforming customer interactions and creating new opportunities for engagement. The integration of these technologies with data-driven marketing strategies will open up exciting possibilities.

Cover

Nigeria counts the cost of #EndBadGovernance...

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fewer in some states.

At least, 17 people have been killed since the protests began across Nigeria on Thursday. The fatalities occurred in various locations, including Abuja, Kano, Niger, Borno, Kaduna, and Jigawa.

In Abuja and Kano, one person was shot dead in each city. In Jigawa, two people lost their lives. In Niger, six individuals were reportedly gunned down by security forces. Borno saw four deaths, while three people died in Kaduna.

The Amnesty International has also reported multiple deaths, while the Nigeria Police Force has confirmed the killing of one officer and injuries to others.

The economic repercussions of the protests are staggering. Nigeria's economy has reportedly suffered a loss of over 500 billion in just one day. This massive economic blow is attributed to the widespread disruption of business activities, the imposition of curfews in several states, and the general atmosphere of instability that has gripped the nation.

Muda Yusuf, the chief executive officer of the Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE) had earlier said that the nationwide protests could inflict an estimated daily loss of N400 billion to the already fragile economy.

He said the consequences of such a huge loss for the country and the citizens would be very severe, appealing for a shorter duration of one day in order for it not to degenerate into chaos and anarchy.

"Prolonged protests create opportunities for hoodlums, miscreants, and other criminal elements in the society to build momentum to unleash mayhem and destruction on the country," the CPPE boss said.

Despite the government's efforts to persuade and pressure the protesters to back down, they have remained resolute.

The demonstrators, driven by grievances over economic hardship, high food prices, and the removal of fuel subsidies, continue to demand changes.

Other demands include immediate reforms of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), along with renewed efforts to combat corruption among politicians.



Their determination is evident in the large numbers that have taken to the streets in cities like Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Jos, Kaduna and Port Harcourt.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's silence on the matter has been a point of contention. Many Nigerians have condemned his refusal to address the nation, interpreting it as a sign of disregard for the people's concerns. This perceived indifference has only fueled the protesters' resolve, as they feel their voices are not being heard.

The government's handling of the situation, including the deployment of security forces and the imposition of curfews, has drawn criticism from various quarters. The situation remains tense, with the potential for further escalation if the underlying issues are not addressed.

As the protests entered Day 3, calls and entreaties for a suspension of the protest grew. The calls came from religious and business leaders as well as some stakeholders in the protest.

Suspend protests, allow dialogue with government - Adegboruwa appeals to protesters

Ebun-Olu Adegboruwa, a human rights lawyer, has called for the suspension of the ongoing nationwide protests.

In a statement on Friday, Adegboruwa, who is the counsel for the "Take It Back Movement," one of the organisers of the protests, urged protesters to withdraw

from their various locations and suspend the protests immediately and indefinitely to allow for meaningful dialogue and engagement with the government.

"Though the intention of the organisers was to achieve peaceful and well-coordinated protests, it would seem that fifth columnists and some angry persons infiltrated the ranks of the protesters to derail their laudable mission," he said.

"I appeal to the protesters to withdraw themselves from their various protest grounds and to suspend the protests immediately and indefinitely, in order to give room for meaningful dialogue and engagement with the government.

"Given that the protests were said to have been hijacked by sponsored agents, it is necessary to avoid further losses and casualties.

"The organisers of the protests and their representatives should embrace dialogue with the government," he added.

Adegboruwa expressed regret over the deaths and losses recorded during the demonstrations. He emphasised that such outcomes were never the goal of the protests and extended his condolences to the families of the deceased security personnel and protesters.

On the eve of the protests, Adegboruwa had urged the organisers to reduce the planned 10-day action to a single day.

Adegboruwa called on Tinu-

bu to directly address the nation and engage with the protesters through their representatives. He suggested that the government should form a committee of reputable individuals to meet with the protesters and address their concerns.

We'll step in if breaches continue - Military

The Nigerian military on Friday said that it may intervene to control the escalating looting crisis and identify the sponsors of the ongoing nationwide hunger protests.

Christopher Musa, the chief of defence staff, addressed the situation during a press conference in Abuja, emphasising the military's current support role to the police.

He said, "We are supporting the police all through. We are just on standby. The police are doing a good job; they are handling the situation for now.

"Unless it breaches beyond what they can handle, then the military will step in. The military is on standby and we are watching day and night."

Acknowledging the economic grievances driving the protests, Musa urged the protesters to understand the Federal Government's position and called for unity during these challenging times. He also cautioned against vandalism and looting, stressing the need to maintain public order and protect property.

The defence chief also asked

the media to reduce the coverage of the protests, saying some protesters are only looking for screen time.

"I noticed throughout yesterday all the stations were hooked up on the occasion. This is not an election, don't give them that coverage because some of them are just looking for moments of being on the screen," Musa said.

Protest may go beyond 10 days - Group

The TakeItBack Movement, one of the organisers of the protest, said the demonstration would continue and "may go beyond" 10 days, "depending on the response we get from the government."

"It does not seem that we are dealing with a responsible government so they should expect it to go beyond 10 days if our demands and concerns are not addressed," Damilola Adenola, the director of mobilisation, said on Channels Television on Friday night.

More reactions

"President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (PBAT) policy makers should have observed from developments culminating into the recent nationwide protest that people's factor is very germane in any democratic government's policies. The timing of the implementation of planned actions is equally crucial because doing the right thing at the wrong time will vitiate the goodness of the right thing done," said Samson Oluga, dean, school of general and administrative studies, Federal Polytechnic Ede, Osun State.

According to him, President Tinubu has been facing a lot of challenges since he got the nation's mantle of leadership last year with the intention of bringing

back the country on the track of systematic societal transformation heading towards sustainable national developments.

However, he said that some of the present government's economic policies leading to fuel price hike, foreign exchange floating, electricity tariff upsurge, import duty increment and value added tax upward review have negatively impacted on the masses socio-economically.

"Costs of essential goods and services like food items, house rents, mobile phone charges, medications, building products and educational materials have been skyrocketing and have not been nose-diving thereby defying the law of gravity," Oluga said.

He further said that the government's policy intervention has failed to appease the protesters because the policies were ill planned. He said further that the current administration should always be mindful of the plights of the people and should avoid things that will negatively impact on the people or jeopardise their interests.

"This is the only way the good plans that the PBAT's government has for the country's systematic transformation and nation's sustainable development will work well without wounding the people who are the beneficiaries. This is pertinent because democracy remains



the government of the people by the people for the people," Oluga said.

Counting the huge losses so far, Bosun Tijani, Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, took to his X (Twitter) handle to lament the unnecessary looting of the Digital Innovation Part by protesters in Kano, amounting to millions of Naira, and sadly, a setback to deepening the country's workforce for technology.

"Sad to learn that our Digital Innovation Park in Kano slated for launch next week to support our technical talent accelerator (3MTT) has been set ablaze and looted by protesters.

"Alongside #3MTT, this building is set to host our buildathon holiday maker programme for secondary school kids starting next week. A slight setback for our journey to deepen our workforce for technology while creating job opportunities for the youth. Millions of Naira down the drain." The minister tweeted on X (@bosuntijani) recently.

Also counting the losses, Mathias Ineh, a chief driver of a popular transport company in the country, decried that apart from closing their 12 terminals across the country, two buses of the company were destroyed by angry mob along the Lokoja-Okene Road on the first day of the protest and passengers lucky escaped.

"The two were Lagos-bound buses from Abuja. They suffered delays on

the road on July 31 due to many security checks and the drivers left early hours on August 1, yet the mob attacked.

"We have since closed all our terminals and mounted security to forestall destruction," the driver said.

But Chijioko Umelahi, an Abuja-based lawyer, pointed to the insincerity of the government, which he accused of raising its own supporters to counter the anti-government ones led by true Nigerians, to be fueling the violence in the peaceful protest.

"I condemn the looting and a violence. But I also see government's hand in it because they never wanted the protest to happen. They think it is a vote of no confidence by Nigerians and that is exactly what we Nigerians are saying," the lawyer said.

On the number of casualties, he noted that the security operatives are inflating the number to justify the government's claim that the protest was ill-conceived, politically motivated and would be hijacked by hoodlums.

However, what bothers Adeyuanju Oguni, a civil right activist and youth leader from Oyo State, is the refusal of President Bola Tinubu to address the nation and Godswill Akpabio's sad comment that while Nigerians protest, they (politicians) are eating, which has gone viral.

"No matter the level of violence and looting in the protest, you cannot compare it with the level of insensitivity and wickedness of the ruling class. They don't care about the masses at all," Oguni lamented.

He is also calling out President Tinubu to face Nigerians, even if he claims to have bought his victory at the 2023 presidential election.

The National Coordinator of the Take It Back Movement, Juwon Sanyaolu, and the National Coordinator of the Education Rights Campaign, Hassan Taiwo who both lead protests in Lagos State have hailed the resilience of Nigerians.

Sanyaolu said the protest was to register the grievances of the hungry people in Lagos and Nigeria.

He said Nigerians and their families can no longer afford a single balanced diet in a day due to the harsh economic policies by the Bola Tinubu-led government.

"It is important to say that this protest will continue till August

Summer coaching..

Continues from Page 1

some acts. To avoid idle moments, and ensure schools make some money for the holidays, many schools come up with the idea of summer lessons.

However, many stakeholders and experts in the education sector have argued that it amounts to overburdening the children.

Olusola Balogun, civil servant argues that subjecting children into another academic activities some few days after the end of the school session is counterproductive.

"This to me, is all about how schools' owners can make money for their personal interest. A school in my estate is charging parents N15,000 per child, imagine how much the owner will be harvesting with 100 children in attendance.

"The government should do something about this, but unfortunately, the government is either weak or partners in the crimes; don't forget that many private schools are owned or co-founded with politicians," she said.

Balogun advocates that the children be allowed some resting time to engage in other life-enhancing activities such as vocational or technical skills acquisition to give them a balanced learning experience growing up.

"To develop a holistic child, such a child must be taught skills besides academic works," she noted. Oyebola Ajetoro, an education consultant, sees the summer holidays as a period basically for mental rest for children after a whole session of learning, waking up early to meet up with school bus or the school assembly, the long trek for others and many other factors.

However, she said due to pressure of the economy on parents, and also bearing in mind the forthcoming school bills, that the new session holds, most parents barely permit their children stay an extra day at home after the vacation day, hence, the idea of summer school.

"Summer vacation for children should not only be educational-centred, the holiday can be optimised with several activities which can nurture the child for the tomorrow.

"This is a period whereby the children can have hands-on training on their choice vocation like tailoring, shoe making, hairdressing and many more," she said.

In addition, she said, "Now, children are having the advantage of enjoying more of tech with the development of coding/robotics and many more. All these still cut across the domains of learning (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) just as it is done in the classroom setting.

"Summer lesson is ideal if it is channeled to the other needs of a child excluding that received

within the four walls of the school."

Blessing James, a teacher, said during summer holidays, children should be encouraged to learn new things both academically and socially.

"It is an opportunity to develop social skills. Schools organise field trips, science expositions, art and crafts- weaving of different things such as caps, pullovers, and table cloth, among others.

"Dying of different patterns on clothes, baking and introducing children to robotics which is the in-thing now. Children are free to express themselves, learning is done with ease. The pressure of adhering to the strict curriculum pattern is gone," she said.

Besides, James reiterated that summer holidays should also be a period when children are given a glimpse of what they would do in the first few weeks of the new session.

According to her, "This makes them confident when they get back to school. During summer lessons, reading classes can be organised to help improve literacy skills children and build them to have love for reading.

Since, summer lessons are done during the holidays, organisations like Red Cross Society, LAWMA, Fire Service, pharmaceutical companies, and other non-governmental organisations can have sessions with the children on different pressing issues bothering on their general wellbeing and how it always affects the society."

James believes such acts would help curb crimes and vices to the barest minimum during the holidays, since the children are engaged with productive ventures.

Abiola Omosobi, a teacher, said: "Let me use myself as example even as a teacher; I enrolled my kids only once throughout their basic education and I discovered that it's just a waste of time, as I'm privy to an information that most schools use the proceeds to pay teachers July and August salaries which is usually half payment.

"In addition, I believe it's a time for the pupils to rest, learn a skill, travel to the village or outside their environment, and bond with parents."

Blessing Ema, a teacher, frowned at the fact that things are not well-aligned in the Nigerian ways of maximising summer holidays.

"During the summer holidays, families should create time to bond with their children instead of the usual jumping out for work, parents should have time for devotion with their children.

"Besides, they should make out time to check what their children are doing with their gadgets to avoid allowing them being exposed to immoral values.

"I think engaging the children in vocational skills acquisition is ideal; everything shouldn't be about academic; children should rest from brain works and engage in craft works," she said.

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Nigerian students react to new loan scheme amid...

Continues from Page 1

N2,026,163,340. The remaining institutions will receive payments next week (this week)."

Ayitogo also mentioned that NELFUND has started providing upkeep payments to students, with N442,400,000 allocated for July.

"This initiative will support 22,120 students across the twelve institutions," he noted, reflecting the federal government's commitment to student well-being.

The Fund reiterated that disbursements align with each institution's academic calendar. On July 31, 2024, NELFUND released data to ensure transparency, a move supported by its Managing Director, Akintunde Sawyerr.

Additionally, Ayitogo announced that twelve more state-owned tertiary institutions have been added to the loan scheme, increasing the total to 48. However, data

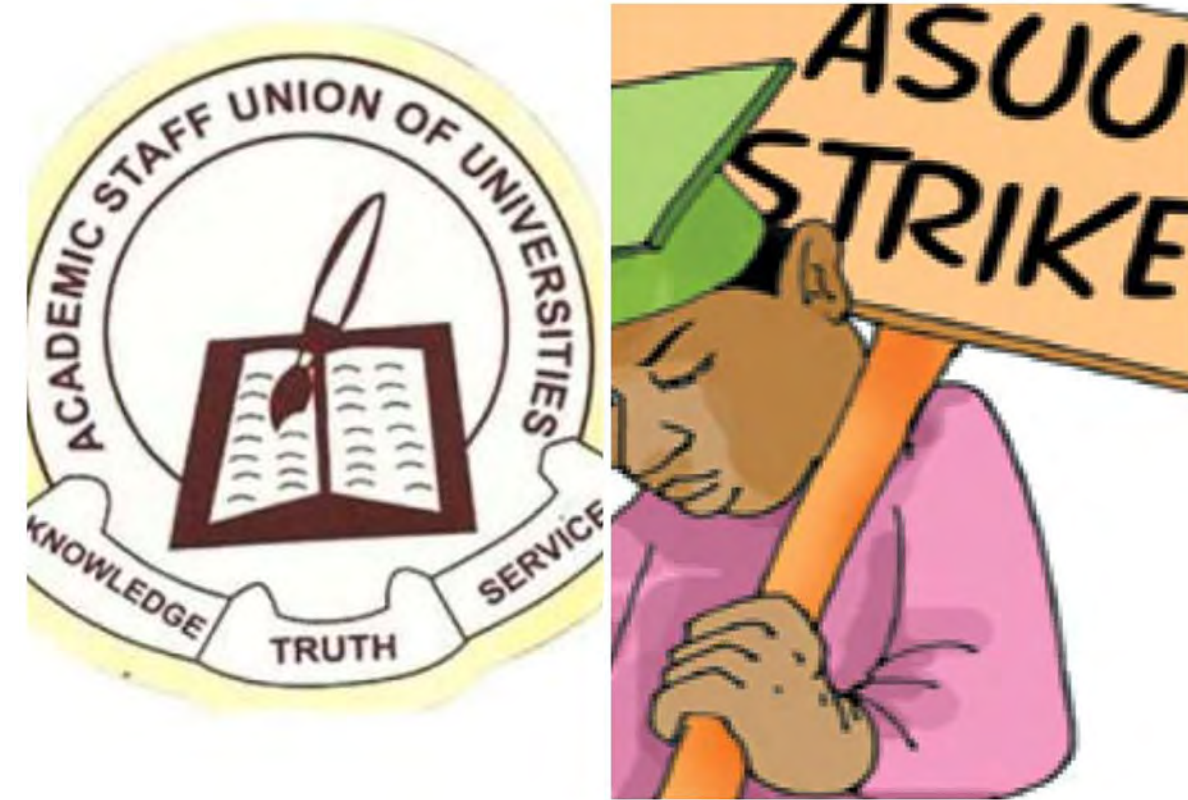
from 121 institutions is still pending. "This expansion follows successful verification of data from the institutions," he explained.

The Student Loan Act 2024 aims to make education accessible to all Nigerian students. NELFUND's funding sources include a percentage of taxes, levies, and duties from the Federal Inland Revenue Service, Nigerian Immigration Service, and Nigerian Customs Service, along with contributions from government profits, education bonds, endowment fund schemes, and donations.

Repayment of the student loan begins two years after completing the NYSC programme, with 10% of the beneficiary's salary automatically deducted.

Reactions from ASUU and Students

The announcement of the expanded student loan scheme has elicited mixed reactions



from the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and students across Nigeria. While the initiative aims to alleviate financial burdens and support

educational pursuits, opinions are divided on its effectiveness and sustainability.

For instance, the Ebonyi State University Chapter of ASUU

expressed scepticism about the viability and sustainability of the student loan scheme. Ikechukwu Igwenyi, chairman of EBSU-ASUU, voiced concerns during a press con-

ference in Abakaliki, the state capital. "The education system in Nigeria has been plagued by chronic underfunding," Igwenyi stated.

According to him, "Successive governments have allowed public primary and secondary schools to deteriorate, leaving teachers with low self-esteem and meagre salaries, often earning less than \$20 per month."

Speaking further, Igwenyi highlighted the negative impact of inadequate funding on tertiary institutions, warning that the student loan scheme could be a diversion from addressing these fundamental issues.

"Having witnessed the destruction of basic education, it seems tertiary institutions are next," he said.

"ASUU is calling for renegotiation, improved funding for revitalisation, university autonomy, and academic freedom."

He also traced the origin of the student loan scheme back to 1972, under General Yakubu Gowon's military regime, designed to aid students affected by the civil war. Despite substantial loans disbursed, repayment proved challenging, with over 40 million remaining unrecovered.

"Imagine if that sum was invested in the funding of tertiary institutions," Igwenyi said.

Students also voiced their concerns on social media. Chukwuemeka Azubuike, an X (formerly Twitter) user, wrote, "Tell the government to start making provisions for jobs in the next 1 to 5 years so graduates can find work to pay back."

Aliyu Ak Balarabe, a student at the University of Maiduguri, expressed scepticism, "Most of us are verified but not approved. I don't know anyone who has received these funds."

Similarly, another X user with the handle "Big Jo" wrote, "Read the fine print of student loans. They might seem appealing, but without a good job, you could be repaying them for life."

Others, like Agunloye Taiwo Hope, are anxious for approval. "I applied three weeks ago and haven't received mine. My exams are near. Please, approve my loan so I can take my exam next month," he posted on X.

Nigeria counts the cost ...

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10 and beyond until the government reverses all the anti-people policies it has introduced.

"The FG must immediately reverse fuel subsidy removal, reverse fee hikes in schools and give students grants, not loans that they cannot pay back, because people who cannot feed themselves cannot pay any loan in this economy as you can see", he said.

Lucky Odili, a 35-year-old trader, said he joined the protest because of the prevailing state of the economic and current hardship. He said he was finding it increasingly difficult to feed his family of three, because of exorbitant cost of foodstuff.

He lambasted President Tinubu for initiating such reform without any programmes to help the masses.

Tinubu's silence irks PDP

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) on Saturday, berated President Tinubu for failing to address Nigerians over the #EndBadGovernance protests.

The PDP called on President Tinubu to immediately address Nigerians on urgent steps to reduce the price of petroleum products, stem the fall of the Naira and ensure speedy provision of food among other critical issues so as to revamp the productive sector, stimulate employment and restore stability in the polity.

The party, in a statement signed by Debo Ologunagba, the national publicity Secretary, expressed concerns about President Tinubu's silence which it said "is sending a very dangerous signal and heightening public apprehension that the All Progressives Congress (APC) government is insensitive to the feelings of the citizens and the overall sorry state of affairs in the nation."

The opposition party further said: "It is indeed worrisome that President Tinubu could remain silent as Nigerians are on the streets demanding for good governance, protection, security and welfare, which are the primary purpose of government."

Paul Alake, Chief Economist at SPM Professionals, had, while appearing on Channels television, estimated that Nigeria lost N700b to first two-day of the protests, which began on Thursday, 1st of August

He noted that the protesters came to the streets to make the government "hear their cry."

"The gain from the protest is for the government to hear the cry of the people and for the government to know that the people can also checkmate their actions. But it comes with costs. When people are not able to move, at least the cost we are able to estimate is about N350 billion," he said.

NLC reacts

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), in a statement on Saturday, called on the Federal Government to stop the killing of innocent protesters, even as it said about 40 protesters have been killed

Joe Ajaero, the NLC president, said: "With unconfirmed reports putting casualties at 40+ in two days of managing the #EndHunger protest across the country, we have sufficient reasons (backed up by reports and video clips) to call to question the professionalism of our security personnel as this represents nothing but MASSACRE of citizens."

"Had the security personnel deployed the same thoughtless brutal precision against bandits or other criminals, our country would have been an eldorado."

"As the lead-agency in internal security management, the police bear the burden of this massacre."

The NLC president further said: "Kaduna State police command under the watch of Com-pol Audu Ali Dabigi represents the worst-case scenario in which one of the fleeing protesters was heard on camera desperately appealing to deployed police personnel to not shoot until his voice was drowned by a hail of bullets with the resultant death of a protester on the spot and several injured."

"In the same breadth, Edo State Police Command under the personal command of COMPOL Funsho Adegboroye represents the overall sorry state of affairs in the nation."

The opposition party further said: "It is indeed worrisome that President Tinubu could remain silent as Nigerians are on the streets demanding for good governance, protection, security and welfare, which are the primary purpose of government."

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police were shelling or tear-gassing them as they were marching solemnly without breaking a twig.

"One noticeable pattern was that once police personnel introduced violence, all hell broke loose in fulfilment of the credo that violence begets violence."

"We pause to ask, what happened to all the years of training or experience? No lessons learnt or was this a case of loss of human values on an industrial scale? Don't our police personnel watch their colleagues in other parts of the world manage equally challenging (if not worse) situations?"

The NLC demanded "that the cops with blood stains on their hands be fished out for appropriate disciplinary action. Ditto their commanders."

"Secondly, adequate compensations should be paid to the families of casualties while government should be responsible for the treatment and rehabilitation of the injured."

"Thirdly, all those arrested should be released immediately and unconditionally."

Cleric speaks

An Abuja-based cleric, Jeremiah Sanya, who spoke with BDSunday on the implications of the protests, noted that Nigeria, with current fragile economy cannot afford to shut down its economy.

He therefore, called on President Bola Tinubu to urgently move in to halt the ongoing protest before it escalates beyond the current situation.

"We know the Politics has crippled into the #EndBadGovernance protest, but the President himself is a politician and an experienced man at that, so he needs to do the needful."

Senator Iroegbu, a public analyst/Security expert who also spoke on the ongoing protests, noted that the protest is uniting Nigerians for the first time, against unfavorable government policies

"For the first time after the 2023 general election, the issues of hunger, need for good governance and unfavorable economic policies are now uniting Nigerians. So, the government must give listening ears."

President Tinubu's address may calm nerves

As President Tinubu speaks to the nation today, chances are that tension may be doused and the protesters may be dissuaded from completing the 10 days' mark.

N70,000 minimum wage can't match soaring ...

Continues from Page 1

N200 and N5,500 and paint bucket of rice sells for as much as N8,000.

A paint bucket of garri sells for N4,000 while 5kg goes between N8,500 and N9,500 while 10kg of semolina sells for N17,000 and N19,000.

BDSunday also discovered that prices of condiments for stew and soup have also gone up as a derica and paint bucket of egusi now sells for N1,500 and N8,000; ogbono sells for N6,000 per derica and N30,000 per paint bucket; a paint bucket of fresh tomatoes sells for N10,000; a kilo of stockfish now goes for N8,000 while prices of pepper and ginger have also gone up.

With the prices of foodstuffs skyrocketing daily, Nigerians skip meals while others eat less balanced diets to meet the economic pressure.

"I nearly fainted when a yam seller told me that a tuber of a sizeable new yam was N10,000. It is not easy to buy yam these days. Old and new yams are very expensive, which means that there is no respite from any angle as far as buying food items is concerned," said Ayorinde Babatope, a Nigerian worker.

According to Babatope, his family of six would manage to eat N10,000 tuber of yam as a meal and will need double tuber if it is the one that sells

for N4,000 each.

"What is happening in Nigeria is unimaginable because my wife likes to eat yam and she recently bought a small tuber of old yam for N4,800 but half of that yam was spoiled and, in the end, it was only my wife who ate the remaining," he said.

Monica Ezechi, a businesswoman, said she recently bought four tubers of small-sized old yam for N25,000. She said prices are scaring people away from buying yam for pottage, frying and most importantly preparing pounded yam.

She said her husband recently went to Mile 12 in Lagos to buy yam only for the seller to tell him that a tuber sells for N10,000 and the man ended up leaving the market without being able to buy one tuber.

Rising food inflation soars

Nigeria is battling the worst inflation rate as prices of food items continue to climb up pushing families into hard times.

While the cost of food items continues to rise, people's salaries remain the same as many employers of labour struggle to keep their heads above troubled waters due to the surging inflation and find it difficult to increase their wage bill by raising workers' salaries.

According to the National Bu-

reau of Statistics, inflation fastened to 34.19 percent in June 2024 from 33.95 percent in May 2024, for the 18th consecutive month.

On a year-on-year basis, the headline inflation rate was 11.40 percent points higher compared to the rate recorded in June 2023, which was 22.79 percent.

On a month-on-month basis, the headline inflation rate in June 2024 was 2.31 percent, which was 0.17 percent higher than the rate recorded in May 2024.

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.

Cost of Jollof rice 19.6%

BusinessDay reports that the average cost of preparing a pot of jollof rice for a Nigerian family of five rose by 19.6 percent within four months due to a spike in tomatoes and pepper prices, according to a new Jollof Index report.

The SBM Intelligence report shows the cost of preparing a pot of the popular Nigerian delicacy increased to N20,274 in June 2024 from N16,955 in March.

This means that a family of five that earned the old monthly minimum wage of N30,000 (\$18.6) per month before it was increased to

N70,000 (\$43.5), would have spent to 34.19 percent of the pay to cook a pot of jollof. But with the new wage, a pot of jollof could take 28.9 percent. Further

"The surge in cost of Jollof rice was primarily driven by substantial price hikes in key ingredients, particularly tomatoes and peppers. Other essential components such as rice, turkey, beef and vegetable oil maintained their already high prices, further contributing to the overall cost increase," the report said.

More Nigerians live below the poverty line

A total of 70.7 million people re-

presenting 31 percent of Nigeria's over 225.7 million population are now living in extreme poverty, according to the World Poverty Clock.

World Poverty Clock, which puts conditions of people living below the poverty threshold at \$2.15 about N3,460, revealed that about 62.8 million poor Nigerians representing 89 percent of the nation's population live in rural areas while 11 percent representing 7.9 million people live in urban areas.

How it started

Nigerians started battling surging food prices in June 2023 after President Bola Tinubu removed the controversial petrol subsidy, causing petrol pump prices to spike from N195/litre to the current



price of between N590 and N780 per litre depending on location and marketer.

Tinubu's administration also floated the naira through its forex liberalisation policy which ended up battering the value of the currency and pushing it to N1,609.29 per dollar at the Nigerian autonomous foreign exchange market (NAFEM) as of Friday, July 26.

Youths protest economic hardship

Nigerian youths last Thursday and Friday took to the streets to protest against economic hardship. Many Nigerians cannot afford food as Africa's most populous nation battles the worst cost-of-living crisis.

Despite the approval of the N70,000 minimum wage by President Tinubu, Nigerians have argued that the new minimum wage may not be enough to feed a household of three.

BusinessDay calculations show that the new minimum wage represents a 133.3 percent rise from N30,000 since 2019. Still, it cannot provide food for an average Nigerian family of three for one month.

Meanwhile, the Federal Government has rolled out some palliative measures such as the distribution of truckloads of food to the state, approving the importation of paddy rice, approving a 150-day duty-free

Entertainment

Artistes must multitask, be go-getters to compete in Nigeria's music industry - Esta

Since transcending her music journey from the church pews to international stages, Nigerian gospel artist, Esther Efosa Edougha's musical odyssey has blossomed into a remarkable career with several albums to show for her effort in the ever-competitive world of music. In this interview, the R&B gospel artist popularly known as Esta, a beacon of inspiration and talent in the vibrant tapestry of Nigerian gospel music, shares her thoughts on the Nigerian music industry. She also gave insight into her focus, journey into music and why the government need to expand its investment in the creative industry among other related issues. Amaka Anagor-Ewuzie brings the excerpt:

What is your assessment of the music and entertainment industry in Nigeria? Are there areas that need government support?

The music industry in Nigeria has grown and is still growing. Nigerian music tops the charts worldwide because of its unique, rich nature and vibes. The government could support it by investing in it, which would make it more efficient.

You ventured into gospel music to address certain known challenges in society. Can you describe your experiences so far?

Music is a universal language, and as such, messages can be passed across efficiently, quickly, and with ease. I am a gospel artist because God blessed me with the gift of songwriting and singing and also because God called me to be a music minister. I have a passion for the gospel of Jesus Christ, and as such, I intend to use my gift to spread the gospel of Christ's love for man.

As a solo artist, you worked with the Sinach band. How have the experiences you gained there

shaped your style of gospel music?

I had already started singing and recording music as a solo artist before I joined the Sinach Live in Concert (SLIC) team. But I must say that being a member of the band has given me exposure and made me experience gospel music differently. I have been greatly blessed by Sinach, and being in the band has inspired me to do better as a solo artist.

How is your gospel R&B genre structured to attract and sustain patronage? What are some of the unique selling points that set your music apart?

The fusion of pop and R&B in my songs has a sweetness, enabling me to pass my message to all, especially the younger generation. Also, my songs are centred on the love of God and his goodness towards us, which I know everyone can relate to.

What are some of the challenges you have faced in your journey as a gospel artist in Nigeria, and how have you overcome them?

Being a gospel artist or an artist generally has its perks, and my journey hasn't been any different. As a



Esther Efosa Edougha

recording artiste in Nigeria, one has to go through several stages to release a song successfully, and it

can be tiring if you are not resilient, from songwriting to getting the right producer to interpreting it to getting

the right people to voice the song to get a perfect mix to releasing and then promoting the music.

Also, there's the issue of funding. As a singer and an artiste, I tell people, especially upcoming singers, to have a job or a business you do because money is needed to have a successful musical career. Also, being

trained in the technical aspect is key.

Don't just record a song; drop it with someone and go. Learn the ropes and know what goes on behind the scenes; this is also very important. An independent artiste in Nigeria is a multitasker and a go-getter.

Kindly share some of the key music projects you have worked on and what we should expect from you in the future.

One of the major highlights of my musical career was the concert I had in 2019, and I have my husband to thank because he practically pushed and encouraged me to do it. That project birthed most of the songs I have released so far: 'You Lord, Good God,' 'All Of My Worship' and 'All Sufficient God'. Yes, to be released are 'I'm The Light Of The World,' etc.

Worthy of note was also the beautiful programme by Sinach 'In This Room,' which was held at Terra Culture in Lagos. I was privileged to have led the worship segment, and I was greatly blessed to be a part of the team ministering for the day.

Nolly also featured me in 'Hold On' and by Samjamz. These were two features I enjoyed doing.

“I was privileged to have led the worship segment, and I was greatly blessed to be a part of the team ministering for the day”

Energize Music enters strategic partnership with Orchard to revolutionise family and gospel music

BRIGHT IMOH

In the vibrant heart of Lagos, Energize Music's new headquarters is a beehive of creativity and innovation. These studio and creative hub represent the label's commitment to becoming a formidable player in the global music industry. With ventures into TV, film, podcasts, gaming, and social media, Energize Music is more than a record label—it's a multimedia powerhouse.

The CEO and Founder, Tochukwu Macfoy, known as Dr. FOY, encapsulates this vision, stating, "This is the label of the future."

A landmark moment

for Energize Music is its strategic alliance with Orchard, a subsidiary of Sony Music. This partnership significantly boosts the label's distribution reach, enabling it to connect with a global audience. Excel Joab, Head of Music, stresses, "The quality of music must be excellent," a standard that permeates every facet of the label's artist development and production efforts.

Situated in Victoria Island, Lagos, Energize Music leverages Nigeria's rich musical heritage while extending its influence globally. Artists like TY Bello and Greatman Takit are making waves

on international charts, from Lagos to London and São Paulo, demonstrating the label's ability to cross cultural and linguistic barriers with messages of hope and empowerment.

Teniola Akanni, Head of Legal and Admin, ensures the company's foundation is robust, fostering sustainable growth. Emmanuel Abadi, Head of Tech and Products, sees technology as pivotal to the label's future. "We are leveraging technology to stay ahead and bring our artists' visions to life," he asserts.

Lanre Masha, director of African operations for Orchard, praises the new



partnership: "I'm excited for this new venture between Energize and Orchard; they've done amazing work in the Christian music space and I'm particularly excited about what they're trying to accomplish with clean family music."

Looking ahead, Energize Music remains focused on its mission: to inspire, uplift, and energise through music that transcends boundaries. With a talented roster and a steadfast commitment to excellence, Energize Music is set to redefine the future of family and gospel music, one song at a time.

Bliss with Nonye Ben-Nwankwo

Email: chiwuagwu@yahoo.com Phone number (SMS only) 08057511893

How I found love again – Tchidi Chikere

Veteran director and filmmaker Tchidi Chikere has recounted how he found love again and got married the third time.

Recall that the movie maker was once married to actress, Sophia and later on, to another actress, Nuella Njubigbo. Both actresses have moved on with their lives and remarried.

And it seems their former ex, Tchidi, has equally moved on and found another love.

Making this known on his social media page, the filmmaker who also posted a short story on how he met his wife chose not to reveal her name or her face.

Narrating how he met his wife in the US, Tchidi said in the post, "When we started, I was broken and hurting bad. She said, 'I'd be different.' I told her to prove it and I went back to Nigeria. I said I can't do it. I don't do long distance."

Tchidi said the wife had to come down to Nigeria to meet him.

"She got on a flight and flew thousands of miles to me in Nigeria to claim her king. For someone who has never lived in Nigeria, She endured when NEPA took light and the generators ran riot in VGC and sometimes my generator got tired and we sweated and swapped mosquitoes. She stayed. She instantly became best friends with my daughter and my boys.

"The blogs called her



different people. They said she was this person, they said she was that person."

Despite having tried his hands on marriage twice and they failed, Tchidi said he never liked being single.

"So every day, I started to know... maybe I'll do this one. You see, I love to love and I love to be in love. It gives me the emotional balance I need to

be creative and to be me and to thrive. I am a Libra guy. We love love and we are in love with being in love. Everyone who knows me well knows that. I can't be single. No way!

"She was focused; well brought up from a good solid family with stellar values and well educated, beautiful and career focused. And she said to my siblings, 'I'll take care of

him, don't worry.'

"That year went by, the next year, I relocated to the USA and we got married in Boston Massachusetts her home state and she grew in her career. I pursued certifications in other areas aside movies. I diversified. She encouraged me to try new things and still keep my movie talent and career."

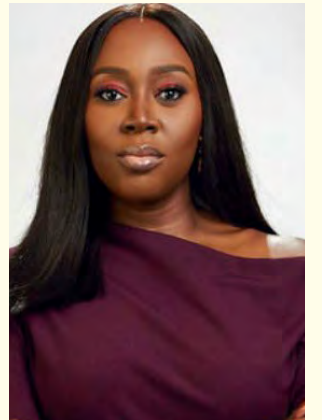
Ladun Awobokun lands new appointment at Filmone

Filmone Limited has announced the appointment of Ladun Awobokun to Chief Content Officer of the company.

Her journey with Filmone Limited has been marked by her passion creating opportunities for filmmakers to tell their stories. As the General Manager, she played an instrumental role in securing exclusive distribution rights in Anglophone West Africa for major Hollywood studios, including Sony Pictures and Walt Disney, positioning Filmone as a market leader with the highest market share in the region.

Under Ladun's leadership, Filmone has distributed 90% of the top-grossing Nollywood films, including the groundbreaking "A Tribe Called Judah," the first Nollywood film to surpass N1 Billion at the box office, "Wakanda Forever," "Ajosepo" and "King of Thieves" to mention a few.

In her new role as Chief Content Officer, Ladun Awobokun will oversee the creative direction, operations and content strategy of both divisions of the company; Filmone Entertainment and Filmone Studios. She will be responsible for driving the development of high-quality, engaging content that resonates with audiences both locally and internationally. Her vision and leadership will be pivotal in progressing Filmone's legacy of producing and distributing acclaimed films that elevate the Nigerian film industry on the



world stage.

"Ladun's appointment as the Chief Content Officer is a testament to her exceptional contributions and visionary leadership," said Kene Okwuosa, CEO of the Filmhouse Group. "Her deep understanding and passion for the industry, coupled with her innovative approach to content creation and positioning, will propel Filmone to new heights. We are excited to see the future of Filmone under her guidance."

Ladun expressed her gratitude and enthusiasm for her new role, stating, "I am honored to take on this new challenge and continue working with the incredible team at Filmone. Together, we will push the boundaries of storytelling and create content that not only entertains but also inspires and connects with audiences around the world."



AVRS enhances capacity with comprehensive training

Last week, the Audio Visual Rights Society of Nigeria conducted a vital training workshop at the AVRS Boardroom to strengthen the Board's understanding of copyright and collective management and enhance the execution of its oversight functions.

The full Board, management staff, and the Lagos Head of the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC), Mrs. Lynda Alpheaus, attended. The Board members unable to participate in person joined virtually from various locations across the country.

Two esteemed professionals in the copyright ecosystem facilitated the training: Barrister Michael Akpan, Principal Partner of Alpha Edge Legal and former Regulatory Head of the NCC, and Dr. Chinedu Chukwuji, Copyright Administrator and AVRS Consultant.

Barrister Michael Akpan led the sessions on "Basics of Copyright and Neighbouring Rights" and "Legal & Regulatory Framework of Copyright in the Film Industry in Nigeria." His extensive knowledge and experience provided invaluable insights into the legal foundations and current regulatory landscape of copyright

and neighbouring rights in the Nigerian film industry.

Dr. Chinedu Chukwuji facilitated the sessions on "Collective Management Organisation and Audiovisual Copyright Licensing" and "Effective Governance in CMOs." He covered the purpose and benefits of a CMO, the challenges and opportunities, key considerations in copyright licensing, and factors that help determine tariffs. Additionally, Dr. Chukwuji emphasised essential aspects of good governance, the role of the Board, and best practices in CMO governance. His session aimed to enhance the Board's capacity to develop strategic policies that would enable AVRS to fulfil its mandate and remain relevant.

The Chairman of AVRS, Mr. Mahmood Ali-Balogun, who opened the workshop, commended the Board members for their dedication to attending the training despite their busy schedules. He highlighted the importance of the workshop in updating the directors on new developments in the copyright and collective management space and their knowledge in carrying out their oversight functions.

Celebrities pay tribute to Onyeka Onwenu

Nigerian celebrities have been paying glowing tribute to the veteran musician, Ms Onyeka Onwenu, who passed away last Tuesday night.

The late singer, actor and politician was well loved by so many who have are still in shock over her demise.

Rita Dominic, Nollywood actress, on her Instagram page, said the late singer would be missed.

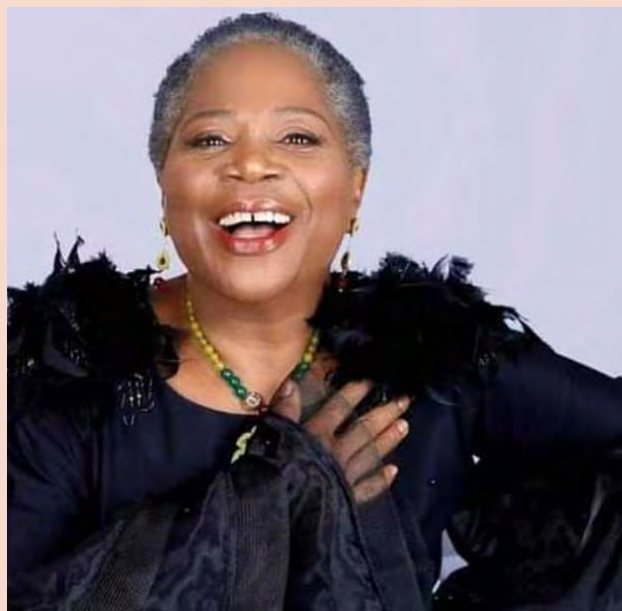
She wrote, "Good night great Stallion. Sing on with angels in heaven.

You will be missed greatly. Rest In Peace."

Veteran actor, Joke Silva, who was among the last people that saw the actress given the fact that both were at the same even where the late Onwenu had her last performance, said she was still in shock.

She said, "My sis, exactly a week ago yesterday, I interviewed you at the National Theatre on the National Theatre. I loved your dress... beautiful dark indigo and white. We hadn't seen in a while so we tried to catch up. The interview was a blast... we laughed so much. Afterwards you patiently took pictures with everyone including the 'genzees'.

"As you were about to leave, you pulled me to yourself, and thanked me for taking good care



of your brother then prayed and prayed and prayed for me. I remember all you asked God for. I knew I would see you at Aunt Stella's 80th. Lo and behold, we were on the same table and we had a great time. We all called it the 'fun table'. Your performance as always was brilliant, sexy, committed, fiery and so giving.

"And then we danced...just for two minutes and then...you... left... What a bow...with a flourish. Adieu Sis...R.I.P."

Actor, Richard Mofe-Damijo, said words failed him to describe how much the late singer meant to him.

He said, "Words are not enough. I am happy I got to share so many magical moments with you and one day soon I'll tell the story of our many encounters. Rest in Power. An Icon!"

Comedienne, Mandy Uzonisha also could not hold back her emotions as she talked about the late singer, who she said, took

her like her sister.

She said, "Forgive me my big sister if I have been in denial. All the people that called me, I told them you might be in a Coma because I know you are too strong a mother, to just give up like that. What will happen to your sons?"

"We had a friendship like no other; a big sister relationship till you invited me to attend your ThisDay award and when you were going to receive you award you told me to join you to receive your award.

I said, 'Join you ke?' When such awards, you receive it with family?"

Only for me to join you and you introduced me to Tony Blair's wife, the former British Prime Minister, as first comedienne in Nigeria

"God knows I can't take this. It's too much for my little heart. First, my mum and now, you.

"Everyone knows how you flew to and performed for well over 30 minutes in Asaba when my dad went to be with the Lord, or how you honored me when I celebrated 25 years on stage with another stellar performance.

"Our relationship was more of you giving me of yourself and your finance. People always felt you are this no nonsense person. I will miss you. Rest on legend."

Health and Living

Enugu, WHO, UNICEF target 1000 mothers, mark 2024 world breastfeeding week

REGIS ANUKWUOJI

Enugu State government, in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organisation and other agencies has marked the 2024 world breastfeeding week, targeting 1000 women in the state.

The 2024 breastfeeding week with the theme, 'Closing the Gap, Breastfeeding support for all, was also to observe a world record breaking attempt towards achieving the world record for "the most lactating women breastfeeding simultaneously, targeting 30000 women breastfeeding simultaneously across 36+1 states in Nigeria including Enugu State."

Declaring the one-week event open Nkechinyere Mbah, wife of Enugu State governor, called on the over 1000 breastfeeding mothers, who participated in the event, to embrace exclusive breastfeeding, saying that the breast milk has all the nutrients required by every child in the first six months.

She also said that introducing water and some other things undermines the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding, and that the state would be breaking the record of contributing 1000



The wife of Enugu State Governor inspecting breastfeeding mothers at the 2024 world breastfeeding flag off in Enugu

breastfeeding mothers out of the 30000 expected of Nigeria to set a new record.

Mbah, who inspected the breastfeeding mothers with her team, said: "We are not just breaking records, we are also breaking barrier working against exclusive breastfeeding in the state and directed that the list of the lactating mothers be made available to her for some palliatives to assist them meet up with some food requirements.

In a good will message, the Chief of Field Office, UNICEF Enugu, who was represented by Ngozi Onuora, Nutrition Specialist UNICEF field Office, Enugu said that UNICEF would be collaborating with the Enugu State government to improve the lives of children and women in the state, pointing out that nutrition contributes to health and wellbeing of the children.

She said: "We are all away Children in Enugu State

are experiencing chronic food poverty. Exclusive breastfeeding occurs only among 28 percent of newborns, which is still below the global target of at least 50 percent by 2025 what it means is that 72 percent (i.e 7 out of 10) of our children between ages 0-6 months are denied the uncontested benefits that come with exclusive breastfeeding."

According to the UNICEF Nutrition Specialist, "introduction of water in

the first 6 months of life, is the major harmful barrier to achieving optimal EBF in Nigeria and Enugu State specifically. Hence, if mothers could ensure zero water within first 6 months of the life of the baby, we can rapidly improve our EBF rate to over 60 percent from current 34 percent nationally and 28 percent at the state level, ahead of the 50 percent WHA global target year by year 2025."

UNICEF, however, offers

some suggestions on the way forward, such like increasing funding for the implementation of the maternal and youth child nutrition strategy to support social and behaviour change for appropriate infant and young child feeding.

Increase funding to implement the zero-water camping across local governments at a scale and intensity needed to yield the desired results among others.

Also in her contribution, Ifeyinwa Ani-Osheku, executive secretary Enugu state primary Healthcare Development Agency said that the agency is using the occasion to promote exclusive breastfeeding telling the mothers that despite all the good benefits from exclusive breastfeeding, that it is a powerful bond between the mother and child and advised the breastfeeding mothers to strictly stick to it an experience the good benefits.

Enugu State Commissioner for Health, Emmanuel Obi, who commended UNICEF for the support the state has been getting from it, said that exclusive breastfeeding promotes health to attain to zero poverty index, when a woman carries out exclusive breastfeeding, she is helping the state to bring up healthy and intelligent children.

Millions of hepatitis patients unaware of status in Nigeria

LADI JOSSY

The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that about 200 million Nigerians are living with Hepatitis B, C, or both without knowing their status, exposing themselves to severe consequences, including liver cancer, cirrhosis, and death if left untreated.

The WHO, in partnership with the Borno State government, launched a hepatitis initiative, including free testing and vaccination exercises to mitigate the effects on society. Salisu Audu, the WHO State coordinator in Borno, stated this during an event to mark the 2024 World Hepatitis Day, with the theme 'It's Time for Action.' in Maiduguri.

He said that statistics showed that only 36% of people infected with hepatitis C are diagnosed, while just 20% receive curative treatment. The five-year survival rate for liver cancer is a mere 20%.

Audu explained that the human cost of hepatitis is enormous, with families and communities losing loved ones to a preventable and treatable disease.

He said hepatitis an inflammation of the liver caused by viral infections, alcohol abuse, and toxic substances can progress silently to liver cirrhosis, liver cancer, and death if left untreated.

To address this, the WHO has launched a global strategy to reduce

new infections by 90% and deaths by 65% by 2030. Prevention measures, including vaccination, safe injection practices, and screening, can prevent new infections. Early diagnosis and treatment can also save lives.

In Nigeria, the day serves as a reminder of the need for increased awareness, prevention, and treatment efforts to combat the spread of the disease.

Hepatitis B and C are viral infections that can cause severe liver damage, liver cancer, and even death if left untreated. The high prevalence of the disease in Nigeria is attributed to limited access to healthcare, poor sanitation, and inadequate vaccination coverage.

WHO urged the government to scale up efforts to provide free screening, vaccination, and treatment services to affected communities and to launch public awareness campaigns to educate people about the risks and prevention methods.

Also speaking, Prof. Baba Malum Gana, the Borno Commissioner of Health and Human Resources, has reiterated the state government's commitment to combating hepatitis through collaborative efforts with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners.

Gana said the government will prioritize creating awareness among the public as a crucial step in the fight against hepatitis.

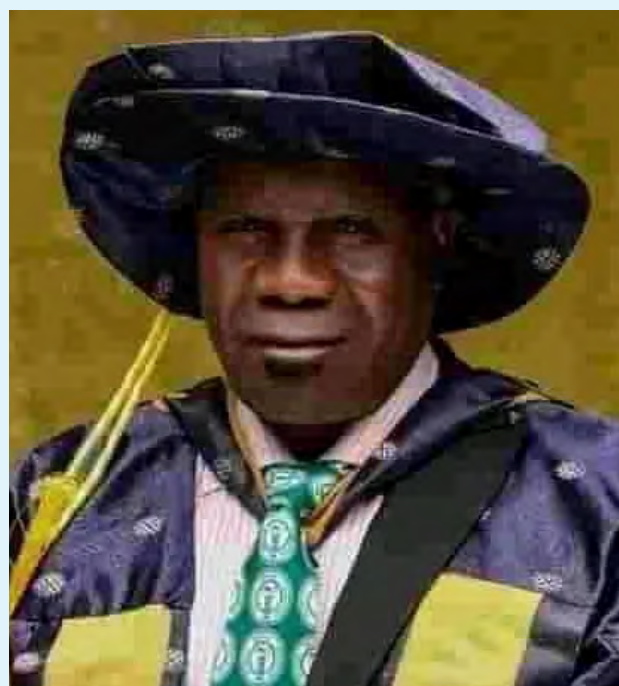
Benue Varsity graduates 416 doctors in 9 years - Provost

BENJAMIN AGESAN

The Benue State College of Health Sciences has graduated four hundred and fifteen (415) Medical Doctors in nine (9) years comprising three hundred and thirty-six (336) males and seventy-nine (79) females, ranging from 2015 to 2024 when Benue State Governor facilitated the accreditation of Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programmes by the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN).

The Provost of the College Professor, Linnus Saalu stated this during the 10th professional Induction and Admission Ceremony for the 2024 Graduating Medical Doctors at the College of Health Sciences Auditorium1 Benue State University Makurdi. Professor Saalu explained that the College of Health Sciences inducted her first set of twenty-seven (27) medical doctors in November 2015 which was the batch B of 1st set consisting of Thirteen (13) medical doctors inducted and another set of twenty-one (21) medical doctors in November 2016.

He added that, the College graduated fifty-two (52) in March 2017 and forty-one (41) medical doctors in 2018 even as forty-six (46) medical doctors were graduated in 2019 making the number to two hundred and twenty-seven (227).



Also, the induction of 45 medical doctors was in 2020 added the number to 272 and last induction in 2023, 41 medical doctors were graduated and today's induction of 58 brought the number to a total of 415 medical doctors, he revealed.

The provost, who stressed that the university is the first state-owned university in northern Nigeria, also emphasised it is the first state owned university to establish a Teaching Hospital in Northern Nigeria but lamented the

challenge of funding and expansion of the existing infrastructure despite the sustained efforts of the government.

He appreciated the visitor and executive Governor of Benue State, Hyacinth Alia for resolving the salary shortfall of the college amongst many other provisions to the university.

In addition to graduating 415 medical in nine years, the Provost informed that the college has graduated students in other programs such as; B.Sc. Human

Anatomy, B.Sc. Human Physiology and B.Sc. Biochemistry as well as Bachelor of Nursing Science, B. Sc. Radiography/Radiation Science and Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science.

He noted that the state government has worked tirelessly to ensure that the schools of Nursing and Midwifery has been absorbed into the college of Health Sciences there by making them degree awarding institutions.

Explaining further the provost said the college has been running and graduating students in the postgraduate programs; M.Sc. Anatomy, M.Sc. Physiology, Ph. D. Anatomy and Ph. D. Physiology amongst other achievements.

The Vice Chancellor of the Benue State University, professor Joe Tor Iorapuu revealed that the university has recently recorded a milestone of actualising 100% NUC accreditation pass mark adding that the list of governing Council has just been made public and the university would certainly move fast again.

The guest speaker and chief Medical Director, Benue State University Teaching Hospital, Steven Hwande who delivered a speech titled; Fulfilling your medical professional goals looking at teaching Hospital advised the newly graduated students to remember to fulfill their goals of becoming medical doctors in other to protect the profession and should not dent the image of the profession.

Health and Living

Akwa Ibom to launch health insurance scheme to expand access to medicare

ANIEFIOK UDONQUAK

The Akwa Ibom State government has announced plans to launch a health insurance scheme to expand access to medical care and ensure affordable services to a larger population of the people in the state.

To this end, it has completed the accreditation of health facilities in the state which will be part of the insurance scheme with four health institutions having been selected in each of the 31 local government councils of the state.

It added that health officials were being sent to communities to enrol people in the scheme ahead of its launch "in the next couple of weeks."

Igbemi Arthur Igbemi, a medical doctor and the executive secretary of the State Health Insurance Scheme, who made this known when he received members of the Amadaka community from Eastern Obola council area in his office in Uyo, the state capital, said the scheme would enable many people to have access to affordable healthcare.

Igbemi, who was recently appointed a Permanent Secretary, described health insurance as the surest way to reduce out-of-pocket expenses, adding that



each beneficiary would be expected to pay a yearly premium of N18,000 only.

"In the next couple of weeks, we will be launching the health insurance scheme in Akwa Ibom State. Health insurance is one of the best ways of reducing out-of-pocket expenses so that people will save some money to take care of their children's education, to feed well and be able to go to farm and grow their crops as well

as engage in fishing, that is why health insurance is the best.

"We will be coming to meet you people. Akwa Ibom State Health Insurance Agency will send people out to go and enroll people into the scheme.

"We have carried out accreditation of some health facilities, in the state across all the three senatorial districts, in every local government, we have a minimum of four health facilities we visited

and accredited.

"Eastern Obola was not left out. For your information, I did not sit down to pick the health facility, but the list we got from the Primary Healthcare Development Agency included the health centre in Amadaka and the report I got I was proud of. They came back to say that Amadaka health facility was one of the best in terms of organisation.

"And we would appeal to you

to key into what the governor is doing in the health sector. Our premium is only N18,000 per annum.

"Some of you can pay for some people. If you pay, we will take over the care of these people, so when they are sick, all they need to do is to go with their cards to the health facility and once they go there, they will be treated and they don't need to pay any money. That is what the governor is doing for us," he said.

He appealed to the elders of the community to ensure that the health facilities were protected so that people would benefit from the "laudable projects the governor has in store for the people."

He also lauded the people for their orderly conduct during the just concluded ward congress of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) which took place in all the 31 local councils in the state, thanking Governor Umo Eno for the programme of his administration captured in the Arise Agenda which he said showed that governor came prepared for governance.

"The governor has shown strategic leadership; he came in with the Arise Agenda that shows that he is prepared to lead, not to

come and learn how to lead, from the beginning of his administration touching every sector, telling the people, this is my contract with you," he said.

Earlier, Awajiojak Umin Awajiojak, chairman of the Amadaka town council, described Igbemi as a true son of Amadaka community, an embodiment of credibility, tenacity of purpose, sincerity of mind, devotion to duty and someone who has the willingness to serve and thanked Governor Umo Eno for appointment of "our son as a Permanent Secretary," saying it was an honour to their community.

Recounting its achievements, Awajiojak said the community has remained relatively peaceful, initiated a quarterly prayer/fasting programme and provided facilities at its town hall while appealing for assistance in providing employment to youths of the community, liaising with the state government for the completion of the abandoned Okorette, Etille, Amadaka and Kampa road project.

He also requested for a scholarship scheme for their students in the university and other institutions of higher learning.

UNICEF urges mothers to breastfeed children to reduce illness, non-communicable diseases

AYUBA MAFFI

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has said that breastfeeding reduces the burden of childhood illness, and the risk of certain types of cancers and non-communicable diseases for mothers.

The UNICEF Nigeria's Country Representative, Christian Manduate made this known in a statement signed and issued to newsmen in Bauchi State.

The advice came as UNICEF observed the World Breastfeeding Week with the theme 'Closing the gap: Breastfeeding support for all.'

UNICEF and the World Health Organisation (WHO) are emphasising the need to improve breastfeeding support as a critical action for reducing health inequity and protecting the rights of mothers and babies to survive and thrive.

Manduate said that in Nigeria there were insufficient maternity leave policies, lack of workplace support, and inadequate access to breastfeeding education and services, particularly in rural areas.

"Breastfeeding is the foundation of lifelong health and well-being. It is a simple, cost-effective, and natural way to provide infants with the nutrients they need for healthy



growth and development. However, despite its proven benefits, exclusive breastfeeding rates in Nigeria remain low.

"Many mothers face cultural, social, and practical barriers that prevent them from breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months of their child's life. During this critical period of early growth and development, the antibodies in breast milk protect babies against illness and death. This is especially important during emergencies, when breastfeeding guarantees a safe, nutritious, and accessible food

source for infants and young children.

"Only seven states offer the recommended 24 weeks of paid maternity leave, and many women return to work without the necessary support to continue breastfeeding," he said.

According to the UNICEF representative, "The government, employers, healthcare providers, and communities need to collaborate. Policies should also be enacted to extend paid maternity leave, create breastfeeding-friendly

workplaces, and provide comprehensive breastfeeding education and support services.

"This year, UNICEF is supporting Nigeria in setting the world record for the highest number of lactating mothers breastfeeding simultaneously.

"This initiative not only aims for a record but also seeks to draw attention to the importance of breastfeeding, as well as challenge harmful nutrition norms and practices, specifically the introduction of water and other pre-lactal feeds during the first six months of a baby's life."

Borno lags in achieving breastfeeding target – WHO, UNICEF

LADI JOSSY

The World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and their partners have lamented that Borno State has been lagging in achieving breastfeeding global targets for the past three years.

Joseph Senesie, UNICEF Chief of Maiduguri Field Office, canvassed support from the state actors and partners to tackle the gaps in breastfeeding.

UNICEF requested Borno State to enact the CODE of breastfeeding for the promotion of breastfeeding among infants and young children in Borno State.

"I was looking at the data from 2021 to 2023. I noticed that we have been down, in 2021 we were 49.1 percent; in 2022 we went down to 44.67 percent, and then in 2023 we further went down to 35.6 percent. So, in 2021 we were less than 1 percent of achieving the global targets of an hour breastfeeding of 50 percent. For 2024 we hope the trend will change.

"It is high time for all of us to commit to inspire, empower and educate mothers on the importance of breastfeeding to infants and provide all the support needed by mothers regardless of their socio-economic status for the protection and promotion of optimal breastfeeding practices," he

said.

Salisu Audu, the WHO State Coordinator in Borno Field Office, raised concerns about the alarming gaps in breastfeeding support in the conflict-affected areas in the state.

He explained the dire situation, saying millions of mothers are being denied the basic right to breastfeed, leaving their babies vulnerable to life-threatening diseases and acute-malnutrition.

"We must work together to create a world where every mother can breastfeed with confidence and dignity. Every mother deserves support to give her child the best possible start in life," he said.

Speaking on the occasion of World Breastfeeding Day, Hajiya Falmata Babagana Zulum, wife of Borno State Governor called on the government, healthcare providers, and community leaders to work together to create an enabling environment for breastfeeding mothers.

Falmata represented by Zuwaira Gambo, commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, urged families and communities to promote breastfeeding as a vital aspect of childcare.

"We must ensure that every mother has access to the support and resources she needs to breastfeed her child. This will surely play a significant role to encourage mothers," she promised.

FashionTalk

Best comfy outfits for a protest march

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA

As Nigerians continue the a nationwide protesters, especially the youths, need to prioritise their safety as well as their outfits so they are as comfortable as possible.

In an article by wardrobeoxygen.com, it list some comfortable outfits as how to rock them to achieve both comfort and smartness during a protest.

Here are comfortable and smart outfits to wear for a protest

Comfortable shoes

According to wardrobeoxygen.com, in a protest, you're going to be doing a lot of walking and a lot of standing. A waterproof hiking boot is a great choice as it will provide arch support, warmth, a high profile to protect from splashes or puddles, and a fabric that will keep you dry even if you're in two inches of mud slush.

Coat to the rescue

Like your boots, coats are also recommended. You need something that is insulated, comfortable, and waterproof. While many have wool coats they love, for a protest march, it is great to put on something that will repel water and has a hood. There may be snow, sleet, or other precipitation along with the low temps. It's also a good idea to wear your hood to blend into a crowd and be less recognisable. A longer coat may protect more, but you want to be sure you have a coat that lets you move easily and quickly on short notice.

Accessorise

Accessories are key. They can be stuffed in a pocket or bag when not in use, but can keep you extra warm and toasty when standing and waiting or if the wind picks up.

Keep Your Outfit Functional

Even if it is hot out, I recommend wearing pants long enough to cover your knees. Not only is this sun protection and chafe protection, it's also knee protection if you by chance fall or have to kneel. A cotton, twil, or denim garment will be less likely to cling in the heat and humidity than a knit fabric.

Feel free to wear a t-shirt, tank top, or whatever is comfortable on top, but consider packing a solid dark-colored

lightweight long-sleeved layer. Sun protection, warm days that turn into breezy nights, but also a long-sleeved top will reduce ways to be identified if the event turns aggressive.

Protect Yourself from the Sun

Don't rely on sunscreen you may have applied before heading out. You can take sunscreen to reapply during the day. A baseball cap will not only protect your face from the sun, it helps you blend into a crowd. Bring a bandana, fold on the diagonal and tie around

your neck with the point in back covering your neck (you can also tuck the bandana into the back of your hat to protect your neck). Again, a lightweight layer, especially with UPF will protect your chest, shoulders, and arms when in direct sun for long periods of time.

Sunglasses are smart for many reasons. They can protect your eyes if any gas or spray is emitted, they hide your identity, and they reduce glare on bright days. Leave your favorite sunnies at home and consider a budget-friendly of lightweight polarized shades.



Recognition

Okeke-Lawal, ED Optiva Capital Partners named African Union Agenda ambassador

MODESTUS ANAESORONYE

AMAKA Okeke-Lawal, executive director of Optiva Capital Partners, has been honoured with the prestigious title of “Ambassador at Large” by the African Union Agenda 2063 Ambassadorial Assembly.

This is in recognition of her contributions and leadership in the financial services industry. Okeke-Lawal has been at the forefront of innovative strategies in investment advisory, investment immigration, insurance, and international real estate, driving growth and stability across these sectors.

Her leadership at Optiva Capital Partners has not only transformed the firm into a powerhouse of wealth management services but also contributed significantly to the broader objectives of the African Union's Agenda 2063, a strategic framework aimed at achieving inclusive and sustainable development across Africa.

The conferment ceremony, held during the recent African Union Agenda 2063 Ambassadorial Assembly in Abuja, highlighted Okeke-Lawal's firm dedication to fostering economic stability and her commitment to the vision of a prosperous and integrated Africa. As an “Ambassador at Large,” she is now poised to leverage her extensive expertise and networks to further champion initiatives that align with Agenda 2063's



L-R: Shade Adepeju-Joseph, director, Diaspora and International Affairs Office of the leader of the Senate; Amaka Okeke-Lawal, executive director of Optiva Capital Partners and award recipient; and Gbatigbi Ben-Joel, head of mission and country director of African Union Agenda 2063 when Okeke-Lawal received an award as Ambassador at Large of the African Union Agenda 2063 Ambassadorial Assembly held at the Army Resource Centre, Abuja.

aspirations.

Delivering her acceptance remarks, Okeke-Lawal said “It is a profound honour to be recognized as an Ambassador at Large by the African Union Agenda 2063 Ambassadorial

Assembly. “This title is not just a recognition of my work but also a new responsibility to deliver on the mandate I have been given as Ambassador at Large. A mandate I do not take lightly, together with my firm, we are

committed to driving forward the economic transformation of Africa and realizing the goals set out in Agenda 2063.”

This award adds to the growing list of recognitions for Optiva Capital Partners' leadership.

Recently, Jane Kimemia, the CEO of Optiva Capital Partners, was awarded the Pan African Entrepreneur of the Year by the African Achievers Award at the House of Lords, UK Parliament. These accolades highlight the firm's significant impact on the continent's wealth management landscape and its dedication to excellence and innovation.

As an “Ambassador at Large,” Amaka Okeke-Lawal is expected to play a crucial role in promoting sustainable investments, fostering economic cooperation, and advocating for policies that support the African Union's strategic goals. Her appointment is a beacon of hope and a call to action for all stakeholders to contribute to Africa's development agenda.

The African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 is a comprehensive strategic framework aimed at steering Africa's socio-economic transformation from 2013 to 2063. It builds upon and seeks to advance previous continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development. The agenda is founded on the vision of a unified, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens and positioned as a powerful force on the global stage.

Earlier in his welcome address, Amb. Stephen Gbatigbi Ben-Joel, the head of Mission and Country Director of the African Union Agenda 2063 Ambassadorial Assembly, said,

“Today is not just a ceremonial gathering; it is a clarion call to responsibility, a call to advance the African dream – the Africa we want. We gather here, not merely to bestow titles or create a distinguished class, but to recognize and elevate individuals who have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the development of our continent, both at home and in the diaspora. This investiture signifies a greater call to service, a reaffirmation of our collective mission to transform our beloved continent” he added.

A total of 73 Ambassadors were inaugurated into the African Union Agenda 2063. They were drawn from different sectors of the economy and government officials. They were given the mandate to create the Africa we want. The 2-day event culminated with taking the oath of office as Ambassadors of the AU Agenda and Ambassadorial certificates were issued.

Optiva Capital Partners, the leading firm in wealth retention and investment immigration in Africa, also served as the lead sponsor of the African Union Agenda Ambassadorial Assembly. The event saw active participation from Sylvia Onyalu, the head of Northern Region at Optiva Capital Partners, who emphasized the importance of wealth retention and creating an environment conducive to protecting, growing, and optimizing wealth.

ALX recognised as most innovative EdTech company in Africa

JOHN SALAU

ALX, a tech career accelerator with physical hubs in eight African countries, including Nigeria, has been recognised as the ‘Most Innovative EdTech Company of the Year’ at the 20th anniversary of the Titans of Tech awards.

“ALX remains committed to providing millions of young Africans with opportunities to develop their personal and professional lives through quality and industry-standard tech programs. This recognition reinforces our resolve to continue creating impactful learning experiences and supporting the growth of the tech ecosystem across Africa,” Seun Babajide-Duroshola, country marketing manager, ALX Nigeria stated.

According to her, the recognition highlights ALX's commitment to advancing technology learning and innovation in Africa. “We are deeply honoured to receive this award. It demonstrates our team's hard work and dedication to contributing to innovation in the tech industry over the years,” Babajide-Duroshola stated.



L-R: Ayotunde Coker, chairman, Africa Data Centers Association (ADCA) presents an award of most innovative EdTech company of the year 2024 to Ridwan Bello, events & activations lead, ALX Nigeria, during the Titans of Tech awards held recently in Lagos.

Don Pedro Aganbi, Convener, TOTA 2024, stated that the brand was recognised for its collaboration in the tech sector. He disclosed that ALX has consistently extended its reach across the continent in furtherance of deepening IT skills set in Africa. “The recent half a million

dollars collaboration with Paton ranking Foundation to empower tomorrow's tech disruptors and innovative community leaders with the most in-demand hard and soft skills to solve the problems of the continent and beyond is a humongous step in the right direction,” Aganbi stated.

Haven Homes' Ufuoma Ilesanmi outshines peers, earns recognition at Housing Show

CHUKA UROKO

It was an exciting moment for the Haven Homes family a few days ago as its General Manager, Ufuoma Ilesanmi, out-paced her peers at this year's edition of Africa International Housing Show (AIHS) in Abuja to clinch Excellence in Real Estate Award.

AIHS, Africa's largest housing and construction expo, recognized Ilesanmi for her transformation and contributions to the real estate industry in Nigeria.

Ilesanmi has an impressive background that gives her away easily as an achiever. She has a first degree in Human Resources and a Masters in Strategic Marketing. These are complemented by her numerous leadership and management trainings.

A versatile business-woman, Ilesanmi has been

instrumental to developing Haven Farms and Haven Suites, while also mentoring aspiring entrepreneurs.

She joined Haven Homes 13 years ago as a Sales Assistant and rose through the ranks to become the Corporate Manager, then Assistant General Manager and ultimately General Manager.

Her journey in the real estate industry has been marked by consistent growth and dedication.

In a brief interview, she expressed her gratitude for the award. “I am deeply honoured that the Africa International Housing Show has watched my growth over the years. This recognition of my consistency is truly humbling as I didn't realize people were observing my progress.

I am grateful for this award; I am also grateful to my boss, Tayo Sonuga,

the company's CEO, who believes in me and has given me the platform to express myself. I truly hope this inspires others in their respective fields,” Ilesanmi said.

Her success story highlights the importance of continuous learning, skill development, and adaptability in one's career. Her journey from corporate management to becoming an award-winning figure in real estate demonstrates that dedication and self-improvement can lead to significant achievements.

Ilesanmi's multifaceted approach to business, involving starting new ventures and growing existing ones, coupled with her commitment to developing people, has set her apart in the real estate sector. This award is a testament to her excellence and the positive impact she has made in the industry.

Travel

Why investment in infrastructure is key in driving growth in tourism - Philda Kereng

OBINNA EMELIKE

In 2023, the United Nations Tourism (UN Tourism) was excited that about 1.3 billion people traveled around the world for tourism purposes.

The excitement stemmed from the fact that in 2023, the tourism sector impacted global economy with roughly \$USD1.48 trillion from international tourism receipts, the highest figure recorded to date.

Sadly, Africa could only attract 66.4 million international arrivals in 2023, despite its huge potential and billing as the last frontier for sustainable tourism in the world, while France and Spain attracted 100 and 80 million visitors, respectively last year.

The inability of the continent to woo huge number of tourists from across the world is a big concern for some stakeholders, who are also working to address the challenge.

Identifying one of the challenges,

Philda Kereng, High Commissioner of Botswana to Nigeria, decried that little or no investments in tourism infrastructure across the continent is the biggest obstacle that is hindering Africa from attracting huge number of visitors to her shores for tourism.

The former Botswanan Minister of Tourism, insisted that investments in tourism infrastructure, in addition to developing a value chain for

businesses remain key to growing the industry in Africa.

According to her, the investments should be championed by both the government and private-sector tourism players.

Kereng held these views at the conference session of the 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Federation of Tourism Associations of Nigeria (FTAN), which held in Abuja recently on the theme, "The Role of Private Sector in the Development of Tourism in Nigeria".

According to the Botswanan High Commissioner, in her paper as the lead speaker at the AGM's conference, tourism will thrive when the private-sector operators create a value chain for their businesses and events.

She posited that collaboration between the private sector operators and the regulators in the public sector was a matter of necessity as, according to her, while the latter formulates the policies, it is still the former that is vested with the task of driving those programmes and laws.

In her opinion, the relationship must be mutually beneficial for any expected growth to take place in the economy, warning that there should be no competition between both sector operators.

Apart from the private-sector investments, the envoy also stressed the imperative of investment in infrastructure by the government, which she said is key to driving growth.

"Government needs the private sector to drive its



Philda Kereng

policies, as the latter is the implementor of government policies. Therefore, policies enacted by the public sector must be all-inclusive.

"It is also important that the government or regulators in the public sector see the imperative of investment in infrastructure as essential for any meaningful growth to be achieved.

"Government needs to look at tourism growth in terms of infrastructure investment. This means that it is how much you put in that you expect to recoup from the investment. Countries that invested heavily expect to see a higher ROI than those who don't. Infrastructure investment should also cover security deficiencies.

"Also, there must be a new way to approach industry challenges or implement policies in the sector. We can't continue doing things the old way. Government needs the private sector, and vice versa," she said.

Considering the above, Kereng charged private sector operators in the country to work towards positioning their businesses as relevant players in the industry.

"Since the government needs you to drive its policies, you need to position yourself and your businesses to be relevant. If you have to be relevant, you must show your worth with real growth in your operations so as to convince the government that you are truly relevant.

"See yourself as an influencer who can drive that growth through your various businesses. You have to influence the industry with real growth, having a business that is actually delivering and attaining that sustainability level, job creation and tangible staff.

"That is how you influence the public sector; by growing your businesses through sustainable strategies," Kereng stressed.

In charting the way forward,

Kereng advised private sector operators to, among others; develop their capacities, engage the services of the media, embrace technology, and to adopt a value chain approach in organising business events.

"For every event that you organise, there must be a value chain created. You grow by growing others for sustainable growth to take place," she said.

The envoy also harped on collaboration between all sector players in the tourism industry, as she urged them to work together and communicate ideas on developing the country's economy.

Earlier, in his opening address, Nkereuwem Onung, president of FTAN, noted that in choosing the theme for this year's AGM, the association had acknowledged the efforts made by the private-sector in tourism development in Nigeria, including job creation and infrastructure development, while insisting that for sustainable growth to take place, the public sector operators need to play their part.

"Rather than make laws to tax and take toll from our businesses, we would like to see government being decisive on appropriate visa policy, stimulate market demands with appropriate marketing strategies, invest in tourism assets and attractions, fix the roads, provide security and maintain peace," Onung said.

The FTAN president used the AGM platform to invite the public sector to have lunch with the private sector.

According to him, it has become imperative for the

regulators to dialogue and with the private sector operators in the country in order to chart a new course for Nigerian tourism.

"We are told that Nigeria has secured hosting rights for 68th UN Tourism CAF meeting in 2025. What does it hold for the country? Will the country be at WTM, London? Where are the two tourism laws we procured last year? Is it not yet time to engage us? Where is the blueprint of the new ministry? Lunch is served.

"Let us work together to chart a new course for Nigerian tourism. Let us explore innovative solutions, foster partnerships, and drive growth," Onung stressed.

The FTAN president assured that his group would continue drive the narrative of peace within the tourism ecosystem.

"We are open to continuous consultation with the tourism ministry, SON, tourism MDAs, ECOWAS, among other stakeholders. We need cooperation among industry players for collective advocacy as it is the prerequisite for shared prosperity," he said.

Meanwhile, the 2024 AGM also featured a discussion session, which had as panellists leaders in the country's tourism industry.

At the AGM, Munzali Dantata, former president of FTAN, was ratified as the substantive chairman of the Board of Trustees (BOT) after two months in an acting capacity following the resignation of Samuel Alabi earlier.

ATLF 2024 to chart new path for intra-Africa travel, tourism, investments

Once again, the Africa Tourism Leadership Forum (ATLF) 2024 is set to gather industry stakeholders to chart a new course.

From September 3-6, 2024, the Gaborone International Conference Centre, Grand Palm, in Gaborone, Botswana will play host to industry experts in this year's edition of the annual forum, which is themed, "Charting a New Path Forward for Intra-Africa Travel, Tourism & Investments".

The theme, according to Africa Tourism Partners (ATP), the organisers of the forum, reflects the forum's commitment to fostering sustainable growth and collaboration across Africa's travel, tourism, and investment

sectors.

ATLF is a premier Pan-African dialogue platform that brings together influential stakeholders from the travel, tourism, hospitality, and aviation sectors. The forum serves as a unique opportunity for industry leaders to network, share insights, and develop strategies to boost intra-Africa travel and tourism, thereby enhancing the brand equity of "Destination Africa."

The 2024 edition of ATLF will focus on three thematic areas: Sustainable & Inclusive Tourism, Boosting Intra-Africa Travel, and Driving Economic Growth. These themes are designed to ensure that tourism development benefits all stakeholders, especially local communities, and contributes to the continent's economic

integration and growth.

The ATLF Awards, a highlight of the forum, will recognize and celebrate innovation, excellence, and transformative initiatives pioneered by Africans, for Africans, in Africa. Attendees will have access to investment opportunities, innovation showcases, and educational sessions led by industry experts.

Speaking on the upcoming forum, Kwakye Donkor, CEO of ATP, said, "The future of African tourism lies in our ability to chart a new path forward, one that prioritizes sustainability, inclusivity, and collaboration. ATLF 2024 is poised to be a transformative dialogue that will shape the future of African travel, tourism, and investments."

WITLAC champions gender equality in African tourism

Despite making up 70 percent of Africa's tourism workforce, women predominantly occupy low-skill and lower-paid roles, facing significant gender disparities such as unequal pay, limited access to education, and restricted leadership opportunities.

Addressing these challenges, the Women in Tourism Leadership Africa Committee (WITLAC) has taken on the mission to empower women and foster gender equality across Africa. The mission aligns with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 5 of the Agenda 2030, which focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

WITLAC emerged from the 2nd Leadership Taskforce on Women Empowerment in Tourism in Africa, launched in November 2019 in

Accra, Ghana. The event coincided with the 1st Regional Congress on Women Empowerment in the Tourism Sector, focusing on Africa. Since then, WITLAC has been dedicated to promoting women's empowerment and leadership in the tourism sector through a comprehensive approach.

The primary objective of WITLAC is to promote women's empowerment and leadership in the tourism sector. The Committee is committed to promoting UN Tourism Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines by implementing gender-

inclusive strategies for tourism businesses at the regional level. The committee also focuses on providing networking opportunities to facilitate connections and collaborations among women in the tourism industry.

Through tailored capacity-building and mentorship programmes, WITLAC aims to develop women's skills and leadership potential. Additionally, the committee advocates for the adoption of gender mainstreaming policies to promote equality. To highlight the importance of gender equality in tourism, WITLAC conducts awareness-raising campaigns. Furthermore, the committee celebrates successful initiatives and individuals by showcasing role models and best practices.

Our Story II: Reflections on building institutional collection

Stories by OBINNA EMELIKE

When The Wheatbaker, a boutique hotel, opened in Ikoyi, Lagos, in 2011, it debuted with a difference as the first 'art hotel' in Lagos.

Apart from the world-class hospitality offerings, the new hotel projected visual art beyond artists' studios and private galleries.

It turned its beautiful walls, corners and lobbies into new home for artworks.

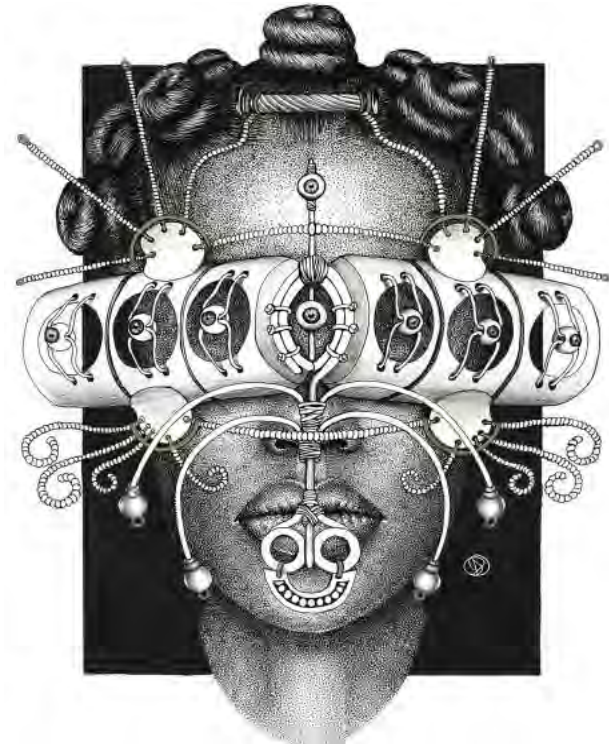
Since then, 13 years and running, the hotel has grown its rich collections of artworks from the first set of exhibitors till date.

It has also generously invited its high networth guests and the public severally to view its growing and rich collections.

Once again, the boutique hotel is opening its doors to the public to see a much richer collection of artworks since 13 years and running.

The intentional emphasis on art as part of its offerings has seen the hotel host 37 exhibitions and showcasing over 80 artists in 13 years.

Excitedly, the hotel, in collaboration with SMO Contemporary, is presenting 'Our Story II', an exhibition of artworks selected from the Wheatbaker's



permanent collection.

The exhibition, which started from June 2, will run until December 1, 2024 in the hotel.

On display are works from many generations of artists, across diverse media.

The artists include; Raqib Bashorun, Billy Omabegho, Gbenga Offo, Bruce Onobrakpeya, Susanne Wenger, Duke Asidere, Kelechi Amadi-Obi, Sandra Mbanefo Obiogo, Rom Isichei, Somi Nwandu, Isaac

Emokpae, Peju Alatise, among others.

As expected, these art masters and upcoming ones are worth seeing, as Bashorun enraptures with his aluminium and wood work, Amadi-Obi comes with photographs, as well as Obiogo, Onobrakpeya excites with his installation, while Alatise's painting glues the eyes to beautiful sceneries, among other creative masterpieces on display.



Speaking on the latest exhibition, SMO Contemporary explained that 'Our Story II' celebrates highlights of SMO's curatorial journey over the past 13 years, since it started curating the hotel's spaces in 2011.

"Our Story shows the growth and maturity of the Wheat-

baker's institutional collection with works from 37 exhibitions showcasing over 80 artists," SMO Contemporary said.

According to the art company, which has been the traditional curator of exhibition in the hotel, since inception, the Wheatbaker Collection grew

from eight works acquired from Olu Amoda, Rom Isichei, Peju Alatise, and Gerald Chukwuma at the opening of the hotel in 2011, to Fifty-six works, which were generously donated to the hotel by the artists who exhibited their work on this important Lagos hospitality platform."

Therefore, 'Our Story', according to SMO, is an important retrospective, celebrating exceptional talent from Nigeria, the African continent, and across the Diaspora.

"These leading and emerging artists showcased phenomenally rich and diverse art and installations, making the Wheatbaker, Nigeria's first art hotel.

"Our Story is a tribute to the artist's resilience and vision, and SMO's commitment to curating public spaces and placing art within the mainstream of Lagos life; each exquisite photograph, painting, mixed media work, sculpture or print tells an intriguing story of Nigeria's socio-political history and culture".

In view of Maya Angelou, poet, writer and civil rights activist's quote, "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you", SMO Contemporary will keep telling the Wheatbaker Collection story than leaving it untold.

Once again, the special exhibition runs until December 1, 2024, offering the hotel guests and art lovers an art escape.

Nigerian short films on spotlight at British Council film lab

The British Council Film Lab Africa (FLA) programme has been a beacon of hope and opportunity for budding filmmakers across Nigeria. Among its many successes, the programme's short film category has produced ten exceptional short films that promise to captivate audiences worldwide. These films, created under the guidance of seasoned mentors, reflect Nigeria's rich cultural tapestry and dynamic storytelling.

After a successful 10-week training programme with 60 participants, the mentorship grant programme announced 20 grant winners in the short film and microfilm categories.

These grants offer crucial funding for their various film projects. Ten short filmmakers stood out from the pool of exceptionally talented entries for their outstanding creativity, story impact, and compelling storytelling prowess. The top ten short filmmakers each received a £5000 grant from the British Council for producing their films.

Sukanmi Adebayo of Afrowen Productions, the principal delivery partner in Nigeria for the inaugural programme, remarked, "The Film Lab Africa programme has been extraordinary, enabling us to produce exceptional films that not only highlight the diverse stories of Nigeria but also resonate with

a global audience. This initiative has truly empowered these filmmakers to achieve their full potential."

The short films coming out of the first cohort of the Film Lab Africa include:

Salamatu's Rhapsody by Shimataver Igbawua is an exploration of tradition versus modernity in northern Kaduna, seen through the lens of a young hip-hop enthusiast. The film delves into the cultural tensions and personal passions that shape the lives of its characters.

Ekun Iyawo by Moses Ipadeola unveils a diabolical Balogun's fate, hinging on bridal tears in a gripping tale of rituals and suspense. The story weaves together elements of tradition, fear, and mystery to keep viewers on the edge of their seats.

She Sees, directed by Akah Nnani and featuring Ronke Osodi, is a powerful story of Rinu, a blind woman from Ajegunle,

seeking justice after being assaulted by a renowned optician. The FLA grant-winning film highlights themes of justice, empowerment, and the resilience of the human spirit.

Toll Free, spearheaded by Mel-Rouge, features a stellar cast including; Michelle Dede, Ibrahim

Suleiman, and Uzoamaka Onuoha. The FLA grant-winning short film tells a compelling story of connection and discovery, highlighting Mel-Rouge's innovative vision.

Shadows of Redemption by Jemima Pearl Marcel-Udo is a poignant drama about a seamstress's fight for healing and justice in Nigeria. Adunni, portrayed with raw emotion, confronts her haunting past amidst the vibrant colors of her Ankara designs. Supported by her steadfast friend Bukunmi and loyal brother Akande, Adunni embarks on a journey

of self-discovery and empowerment, guided by the wisdom of village elder Iya Tunde. The film promises to resonate deeply, showcasing Adunni's courage to reclaim her voice and find hope in the face of adversity.

Blood and Rope by Twamsen Danaan is a gripping tale of passion and identity set in Kano's spare parts market. The film explores the complexities of self-discovery and the struggle to find one's place in a bustling, chaotic environment.

Ireti by Temiloluwa Ami-Williams chronicles a young designer's battle with cancer and her family's unwavering support. Set in Lagos, this heartfelt journey of resilience and hope showcases the strength and determination of its protagonist.

Ralia's Secret by Faustina Okomayin, featuring Norbert Young, Gloria Young, and Michael Ejoor, is a captivating story of hidden truths and personal discovery. This film, crafted under the mentorship of industry veterans, showcases Faustina's unique storytelling prowess.

Femi: Love Me, starring Stephanie Coker and directed by Tolu Ajayi, renowned for his film "Over the Bridge," is a psycho-thriller that promises to captivate audiences with its intense storyline and dynamic characters. The FLA grant-winning film explores themes of love, obsession, and the complexities of human relationships.



Nigerian selection committee calls for entries for 97th Oscars

The Nigerian Official Selection Committee (NOSC) of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) invites Nigerian filmmakers to submit their feature films for consideration in the International Feature Film (IFF) category of the 97th Annual Academy Awards (Oscars).

The NOSC, accredited by AMPAS, is responsible for choosing Nigeria's official entry for the IFF Award. The submission portal will remain open from August 1-30, 2024, at www.thenosc.org.

The IFF Award is conferred annually by the Academy to a feature-length motion picture produced outside the United States, which contains 50 percent or more of dialogue in a language or languages other than English.

The Academy stipulates that submitted films must meet specific criteria, including providing accurate, legible English subtitles, adherence to particular shooting formats, and evidence of theatrical release—detailed information regarding these requirements is available on the NOSC website.

The NOSC also announces a reformation with the addition of new members, such as Ali Nuhu, managing director,

Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC); Blessing Effiom Egebe, producer/director; Ijeoma Grace Agu, actress; Kene Okwuosa, co-founder and group chief executive officer, Filmhouse Cinemas; and Victor Akande, journalist, author, and film critic.

Stephanie Linus, actress/filmmaker, leads the committee, which has returning members like Victor Okhai, president, Directors' Guild of Nigeria (DGN); Omotola Jalade-Ekeinde, veteran actress; Andy Amenechi, former president, DGN; Yibo Koko, theatre practitioner; Izu Ojukwu, writer/director; Emem Isong, prolific film producer; Dimeji Ajibola, director; Jude Idada, writer/director; John Njamah, director; and Meg Otanwa, actress/polyglot.

Linus noted that the inclusion of new members brings together individuals with diverse creative backgrounds, enhancing the process of selecting the best film from Nigeria. The team is tasked with collecting, screening, and voting on entries to represent the country in the IFF category.

The 97th Oscars ceremony is set for March 2, 2025, broadcasting live from the Dolby Theatre in Ovation Hollywood, Los Angeles, California, United States, to over 200 territories worldwide.

Food & Beverage



Ayo Oyoze Baje

Value chain process for zonal agric development

unsustainable as it poses danger to the nation's economy.

The sordid scenario of Nigeria's food import is such that as at 2011 the country exported \$3.4 billion worth of crude oil to the United States (U.S.) but got a paltry export of \$150 million. The latter also imports \$4 billion worth of coffee every year as its citizens consume about 400 million cups of coffee per day but Nigeria, a coffee-producing country is yet to key into this waiting export market. That underscores the call by the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) for the sector to be given the desired attention.

On his part, President of the Catholic Brothers United, Mr. Emmanuel Okoro, said that the country can attain self sufficiency in food production, if she strengthens her entire agricultural sector, adding that current challenges facing the sector include poor infrastructures, dormant research facilities, limited food processing and inconsistent government policies among others. Well said.

The truth however, is that the change in government in 2015 has adversely affected

the fillip given to the sector by the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan through the Ministry of Agriculture with the focus on strengthening agricultural value chain. Had it been sustained perhaps, the sector which used to be responsible for 40 per cent of

the GDP and the employment of 70 percent of the rural populace would have become the needed catalyst for sustainable economic development.

It is interesting to note that as at June 2012 there was increased collaboration between some states and the Federal Government in moving the sector forward. For instance, the then Minister of agriculture, Dr. Adesina Akinwunmi was in Ogun state to flag off the Commercial Agriculture Credit Scheme (CACCS), which was in partnership with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). This formed part of the Growth Enhancement Scheme (GES).

A similar visit to Osun state got the minister so impressed by the giant steps taken by the Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola-led administration that he promised the Federal Government will give the state concession to use the railway infrastructure at Lagos. That would facilitate the distribution of its products to other parts of the country.

Also, back then the Federal Government gave N350 million to 61 FADAMA Associations in Plateau state, as part of the Stage Three of the programme aimed at boosting all-season farming in the state. In Rivers state, then Governor Rotimi Amaechi had cause to tell members of Ogburna-Abachi Community Council who paid him a courtesy call, to be ready to urge their children to embrace the new drive for increased food production to create more jobs and ultimately wealth. Said he: "We are

rehabilitating Rishon-Palm. We are establishing 2,000 hectares of banana farm in Ogoni area, 3,000 hectares of cocoa farm in Etche and several fish farms all over the country."

In spite of these laudable efforts, there is still much more to be done to gain maximum economic benefits from agriculture. One of these is the development of the value chain model in the food security sector, according to Jacques Taylor, the Head of Specialized Banking at Stanbic IBTC Bank. He has listed factors responsible for constricting business activities in poor countries to include reduction in international trade barriers such as tariffs, export fees, import quotas and global distribution of goods and services. Taylor has therefore, suggested that the value chain model as has succeeded in Honduras, if adopted by Nigerian would benefit the farmers, transporters, processors as well as those involved in packaging and marketing of the finished products.

He went further to suggest what the BRACED States (Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo and Delta), coincidentally all of the South-South geo-political zone should be doing in this regard, especially with adding value to cassava, even for export.

But it goes far beyond that. There should indeed, be a sustained close collaboration between the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and state governments in developing a Master Plan for agricultural rejuvenation all

over the country. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, while at the helm of the nation's political affairs established Presidential Task Forces on agriculture to identify the areas of comparative advantage and core competence of each of the zones, in order to increase production. We have to take it from there.

For instance, from the North-East and North-West zones the major cash crops whose potentials should be developed include sorghum, millet, maize, ground nut and rice. They are all grains, the first listed three of which could find industrial use in the brewery sector of the economy. If we revive the backward integration policy as promoted by the defunct Ibrahim Babangida-led military regime, some small and medium scale industries could spring forth that would add value to the raw products.

From the North-Central geo-political zone, arguably the food basket region of the country we have yam, cassava, cashew, sesame seed, sugar cane and rice in abundance. Others are fruits such as oranges, grape, guava, pine apple and vegetables including tomatoes, onions and sweet potatoes. What is lacking is the modern preservation and processing technologies to add the economic value that would sustain their all year-availability.

Ayo Oyoze Baje is Nigeria's first food technologist to practice as a journalist. ayobaje@yahoo.co.uk; 07068638066

The huge potentials inherent in agriculture for job and wealth creation, especially with regards to the Nigerian nation have never been in doubt. Policy flip-flops and the neglect of the sector over the decades since the discovery and exploitation of crude oil is what has compounded our self-inflicted economic woes. For instance, Nigeria's annual food importation stands at \$22 billion according to Chief Audu Ogbeh, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Ogbeh. He spoke few days back on the topic: "Technology and agricultural revolution: a tool for economic growth" at the 19th edition of Catholic Brothers United in Lagos, lamenting that the situation was

Business

Impact investing key to Nigeria's economic sustenance – Oke, CEO AgroEknor

JOHN SALAU

Timi Oke, founder and CEO of AgroEknor, has highlighted the role of impact investment as key to economic sustenance, as Nigeria continues its journey of economic recovery and revitalisation.

Speaking on 'Starting small, growing big: private equity's role in nurturing Nigeria's economic pulse', Oke said that investment has been a part of human activities for over a millennium and has constantly evolved. He said further that prior to the mid-twentieth century, investment activities were undertaken for philanthropy or financial gain.

"Given that the Nigerian impact investing market is still evolving, the current macroeconomic environment in Nigeria provides valuable evidence to support investment inflows that will result in both social and financial returns in the three (3) priority sectors - Agriculture, Education, and Health," Oke said during a recent media parley held in Lagos on impact investing in Nigeria.

He said further that the government must provide an enabling environment to attract impact investments that provides capital and spearheads the growth objectives of SMEs operating in Nigeria to achieve

and catalyze a new era of economic prosperity.

According to him, patient capital has the ability to propel SMEs to new heights and lay the groundwork for sustainable growth. "The Nigeria impact investing industry has grown significantly between 2010 and 2025. Coincidentally, Nigeria has experienced two episodes of economic recession during this period," he said.

Oke said further that many institutions and high-net-worth individuals have moved their investment goals to meet corporate social responsibility (CSR), ethical and socially responsible requirements. According to him, these investing entities are incorporat-



Timi Oke, founder & CEO, AgroEknor

ing social, environmental, and financial conditions into their investment criteria and assets portfolio structure which birth impact investing.

"The performance of these sectors and their importance in driving positive development outcomes in Nigeria are also highlighted by the Nigerian government's priorities, as outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2025 and Nigeria's Agenda 2050."

On the role of SMEs in nurturing Nigeria's economic growth, Oke said that SMEs are a critical driver of economic growth and development. He said further that with a contribution of over 45 percent to Nigeria's GDP, it is safe to say that SMEs are the pulse of Nigeria's economy.

"Over the past few years, a critical challenge facing and limiting the growth of SMEs in Nigeria is access to funding and also the interest rate of available funding options," Oke said.

According to him, small businesses are involved in various sectors of the economy, including agriculture, manufacturing, services, and retail, among others. He said further that SMEs are at the center of economic operations, facilitating trade and driving innovation at scale across the country's many sectors.

Chowdeck upscales business, pledges better quality service

...Announces partnership with Chicken Republic in Lagos, Ibadan

HOPE MOSES-ASHIKE

Chowdeck, one of the leading on-demand delivery service in Nigeria, has pledged better quality service as it announced an exclusive partnership with Chicken Republic, an established quick-service restaurant chain and franchise.

It said that the collaboration would enable enhanced quality, more affordable, delivery meals for its users in Lagos and Ibadan.

Chowdeck already provides logistics services for Chicken Republic in eight Nigerian cities, and this new agreement cements its position as the preferred delivery partner.

Leveraging Chowdeck's advanced logistics and technology, customers in Lagos and Ibadan will benefit from lower delivery fees and enjoy some of the fairest prices online. Additionally, the partnership will include periodic in-app special discount offerings and the opportunity to earn Chowscore points through Chowdeck's loyalty program, further enhancing value and satisfaction for loyal customers. To kick off the partnership, Chowdeck users are being offered an exclusive N1000 meal deal.

Chicken Republic will now be able to serve a larger customer base, ensuring that more people can enjoy their delicious offerings. This

collaboration will drive increased daily sales and customer engagement while addressing the growing demand for online food delivery, projected to reach 52.0 million users by 2029. Customers can look forward to more efficient and reliable delivery, ensuring their meals arrive hot and fresh.

Commenting on the partnership, Femi Aluko, CEO and co-founder of Chowdeck said "This collaboration underscores our commitment to delivering high-quality, efficient, and convenient services. Combining our fast-growing delivery network with Chicken Republic's exceptional offerings, we aim to enhance the customer experience and bring happiness to more individuals across Lagos and Ibadan.

Kofi Abunu, CEO of Food Concepts Plc, also said, "We are thrilled to deepen our partnership with Chowdeck. Their remarkable growth over the past year, combined with the forward-thinking approach of their team and their unwavering commitment to investing in partner development, leave us with no doubt that they are here for the long term and will successfully address the last-mile delivery challenge. Our loyal customers around the country, especially in Lagos and Ibadan, can look forward to an enhanced delivery experience with Chicken Republic on Chowdeck."

Fubara sees better life after nationwide protests

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

Governor Sim Fubara of Rivers State sees a better life after the ongoing protest in Nigeria.

He said this would come from sustaining the implementation of policies and programmes that will continue to make living better by the day for all residents in the State.

The governor acknowledged the realities of the current harsh economic conditions that have necessitated the nationwide protest, but insisted that it will be for a short time, given the commitment of President Bola Tinubu-led Federal Government to secure a better future for all Nigerians.

Gov Fubara gave the assurance at the gates of Government House in Port Harcourt on Thursday when he addressed a group of youths on #EndBadGovernance protest, who came to register their complaints over the growing economic hardship in the country.

The governor thanked the youths for being peaceful with their protest so far, and urged them to ensure that they were not instigated by anybody to resort to violence.

He said, "So, like I said before, I



Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara (r); addressing peaceful #EndBadGovernance protesters at the Main Gate of Government House in Port Harcourt on Thursday.

want to thank you for being peaceful. I already know your problems, we will communicate them to the Federal Government.

"But you see, this particular protest that you are doing now, our only worry is that we know a lot of people are planning to take advantage of this protest to destroy our State; but, we will not allow it.

"Like I said, it is not easy, but we know quite alright that very soon, everything will be well. Starting

from our own State, everything will be well. What we just need is for you to support the government and its policies. Implementing policies, at the beginning, it must be harsh, but at the end, everything will be fine," he said.

Governor Fubara said his administration would stick to the tenets of good governance, take decisive actions to address the growing economic hardship in the State, and ensure that life is easy

for the people.

He explained amidst applause, "But, like I said yesterday, I am one of you. I feel your pain, and in our government here, we are doing everything to make life easy for our people.

"We are going to make sure that we make life easy for you. Our youths, I agree with you that there is hunger, but because we preach good governance, we are committed to make hunger disappear very

soon."

Governor Fubara also granted interview to a national television, and reiterated his commitment to ensuring that there is continued peace despite the ongoing protest in the State.

He insisted that his administration will support the youths, and genuinely work for their well-being, but warned that it will not tolerate anybody that will use the protest to cause anarchy.

"I know, maybe, some elements have taken it upon themselves to want to make governance difficult in our State, penetrating through this means to create additional problems. We won't allow it.

"But if it has to do with the (peaceful) protesters, I don't have any fears. Their demands are germane. I can understand them: hardship, bad governance, high cost of living, rent, medical bills. But we are coming from somewhere very bad. And we must start from somewhere to make things right.

"The initial policies, at the centre, might not be friendly but at the end of it, if we are patient and tolerant, there is no way the policies will not yield positive results and development for our State," he assured.

Port-Harcourt-based Business Academy enters Abuja, teaches CEOs better strategy

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

The Mapemond business resource centre in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, thinks Nigerian businesses hardly put their best steps forward.

Experts in the resource centre said in the week that most CEOs can do business better. On that score, the Mapemond Business Academy, an arm of the group, extended the power house to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) at an event held at the Westbrook Hotel & Offices in Abuja.

According to the founder and CEO of the group, Maple Dappa, the strategy is to bring together accomplished professionals and industry leaders to share knowledge, spark business collaborations, and promote excellence in leadership and management.

This strategy seems to have gained ground in Port Harcourt where businesses

have gained from the hydrocarbon industry, and this needed to extend to Abuja and other emerging leadership and business hubs.

The event thus, drew a diverse group of participants from various sectors, including business, education, and government. Notable attendees includ-

ed Adeoti Badaru, CEO of AAHVA Company Lt; Babatunde A. Apata, Bursar of Bamidele Olumilua University; and Ola Adigun-Daniels, a veteran entrepreneur and seasoned public sector consultant.

Other participants were said to have come from institutions and organisations across Kebbi, Lagos, Ekiti,

and Abuja, representing a wide range of industries and expertise.

The induction seminar, "Strategies to Do Business Better," was delivered by Obitunde Obiyemi, Registrar/CEO of the Institute of Strategic Management Nigeria (Chartered), representing the institute's President, Alex Ndudi Enebeli.

The presentation focused on strategic management, SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunities and threats) analysis, and execution plans to enhance better performance in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) business environment.

Dappa, the programme's

founder, and Theophilus Tyungu, Director of Programmes, Communications, and Clients Relations, welcomed pioneer fellows, emphasizing the importance of networking and collaboration in driving business success.

According to the founder, the event marked the beginning of a robust business and career network, with participants expressing admiration for Mapemond's initiatives and acknowledging the power of networking.

The Mapemond Business Academy Fellowship Programme is indicated as a platform for captains of industries and top management personnel to gain access to high-value information, trends, and specialized knowledge.

He said the programme includes a monthly business luncheon, annual conferences, and strategic workshops, both in-person and virtual.



Business leaders unveiling new strategy from Mapemond

NewsXtra

LG floats initiative to engage with gamers in Nigeria

The LG has announced initiative to engage with gamers in Nigeria and demonstrate the innovation behind its premium gaming products.

A decade after introducing the world to the first-ever large-screen OLED TV, LG continues to lead the premium TV market.

The company's cutting-edge OLED TVs have been recognised at the CES Innovation Award for 11 years in a row, and have kept evolving over time to deliver ever-greater value to consumers.

LG OLED is renowned for its exceptional picture quality, producing vibrant, accurate colors with deep blacks and an infinite contrast ratio for images that are remarkably lifelike.

LG Electronics (LG) is announcing the beginning of its exciting new LG OLED Instore gaming tournament, where players in Lagos, Nigeria, will have the chance to compete in a FIFA tournament in a bid to win the grand prize.

The games run from July to August 2024, and the player who wins on each of the Saturdays will qualify for the final. The final match takes qualifiers to the Challenge Arena in Lekki Brandshop on August 18, 2024.

The LG OLED gaming challenge takes places in three designated Fouani Showrooms namely; Omole, Allen and Lekki Brandshop on Saturdays only. For more information and to participate simply register at; <https://www.lg.com/africa/oled-gaming-challenge>

LG Electronics (LG) unique OLED technology delivers deep blacks, clean whites and vibrant shades of



colors says Choongbae Seok, general manager, Home Entertainment, TV Division, LG Electronics. "With cutting-edge self-illuminating pixels, you can experience a more accurate, pure and brighter picture than ever before."

LG OLED TVs have extremely low input lag with an incredible 1ms response time. This ensures that every move you input on the controller is displayed instantly on screen, giving you a vital edge over opponents and a better chance of winning.

Frame rates can often change throughout a game. If a TV can't match these changes, you get image tearing. That's why LG OLED TVs support VRR and ALLM, and are certified as HDMI 2.1 — reducing motion blur and ghosting to barely discernible levels, with fast motion transitions and seamless gameplay up to 4K 120fps, and at the highest resolution.

LG continue to work with industry-leader NVIDIA to make LG OLED TV the only G-SYNC com-

patible TV. LG OLED TVs use the precision and control of individual self-lit pixels to take full advantage of the G-SYNC compatibility, allowing fast response times and smoother gaming, even at high resolution.

Eye comfort (safer viewing)

OLED technology provides a safer and more comfortable viewing experience thanks to its flicker-free technology and certified low blue light levels. This means less fatigue to your eyes during those box-set marathons, nail-biting championship games and intense gaming sessions.

Flicker-free (more comfortable viewing)

You may have noticed the flashing on a monitor before — that's flicker. If your eyes are exposed to this for too long, it's inevitable that you'll feel tired. The flicker effect can be both visible and invisible, and even the invisible flicker can put stress on your eyes. Flicker occurs on LED TVs when they have an operating system that makes

backlights blink in order to control brightness; this is compounded by the slow response times of the LED panels. LG OLED TVs don't have that flicker because they don't have backlights and the response time of the OLED panel is fast.

Low blue light

Blue light comes from many sources and exposure to large amounts of blue light can suppress melatonin and lead to problems such as sleep disturbance. Children and adolescents with underdeveloped irises are particularly vulnerable to retinal damage. So, when you watch TV, it's important which TV you watch. Tests have found that LG OLED displays emit less blue light than LED displays.

Watching LG OLED relieves eye strain and lets you enjoy TV more comfortably. They've been certified by TÜV Rheinland as eye comfort displays that are flicker-free and low-blue light. And verified by UL as no photobiological LED hazard displays that are flicker-free and low-blue light.?

Kogi to partner Police Trust Fund on devt of barracks, logistics for officers

VICTORIA NNAKAIKE, Lokoja

Ahmed Usman Ododo, governor of Kogi State, has said that the state government would partner the Nigeria Police Trust Fund to address the challenges of accommodation and logistics faced by officers and men of the Kogi State Command of the Nigeria Police.

Governor Ododo stated this when he received the Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Police Trust Fund, Mohammed Sheidu who was on a courtesy visit to the governor at the Government House in Lokoja during the week, noting that the state government is committed to deepening its relationship with the Nigeria Police and other security agencies in an effort to guarantee security of lives and property in the state.

According to a statement issued by Ismaila Isah, Special Adviser on Media to the Governor, Ododo pointed out that the provision of accommodation through development of barracks and stations as well as logistics such as vehicles and other facilities are necessary to enhance the welfare and operational capabilities of the police in the state.

He commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for identifying resourceful young Nigerians for strategic appointments

like the Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Police Trust Fund as he assured of the continued support of young Nigerians for the administration of the President.

He equally advised the Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Police Trust Fund to make the best use of the opportunity given to him by repositioning the Nigeria Police Trust Fund, promising that he will continue to avail him of the support of his office as a brother and the governor of his home state in the collective efforts to make Kogi State and Nigeria proud.

In his remarks, Mohammed Sheidu, executive secretary of the Nigeria Police Trust Fund, commended Governor Ododo for the impactful policies and programmes of his administration which he noted are making life more meaningful for the people of Kogi State.

He assured of his willingness to ensure collaboration between the Kogi State government and the Nigeria Police Trust Fund towards enhancing the welfare and effectiveness of police officers and men to guarantee peace and security in the state and other parts of the country.

Recall that the Kogi State government in July commissioned an office complex for the Police Quick Response Unit in Lokoja to enhance the operational efficiency of the State Command of the Nigeria Police in the state.

Celebrity doctors urge parents to promote physical activity in children

A YODELE Renner, a paediatrician popularly known as The Noisy Naija Paediatrician, and general practitioner Aproko Doctor have urged parents to promote physical activities in their children.

They made this known during a live session focused on the importance of physical activity in preventing childhood obesity and supporting the overall physical wellbeing in children.

"Physical activity is crucial for a child's growth, impacting their physical, mental, and emotional health," Renner stated.

He explained that regular exercise improves motor skills, boosts mental health, and prevents chronic illnesses like obesity and diabetes.

Renner highlighted the rise in childhood obesity, attributing it to sedentary lifestyles and poor diets.

"Childhood obesity has long-term health consequences. Integrating physical activity into daily routines is essential for maintaining a healthy weight and preventing related diseases," he stated.

Speaking on the need for

physical activities, Aproko Doctor also discussed the positive impact of exercise on mental health and cognitive development.

"Exercise can improve mood, reduce anxiety and depression, and enhance cognitive functions," he noted, stressing the release of endorphins during physical activity.

According to recent data by the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2022, approximately 37 million children under the age of 5 were overweight.

Highlighting the challenge of childhood obesity that has become a global concern, affecting millions of children worldwide.

This issue, once predominantly associated with high-income countries, is now escalating in low- and middle-income nations, including nations across Africa.

The number of overweight children under 5 in Africa has surged by nearly 23 percent since 2000.

The prevalence of obesity among children aged 5-19 has surged from 8 percent in 1990 to 20 percent in 2022, affecting both genders, with 19 percent of girls and 21 of boys affected.

Plateau commissioner organises soccer tournament to engage youth amid protests

NATHANIEL GBAORON, Jos

IN the midst of the nationwide protest for good governance, Bashir Datti, commissioner for Youths and Sports in Plateau State, has taken a unique approach to engage the youth in Jos.

Datti has organised a soccer tournament aimed at turning the minds of the youth away from destruction and channeling their energy into something positive.

In an interview with BusinessDay in Jos, Datti explained that the aim of the tournament was to provide an alternative platform for the youth to express themselves and showcase their talents.

"We want to engage the youth in something productive and take their minds off the protests," Datti said.

The Commissioner commended the youth for the peaceful nature of the protests so far, saying that

it shows that they were responsible and can be engaged constructively.

"We are proud of the youths for conducting themselves peacefully during the protests. This tournament is our way of rewarding them and keeping them engaged," Datti added.

The soccer tournament, which kicked off last Thursday, attracted teams from across Jos and the environs. The competition is fierce, but the atmosphere is electric,

with the youth cheering each other on and having a great time.

Datti said that the tournament was also aimed at promoting unity and social cohesion among the youth.

"We want to use sports to bring the youth together and promote peace and understanding," he said.

As the tournament continues, the Commissioner promised to provide support and resources to the participating teams.

NewsXtra

Rivers' protesters accuse Tinubu, block federal secretariat as CP pleads

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

The nationwide protests have continued in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, where the protesters blocked the entire axis of the Federal Secretariat along Aba Road last Friday.

The #EndBadGovernance protesters accused President Bola Ahmed Tinubu of inciting the protesters by trying to stop people from participating.

Recall that the protesters, numbering over 2,000 had on Thursday held a brief siege at the federal secretariat entrance before moving to Government House, Port Harcourt, where they were addressed by Governor Siminalayi Fubara.

The situation caused a huge



Protesters at the Federal Secretariat on Aba Road on Day 2

traffic along the ever-busy Port Harcourt-Aba Road forcing motorists to use alternative routes.

The Commissioner of Police, Olatunji Disu, and his entourage,

comprising over eight patrol vans and an armoured personnel carrier (APC), later came to pacify the protesters to leave the major roads. That was Friday



Police on red alert as the Commissioner of Police pleads with protesters against blocking the major road

Some of the protesters who spoke with newsmen accused President Bola Ahmed Tinubu of making annoying statements and actions by trying to stop the pro-

test from holding and by calling on Nigerians not to participate in a peaceful protest that would have helped to make the feelings of Nigerians known to the government.

Youth Movement, Ojo Ola Oyo, thanks South-West youth for non-destructive protest

...Urges them to take full advantage of ongoing FG's developmental programmes for youth

BRIGHT IMOH

An Ibadan-based youth movement, Ojo Ola Oyo, has expressed appreciation to youths in the South-West, particularly in Oyo State for holding their protests without destroying public property or causing any mayhem.

Recall that the group was the first that pleaded with the youth to desist from partaking in "fruitless protests."

While there have been reports of violence, killing and destruction of properties in some sections of the country, the few protests in the South West have been orderly and peaceful.

Just like Ojo Ola Oyo had predicted, the protests had taken after the example of the October 2020 #EndSARS uproar, aftermath of which killings, maiming and destruction of properties, public and private, became the lot of the nation. But while reacting to the current development, the non-governmental organisation (NGO), Ojo Ola Oyo, said it was a good thing that the youths of states in the region allowed the Yoruba Omoluabi ethos to take preeminence.

In a statement issued by Wale Adesope, the Director of Publicity of the group on behalf of its founder, Kehinde Olaosebikan, and made available to journalists in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, at the weekend, the NGO expressed gratitude to the youths in Oyo State and the entire region for taking cognisance of the verifiable moves the Bola Tinubu-led administration had made to secure the future of the youths in the nation.



"It is gratifying that our youths have largely behaved themselves during the protests.

"This is a commendable development. We can still urge them to continue to exercise caution and give the government benefit of the doubt," he said.

Ojo Ola Oyo commended the mature nature the highly respected comrades in the West particularly Professor Ademola Aremu of the University of Ibadan, Comrade Akeem Lawal and others superintendent over the protests in the state.

"As we have said earlier, the youth of this country must be aware of the students' loan scheme of the current administration. This scheme, which gives loan at no interest, doesn't only cover formal academic pursuits, but also informal of vocational trainings in all aspects.

Ojo Ola Oyo also charged the youth to take full advantage of other government's programmes designed for the youths including the National Youth Investment Fund, NYIF; (bit.ly/NYIFAPPLY).

According to Ojo Ola Oyo, "Any government that takes away the burden of education financing and youth development we must understand, prioritizes the future of the nation.

"This is why we are of the strong opinion that this government should be given the chance to do more.

"We believe that with all hands being on deck, we can resolve most of the problems bedeviling us right now.

"Also remember that while lives lost cannot be brought back, the properties destroyed will still have to be repaired with our scarce resources."

Escapade, Life, others to co-sponsor hotel expo Nigeria 2024

INIJOBONG IWOK

Escapade and other major brands in Africa are set to sponsor the Hotel Expo Nigeria 2024 scheduled to hold from August 5-6, 2024 at the Landmark Centre, Lagos.

They will be joining forces with brands including, Air Peace, Ebonylife Cinemas, Floorkraft, Burger King, Ikogosi Resort, Valujet, Leadway, among other notable African brands to be a part of West Africa's biggest hospitality event.

This was according to a statement signed by Dolapo Ojabowale, Communication Officer, Escapade App to the media.

Escapade is an ultimate app designed exclusively for Africans seeking exciting short-term getaways and it offers a unique platform where users can search

for and book shortlets with the confidence of HD and 3D views.

The statement noted that Escapade is committed to providing an unparalleled booking experience that enhances trust and satisfaction for African travellers as well as supporting the broader goals of the hospitality industry in Africa.

The statement further said by offering a platform that makes it easier for travellers to find and book quality shortlets, Escapade is helping to boost tourism and stimulate economic growth, noting that as major sponsor and participant at the 2024 edition of the Hotel Expo Nigeria the company was committed to the event.

The Brand Manager, Emmanuel Etim noted that Escapade's participation in Hotel Expo Nigeria 2024 is a strategic move to enhance brand awareness, establish industry connections, and drive user acquisition for the app.

The Macallan, Premier Business Network partner to host business leaders at GrowthCon 2.0

The Macallan recently partnered with Premier Business Network to host the GrowthCon 2.0 conference on growth and innovation.

The two-day conference held recently in Lagos brought together over 500 inspiring entrepreneurs, operators, investors, and business leaders in the country.

Themed 'Art of Growth: Increasing Innovation Competency' the conference delivered practical strategies and implementable solutions to drive growth for the businesses.

Daniel Atteh, The Macallan brand ambassador and educator, Lagos, stated that the brand's approach to craftsmanship can inspire businesses to achieve sustainable growth.

"One beautiful thing about whisky is, it takes a lot of time and patience to produce. And as we all know, in business you need pa-



tience and dedication to grow anything worthwhile.

"The Macallan's commitment to the meticulous process of whisky maturation is what has made it to become the most valued whisky in the world. It's a testament to the power of consistent and intentional craftsmanship over short-term gains," Atteh stated.

GrowthCon 2.0, powered by Premier Business Network, featured 30+ growth experts sharing insights on reimagining growth and innovation for the continent's rapidly evolving business landscape.

Sports

Olympics: IOC optimistic boxing will be part of 2028 games in Los Angeles

...Irish boxer Broadhurst defends Khelif ...As Carini apologises to Algerian boxer

Stories by JOHN SALAU

THE International Olympic Committee (IOC) has said it is optimistic that boxing will still be part of the schedule at the 2028 games in Los Angeles, following the gender eligibility controversy of two female boxers at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

"We sincerely hope that boxing will be on the programme for 2028. It's a sport, not just a good sport to watch, it's also a sport that does an awful lot in terms of socially deprived areas and socially deprived people," Mark Adams, IOC, spokesperson said in a press conference.

In addressing the IOC's decision to allow two boxers who failed a gender eligibility test to compete at Paris 2024, Adams said that gender eligibility is a minefield.

"This is a minefield and we want a simple explanation. Everyone wants a black-and-white explanation of how we can determine this. That explanation does not exist, neither in the scientific community or anywhere else."

According to the IOC, both ladies have competed and lost to other women in boxing competitions in the past.

"This involves real people and we're talking about real people's lives here."

"They have competed and they continue to compete in the women's competition. They have lost and

they've won against other women throughout, over the years.

"And by the way, this isn't - we should make this absolutely clear for everyone - this is not a transgender issue," Adams clarified.

However, Irish boxer Amy Broadhurst, who beat Khelif at the 2022 World Championships, has defended the Algerian boxer amid the gender controversy that has emerged at the ongoing Paris Olympics.

The Algerian was disqualified hours before her gold-medal bout at the women's World Championships in New Delhi last year after she failed to meet the International Boxing Association's (IBA) eligibility criteria, which prevent athletes with male XY chromosomes competing in women's events.

Similarly, Italian boxer Angela Carini, who abandoned her Olympic bout against Algeria's Imane Khelif inside 46 seconds, says she "wants to apologise" to her opponent.

All this controversy makes me sad. I'm sorry for my opponent, too. If the IOC said she can fight, I respect that decision," Carini told Italian newspaper Gazzetta dello Sport.

Carini said abandoning the fight had been a mature step to take, but she

expressed regret at not shaking hands with Khelif afterwards.

"It wasn't something I intended to do. Actually, I want to apologise to her and everyone else. I was angry because my Olympics had gone up in smoke," Carini said.

After taking a punch to the face inside 30 seconds during Thursday's fight, Carini went to the corner for her coach to fix her headgear.

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After taking a punch to the face inside 30 seconds during Thursday's fight, Carini went to the corner for her coach to fix her headgear.

After briefly resuming, she returned

to her corner once more and stopped the fight.

Khelif is one of two athletes who have been cleared to compete in the women's boxing in Paris, despite having been disqualified from last year's Women's World Championships for failing to meet eligibility criteria.

The 25-year-old's participation in the Games has proved controversial, leading the IOC to defend her right to compete.

The Russia-led International Boxing

Association (IBA), which carried out the tests last year, said Khelif "failed to meet the eligibility criteria for participating in the women's competition, as set and laid out in the IBA regulations".

Khelif has always competed in the women's division and is recognised by the IOC as a female athlete.

However, the IOC spokesperson said, "The Algerian boxer was born female, was registered female, lived her life as a female, boxed as a female, has a female passport."



Two North African teams push for Olympic medals

Stories by JOHN SALAU

Two African representatives at the ongoing 2024 Paris Olympics Morocco and Egypt have secured their first-ever semi-final berth at the summer games by beating USA and Paraguay respectively.

Egypt came from behind to force penalties before emerging victorious in a 5-4 shootout victory over Paraguay, while Morocco thrashed the United States in a commanding 4-0 victory.

The quarter-final clash, played out under the Parisian lights, remained goalless at halftime, with both sides struggling to break

the deadlock.

Paraguay seemed to have struck the decisive blow when Diego Gomez found the net in the 63rd minute, sending their supporters into raptures.

As the clock ticked down, Egypt's Olympic dream appeared to be slipping away. However, Ibrahim Adel had other ideas.

With just three minutes of regular time remaining, the forward unleashed a crucial strike that breathed new life into Egypt's campaign and forced the match into extra time.

The additional 30 minutes could not separate the evenly matched sides, setting

the stage for a dramatic penalty shootout.

Morocco on the other hand is set to play Spain in Marseille after an emphatic 4-0 triumph over the USA.

The Atlas Lions showcased their attacking prowess and tactical superiority in a match that will long be remembered by fans at the Parc des Princes.

From the opening whistle, Morocco dominated proceedings, with their high-pressing game and swift counterattacks causing constant

problems for the American defense.

The breakthrough came in the 29th minute when Soufiane Rahimi converted a penalty, his fifth goal of the tournament, after Nathan Harriel's clumsy challenge in the box.

The USA struggled to gain a foothold in the match, with Morocco's midfield trio of Abde Ezzalzouli, Ilias Akhomach, and Amir Richardson controlling the tempo and creating numerous chances.

Akhomach doubled Morocco's lead in the 63rd minute, finishing off a well-worked move down the

left flank.

Seven minutes later, Paris Saint-Germain star Achraf Hakimi's sublime solo effort, gliding through midfield unchallenged before finding the bottom corner from outside the box.

As the match entered its final stages, Morocco continued to press, and their efforts were rewarded with a second penalty in stoppage time.

El Mehdi Maouhoub stepped up to convert, putting the finishing touch on a memorable night for Moroccan football.

2034 World Cup: Saudi set to build 350 metres above ground level stadium

Saudi Arabia has submitted plans to build a new 350 metres above ground level stadium and 10 additional stadiums as part of its bid to host the 2034 FIFA World Cup.

The 2034 World Cup will be the first time the expanded tournament is held in just one country as a 48-team event.

The hosts are set to be confirmed by the FIFA congress on 11 December.

The proposed stadium in Neom, an as-yet-unbuilt city in the north-west of the country, will only be accessible via high-speed lifts and driverless vehicles.

The arena, which is part of the country's 'The Line' project to diversify the kingdom's economy away from oil, is set to host a quarter-final fixture.

Saudi Arabia's bid is uncontested and the country had until October's deadline to submit its plans.

Of the 11 new stadiums, eight will be in the capital Riyadh - including the 92,760 King Salman International Stadium, which will host the opening game and the final.

The cities of Jeddah, Al Khobar and Abha will also host matches.

An entire new city will need to be built in Neom's case.

Its flagship project, The Line, has been pitched as a car-free city, just 200m (656ft) wide and 170km (106 miles) long - though only 2.4km of the project is reportedly expected to be completed by 2030.

The Line will be taller than the Empire State Building and about as long as the distance between Bristol and London.

According to the bid document,



the new Neom stadium will be "run entirely on renewable energy", mainly from wind and solar sources.

There are plans to build a new international airport in Neom, which the bid document states will have 12 million domestic and international visitors annually by 2034.

The airports in all the other host cities are also set to be expanded, with Riyadh expected to have 100m passengers per year by 2034 - an increase of 170 percent on 2023.

Abha airport will be upgraded to increase its passenger capacity from 1.5m to 8m in time for the tournament.

Saudi Arabia is also planning to extend train lines and bus routes, with the document stating "navigation around the country will be quick and efficient".

Here are the list of the stadiums expected to host the 2034 World Cup:

- Riyadh:**
- King Salman International Stadium - 92,760 capacity
 - King Fahad Sports City Stadium

- 70,200
- Prince Mohammed bin Salman Stadium - 46,979
- New Murabba Stadium - 46,010
- Roshn Stadium - 46,000
- Prince Faisal bin Fahad Sports City Stadium - 46,865
- South Riyadh Stadium - 47,060
- King Saud University Stadium - 46,319

- Jeddah:**
- King Abdullah Sports City Stadium - 58,432
 - Qiddiya Coast Stadium - 46,096
 - Jeddah Central Development Stadium - 45,794
 - King Abdullah Economic City Stadium - 45,700

- Al Khobar:**
- Aramco Stadium - 46,096

- Abha:**
- King Khalid University Stadium - 45,428

- Neom:**
- Neom Stadium - 46,010

Gary Neville acquires Lim's 50% stake in Salford City

Former England and Manchester full-back Gary Neville has bought fellow co-owner Peter Lim's stake in Salford City to pave the way for a new strategic partner, the League Two club has said.

Neville, along with Manchester United "Class of 92" team-mates his brother Phil, Nicky Butt, Ryan Giggs, Paul Scholes and David Beckham bought the club in 2014 alongside Lim.

"Peter has been integral in helping to create a legacy at Salford City that we are now determined to build on," external from the Class of 92 said in a joint statement.

Singapore-based billionaire Lim's shareholding was 50 percent upon the takeover of the club, who were in the eighth tier of English football at the time.

"We cannot thank Peter enough for his support, friendship, belief and loyalty to us for over 10 years, not only in Salford City but in other projects that we have worked on together."

After the takeover, Salford won four promotions in five seasons and reached the English Football League (EFL) in 2019.

Salford went on to win the EFL trophy in 2021, the first major trophy in their history.

"Peter's support has allowed us to become an established League Two club with a unique ownership."

"We are committed to the future growth of this club in the best interests of the supporters, stakeholders and the local community," Butt, who is now the club's chief executive officer, added.



Since Salford reached the EFL in 2019, however, the club is yet to win a further promotion to the third tier and beyond.

The club reached the League Two play-offs in 2023, but were defeated by Stockport County in the semi-finals after Salford's best finish, seventh place, since joining the EFL.

Salford slipped to a disappointing 20th last season, with manager Neil Wood replaced mid-season by Karl Robinson.

"We continue to explore options to potentially work with additional new strategic partners to assist us in achieving our ambitions for the club."

"We are as excited as ever about the new football season and remain focused on strengthening our playing squad and achieving future success on the field alongside the continued development of the football club," Butt said.

Newcastle in talks with Palace over Marc Guehi

Newcastle have made contact with Crystal Palace over a potential deal for England defender Marc Guehi.

Guehi is a stand-out centre-back for The Three Lions in the just concluded 2024 Euros, where they made it to the finals before losing 2-1 to Spain.

Eddie Howe has made centre-back a priority target this summer and Guehi fits the profile of what he is looking for - right sided, but someone who can also play on the left.

The England international's potential transfer fee would be considerable given his growing stature in the game and the fact he has two years left to run on his contract.

Newcastle still have to be conscious of PSR, meaning if Palace's demands become too high they may have to rethink their pursuit of Guehi.

Sources with expertise in the transfer market have pointed towards Everton's



demands of upwards of £60m for his England team-mate Jarrod Branthwaite as the kind of price range for Guehi.

Branthwaite, also one of United's targets did not make the final Euros squad, while Guehi played all but one of England's seven tournament matches in Germany.

If Guehi is to end up staying at Crystal Palace this coming season, it has not been ruled out that he could also sign a new contract at Selhurst Park.

France to face Egypt in semi-finals after beating Argentina 1-0 in Bordeaux

Host France will battle one of the African representatives Egypt after beating Javier Mascherano's Argentina 1-0 in a match that ended in scuffles moment after the final whistle at the Matmut Atlantique stadium in Bordeaux.

Argentina coach Mascherano had insisted before the match that his team will focus on the challenge of a France team that reached the quarterfinals with three wins and no goals conceded in Group A.

However, Jean-Philippe Mateta's early header was enough for France to beat Argentina 1-0 and reach the semi-finals at the Paris Olympics.

France won their only Olympic title in 1984, the year they also won the European



Championship. There was shoving for a couple of minutes before the players were broken up. Some French players appeared to sprint down the tunnel moments later. But they came back out a short time later and did a lap of

honour.

Argentina's players were booed throughout the match by a hostile crowd, who celebrated early on when Mateta headed home in the fifth minute for coach Thierry Henry's team, who will now face Egypt in the last four.

Argentina was given a hard

time by the Bordeaux crowd. The first few Argentina players came out to booing almost an hour before kick-off. The stadium music system then drowned out much of the jeering.

Argentina's national anthem was also met with a chorus of jeers and whistles, and home fans booed Argentina's players after the kick-off when they touched the ball.

A racism scandal has heightened tensions, following a video of Argentina players singing an offensive song about French players of African heritage as they celebrated their Copa America victory last month.

Over 400 police and gendarmier officers were deployed for the match, in addition to 100 military personnel, and security forces used drones to help make the event safe.

The atmosphere outside the stadium was anything but tense, however. Fans of both nations mingled with each other without any signs of hostility, some with Argentina flags or jerseys with Lionel Messi's name on the back.

Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, who met IOC President Thomas Bach on Thursday, said the Italian athlete had faced a boxer who had physical advantages and it was not a fight between equals.

IBA to award \$50,000 prize money to Carini despite loss to Khelif

THE International Boxing Association (IBA) will award Italy's Angela Carini, who lost her welterweight round-of-16 bout against Algerian Imane Khelif at the Paris Olympics in 46 seconds on Thursday, \$50,000 in prize money.

The IBA said Carini would receive \$50,000, her federation a further \$25,000 and her coach an

additional \$25,000. "I do not understand why they killed women's boxing. Only eligible athletes should compete in the ring for the sake of safety. I could not look at her tears," Umar Kremlev, IBA President said.

Carini pulled out in the first round after the Algerian, who is at the heart of a gender row, pummeled the Italian with a barrage of

punches. Algeria's Khelif, and Taiwan double world champion Lin Yuting, were cleared to compete in Paris despite being disqualified at the 2023 World Championships after failing IBA eligibility rules that prevent athletes with male XY chromosomes competing in women's events.

The IOC last year stripped the

IBA of its status as boxing's governing body over governance issues, and took charge of the Paris 2024 boxing competition itself, but now finds itself at the centre of a row over the pair's participation.

Welterweight Khelif next takes on Hungary's Luca Anna Hamori. However, the IOC said the IBA decision to disqualify the boxers last year was arbitrary and the

Sports

Kylian Mbappe: Leading on the field and in the boardroom

ANTHONY NLEBEM AND AKEMINIOMBONG MICHAEL

France star Kylian Mbappe has become the latest football superstar to transition from the pitch to the boardroom, acquiring a significant stake in Ligue 2 club Caen at just 25 years old. Mbappe is reported to have bought 80% of the shares of Stade Malherbe Caen, making him the majority shareholder of the club.

Mbappe's company, Interconnected Ventures, announced the acquisition in a statement on Wednesday, July 31. The new Real Madrid player, who almost signed for Caen when he was younger, acquired the shares through Coalition Capital, the investment arm of Interconnected Ventures, replacing US investment fund Oaktree as the majority shareholder.

Although the exact acquisition fee has not been officially disclosed, French media reports estimate it to be between €15-€20 million. "This transaction marks a significant step in the club's strategic development and reinforces its natural ambition to remain one of the most successful clubs in French football," the club said in a statement. "This acquisition will provide Caen with additional strategic resources to strengthen its sporting policy, modernize its infrastructure, and develop innovative projects."

Founded in 1913, Caen finished fifth in the French top flight in 1992 and reached the League Cup final in 2005 but has played in France's second tier since 2019.

Mbappe joins the likes of Jamie Vardy (Co-owner at Rochester New York FC), Sadio Mane (Bourges Foot 18), and Ngolo Kante (Royal Excelsior Virton), as well as former football greats like David Beckham (Inter Miami) Ryan Giggs (Salford City), and Ronaldo Nazario (Real Valladolid), carving a new path for himself in the football industry. His entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen, combined with his global star-

dom, make him a formidable force in football.

Meteoric rise to stardom

Hailing from Bondy, France, Kylian Mbappe's journey to the top began at a young age. His exceptional talent was evident from the start, leading him through the ranks of AS Monaco's youth academy.

A breakout season at Monaco propelled him into the global spotlight, with his impressive performances attracting the attention of top clubs worldwide. Paris Saint-Germain secured his services in 2017, and he quickly established himself as one of the best players in the world.

Mbappe's highly anticipated move to Real Madrid was finalized, with the Paris Saint-Germain star reportedly signing a €150 million five-year deal through 2029, including a €15 million annual salary, according to BBC.

The 25-year-old World Cup winner will also retain a percentage of his image rights. His high-profile move to Real Madrid in 2023 solidified his status as a global icon, with a record-breaking contract that made him the highest-paid athlete on the planet.

During his seven years in Paris, Mbappe won six Ligue 1 titles with four French cups and became PSG's record goal scorer with 256 goals. Mbappe also reached the semifinals of the 2024 European Championship with France, despite breaking his nose in the first game against Austria.

International accolades

Mbappe's impact on the French national team has been equally impressive. A World Cup winner in 2018, he was instrumental in France's success, earning the Golden Young Player award. His leadership qualities were evident when he captained the French team at the 2024 Euros.

Beyond the pitch

Mbappe's influence extends far beyond



the football field. His commercial appeal and status as a global role model have made him a sought-after figure in the world of advertising and fashion. His decision to become a club owner is the latest chapter in his entrepreneurial journey.

As Mbappe's career continues to evolve, the football world eagerly anticipates his next moves. Whether he chooses to focus on club administration or pursue a coaching career after retiring as a player, his impact on the sport is undeniable.

Osimhen returns to Napoli training as transfer speculation intensifies

ANTHONY NLEBEM

Amid growing speculations concerning his future at Diego Armando Maradona Stadium, Nigerian striker Victor Osimhen resumed full training on Friday with Napoli, dispelling concerns over his fitness.

The Nigeria international participated in morning and afternoon sessions, indicating a potential return to action for the upcoming match against Girona.

Despite ongoing transfer rumours linking him to Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain, Napoli insist on plan-



ning for the new season with Osimhen. However, negotiations with both clubs persist, and no concrete agreement has been reached yet.

While Napoli's director, Giovanni Manna, publicly expresses optimism about retaining the striker, manager Antonio Conte's apparent disinterest in Osimhen fuels speculation about a potential departure.

Osimhen, who has openly expressed his desire to leave Napoli, was notably absent from the club's recent pre-season friendlies. However, the 25-year-old took part in Friday's training session.

"Double training session in Castel di Sangro for Napoli, Victor Osimhen who in the morning earned the applause of the fans with a session of shots on goal. In the afternoon, the Nigerian was deployed by Antonio Conte in the match. The blue bomber also scored, causing the roar of the many Neapolitan fans present in the stands of the Teofilo Patini," as reported by Area Napoli.

"Osimhen's presence in the afternoon training match is an important signal that could also lead to the Nigerian being called up for tomorrow afternoon's friendly

match against Girona."

Osimhen's future remains uncertain, but his commitment to Napoli is evident in his full participation in training. As the transfer window progresses, the outcome of this high-stakes saga will be closely watched by football fans worldwide.

The transfer saga surrounding Osimhen continues to develop, with Chelsea and PSG keen to sign the prolific forward. But Osimhen's return to training indicates his commitment to Napoli as the 2022/23 Italian champions prepare for their 2024/2025 campaign under new boss Antonio Conte.



Biles soars to third Olympic gold in Paris

ANTHONY NLEBEM

Simone Biles dominated the vault final to claim her third gold medal at the Paris 2024 Olympics. The American gymnastics superstar reclaimed the title she first won at Rio 2016, solidifying her status as one of the greatest athletes of all time.

After helping the USA

secure the women's team gold and then capturing the all-around title, the 27-year-old reclaimed another title she first won at Rio 2016, having lost them in Tokyo when she withdrew from several events.

Biles executed her signature Biles II vault flawlessly before sticking to her 'easier' vault—whose difficulty surpasses many competitors' best efforts—

earning an average score of 15.300.

Brazil's Rebeca Andrade, the only gymnast with skills comparable to Biles and the reigning Tokyo champion, took silver with a score of 14.966. American Jade Carey secured bronze with a score of 14.466.

Following her all-around victory two days earlier, Biles admitted

that facing Andrade was "stressful" as she is the only gymnast who has ever pushed her closely, jokingly adding that she did not want to face her again.

There was speculation that Andrade might attempt a new skill she had submitted—a triple-twisting Yurchenko vault with a difficulty value close to Biles' best vault—but it did

not materialize.

The 25-year-old Andrade, who outperformed Biles on this apparatus at last year's World Championships, delivered well-executed vaults. She scored higher than Biles for execution on both vaults, but with difficulty values a full mark lower than Biles' efforts, Andrade's chances hinged on a rare mistake from the American.

With this victory, Biles became the third most decorated female gymnast with 10 Olympic medals. With two more finals on Monday—floor and beam—she can surpass second-placed Vera Caslavskva, who won 11 medals for Czechoslovakia between 1960 and 1968. The all-time record of 18 medals is held by Soviet Union gymnast Larisa Latynina.

Guardiola to shorten team talks after £2m fine

ANTHONY NLEBEM

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has announced plans to make his half-time team talks shorter after the club was fined for repeatedly being late to start matches and return from half-time. The club admitted to breaching Premier League rules 22 times "without good reason" and was fined £2.09 million.

When asked about the fine, Guardiola responded, "I just read it in the news. I would try to do my speeches at half-time shorter." He made this statement before Saturday's pre-season match against Chelsea in Columbus, USA.

With many senior players unavailable following Euro 2024 and the Copa America, Guardiola has allocated significant playing time to Norway striker Erling Haaland, whose national team did not qualify for the



summer tournament. Previously concerned about Haaland's "muscle niggles," Guardiola said, "He woke up and feels much better. And hopefully, he can play a few minutes."

Guardiola declined to comment on rumours that Atletico Madrid is in talks for striker Julian Alvarez, who is currently competing in the Olympics in

Paris with Argentina.

However, Guardiola had praise for his counterpart Enzo Maresca, formerly a member of his staff and now managing Chelsea. "I'm really pleased for him," Guardiola said. "We spent a special year together. He is an incredible, lovely person. And his family too. He did a really good job - unbelievable - at Leicester: promotion to the Premier League, and now he is in one of the top five, six teams in England. And I wish him the best because he deserves it. Nice people deserve the best."

Guardiola emphasized Maresca's dedication and belief in his methods, stating, "To be a manager is believing something deeply but, really, deeply, deeply. And whatever the results, I stick with my idea. And that's why he believes in what he does. And he will have success. I don't know how long, but he will have it."

Algerian boxer Khelif defies odds to compete in Paris Olympics



Born in a poor village about 300 kilometers from Algiers, boxer Imane Khelif faced numerous obstacles in a conservative country where women are often considered unfit for the sport. With braided hair and a powerful 1.79 meter (5 foot 9 inch) physique, the 25-year-old finds herself at the center of a gender controversy at the Paris Olympic Games.

Imane shared her journey on the television channel Canal Algérie one month before the games. "Our village was around 10 kilometers from the center of Tiaret, 280 kilometers southwest of Algiers. I moved from the village to the city. From the city to the capital. From the capital to abroad," she recounted.

Coming from a family of limited means, Imane described the challenges of growing up in a "village of conservative people" in Tiaret's semi-desert surroundings. "I came from a conservative family. Boxing is not a widely practiced sport by women, especially in Algeria. It

was difficult," she said.

As a strong athlete, she initially played football with the boys in her village of Biban Mesbah. Beating the boys in matches often led to fights, where she defended herself with punches. These fights eventually led her to boxing. In an interview with UNICEF, she revealed that she used to sell scrap metal while her mother sold homemade couscous to pay for bus tickets to Tiaret.

Initially, Imane's father did not approve of her decision to pursue boxing, but he eventually became one of her biggest supporters. The 49-year-old unemployed welder told AFP that his daughter is "an example of the Algerian woman, a heroine of Algeria," praising her "strong will to work and to train."

In 2022, Imane told the Algerian news agency APS that she had

considered quitting boxing due to her family's disapproval and societal judgment. "All these barriers made me even stronger and were an extra motivation to achieve my dreams," she said. She also expressed her determination on the UNICEF website, stating that her "dream is to win a gold medal." "If I win, mothers and fathers will be able to see how far their children can go. I want to inspire girls and children in Algeria," she added.

Imane's international career took off when she participated in the lightweight category at the 2020 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo—postponed to 2021—where she placed fifth after losing in the quarterfinals to Ireland's Kellie Harrington. "Everything changed for the better, especially as my country's flag flew and its hymn played in many countries throughout the world," she explained.

Lessons from Prof. Ogunsola's Lecture on peace in Nigeria



AYO OYOZE BAJE

Baje is Nigerian first food technologist in the media and author of 'Drumbeats of Democracy'

Thought – provoking. “Insightful”. “Inspirational”. “Brilliant and life-changing”. These were but a few accolades that trailed the recent lecture delivered by the first female Vice Chancellor of the prestigious University of Lagos (UNILAG), a world-renowned medical microbiologist who is Africa's leading standard bearer in the fight against debilitating diseases, erudite Professor Folasade Ogunsola. Little wonder that it elicited an instantaneous standing ovation, soon after she finished with the lecture. But what was it all about? We shall get to know.

First and foremost, the epochal and history-making event, hosted by the impact-making Apostles of Peace Society International, ably led by Engineer Paul Ajisafe, the National President, along with the tested and trusted team members including Adebayo Gbose, Olawale Otunaiya, the National Vice President and Secretary, respectively, as well as Mrs. Titilayo Oyeniran, the Assistant Secretary, was a veritable platform for the Annual Peace Award and Investiture. The award was given to three well-deserving, prominent, peace-promoting patriots. These included the former governor of Osun state, His Excellency, Chief Bisi Akande (CON), the Group CEO, Blue Star Group, Chief (Sir) Obi Okafor and the CEO, Aero Contractors Ltd, Captain Ado Sanusi. The event which took place at the Archbishop Vining Memorial Cathedral Church located in Ikeja, Lagos will become a reference point in Nigeria's Christendom.

Of significance, was the lecture titled: 'Christians and the struggle for Peace and Justice in Nigeria' one critical and topical issue that would remain for eons in the memories of the engrossed attendees. The thematic relevance of the mind-riveting lecture touched tellingly on what peace and justice really stand for, the connecting chord between the two, and the sources of conflict in Nigeria, with regards to the riot causes. Others include our obedience to the Ten Commandments, the significant role the church has to play in mitigating these problems, as the whole body of Christ, and specifically what it means to us, all as concerned Nigerians?

These burning questions have become expedient more so, at this trying, tension-soaked time in our national history as the hungry and angry youths hit the streets, with protests tagged: #EndBadGovernance Campaign.

As she aptly noted: "Peace is a state of tranquility, harmony, and the absence of conflict or violence". Beyond that, it is a mindset. On its part, "justice is the principle of fairness and moral rightness. It involves the



fair treatment of individuals."

Justice also encompasses the enforcement of laws, the protection of rights and the punishment of wrong doing, to maintain social order. But in the absence of justice, and with the culture of crass impunity we believe that we can do anything and get away with it. When such a situation takes place, we either forgive the offender, or some people who ordinarily should be concerned stand aloof and state that: "Let them not say that I am the one who stopped him".

Unfortunately, "impunity fosters corruption." That, in itself exacerbates wrong doing. But justice, as she rightly noted "is an imperative of a moral society" because "injustices often underlie conflicts" whether it



For twenty-six years, the Apostles of Peace International has been a beacon of hope, a lighthouse guiding the weary and the troubled, towards the tranquil shores of peace

- *Engr. Paul Ajisafe (National President, at the AOP Annual Peace Award and Investiture).*



is the blood-letting Boko Haram insurgency, banditry or herders-farmers clashes.

According to Professor Ogunsola, not feeling concerned about such an anomalous situation is absolutely wrong. And that is because, as well stated in her words of counsel, "evil flourishes when the good keep quiet and we must not forget that."

Indeed, now is the best of times for Christians in Nigeria to practise what they preach. We must reflect the love, compassion and the soul-lifting teachings of Jesus Christ. We have to be the messages we preach. It has become compelling because not a few Nigerians have become resentful. We need to mediate conflicts. We need to be more open and eschew individualism, intolerance, and do away with the inability to accept our differences. Self-centeredness, especially on the part of our political leaders fuels complaints and promotes poverty.

But good enough, that we have been called by God to be peace-makers. We should therefore, create inclusiveness, offer spiritual and financial support. This should be not be done only by wishful words but by visible actions. We need to do more with regards to community services such as the building of schools, provision of potable water and providing agricultural services.

Interestingly, that is exactly what the Apostles of Peace Society International, has been doing over the years. As reflected in the welcome address by Ajisafe: "We have built and provided community water sources as social amenities to elevate the hygiene status in educational institutions, seminary, correctional centres and communities that are cut off from such essential supplies. We have built and managed food and home needs, banks and orphanages, offered medical services" amongst many other humanitarian services. This is highly commendable, is it not? Of course, that is Christianity in full action.

In a similar vein, big kudos goes to the Initiator/ Founder of Apostles of Peace International, Siyanbola Oladapo, along with Obadele Orisabiyi, Mrs. Kemi Sotuminu and Rev. Gabriel Fawole. Others include Global Executives of Apostles of Peace Society International, Arch. Gbenga Babington, Chief Abidemi Ibigbami, and Prince Stephen Oyebo. So far, the AOP with the Mission Statement anchored on the strong tripod pillars of humanitarianism, evangelism and philanthropy has done well. It is actively involved in distribution of food items, clothing, medical services as well as provision of boreholes where the chapters are located in Ibadan

and Lagos.

That should be a wake-up call to us to mitigate the pains and poverty ravaging the victims of insurgency in Internally Displaced Persons, IDPs camps. As Ogunsola rightly noted, your neighbour is that person in need. We should offer spiritual and emotional support. We should be mentors, stimulate others to grow and give a listening ear to others in need. Your kindness can never be forgotten.

Furthermore, she emphasized the crying need for Nigerians to cultivate and imbibe the spirit of forgiveness, which she described as the other side of love. "If you do good to those who are good to us there is no reward. However badly hurt we might be, we have to obedient to God who we pray to, pleading with Him to "forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us."

In fact, she reminded the audience of the Rwanda Genocide, and the important role played by Desmond Tutu through the 'Truth and Reconciliation' agenda. Quoting copiously from the biblical books of Matthew 5 verse 15, John 4 verse 34, John 9 verse 4, John 14 verse 27, Hebrews 6 verse 10 she highlighted the unfailing messages of peace and tolerance. She also referred to Leviticus Chapter 19 verse 18 which admonishes us to "love our neighbours as we love ourselves."

Charity begins at home. We should therefore, practice the peace we preach right from the home front, to our neighbours and places of work. If each and every one of us is peaceful that would grow into a mountain of peacefulness in our communities, and the country at large.

Going forward, what is important is our response to issues of clear injustices as they unfold. That brings to mind, the thought of Aristotle who stated that: "It is not enough to win a war; it is more important to organise the peace."



IKEDDY ISIGUZO

Isiguzo is a major commentator on minor issues

Tinubu listens only to Dangote's hunger, protest

eats only vegetables?

If the objective is for the First Lady to get air time, she has succeeded hugely. The deeper worry is that the First Lady is distant from the people, so distant that she does not know that majority of Nigerians, those mostly hit by hunger, live in spaces insufficient for them to rest their heads. Others are mainly on the move because their means cannot sustain any semblance of permanence at a place.

And the food needs of Nigerians has suddenly reduced to vegetables so that the First Lady would be hailed for pushing her unique nothingness to national prominence.

The hunger is real. It is not one that vegetables can manage. Dangote made that point with the aggressiveness he applied to rescuing his refinery that was apparently heading nowhere.

Within weeks of seizing the media space, Dangote had Nigerians behind him, in a deft move to buy Nigeria's crude, on his own terms, for his refinery. The harsh words that flew between Dangote and the authorities were unprecedented.

The people, we, thought Dangote would remain implacable. He was beating the drums hard. He seemed to have no cares whether he would shred the leather.

Accusations and allegations verged on poor business practices. The affected parties went at full throttle at each other. The blows misses the plexus, deliberately it now appears, by inches.

Presidential panjandrum engaged full gears in attacking Nigeria's global business icon. Dangote replied in like manner. The more stinging the blows were, the lower the devastated party went, the lower the scruples the other applied.

Nigerians became Dangote's friends, adopting their "enemy's enemy" as their friend.

The script that saw Dangote shedding tears, recounting his sacrifices for Nigeria, never for once mentioned Nigerians' sacrifices that contributed to Dangote's riches. His hunger was high voltage drama executed with Dangote as a victim of Nigeria's

notoriety for dealing with its own without counting the consequences.

Not for once did Dangote accept that Nigeria made him. He never discussed the impact of the waivers that Nigeria has fanned his way over the years. Is it possible that he forget? What would he have been without the waivers? How many other businesses got those waivers?

Dangote's retort to his delight in running monopolies was to mock Nigerians by asking us to buy the refinery off him. The mockery was intentional. Where would a country that survives on borrowing raise \$20 billion and more to buy Dangote's discomfort? Why would we have had to buy the refinery?

Nigerians were busied with Dangote's stories of owing no houses abroad, or in Abuja - distractions that only brought more tangentiality to an otherwise elevated conversation on how Nigeria has subsidised Dangote over the years.

Had the conversation on subsidising Dangote's businesses been sustained, we may have had insights into what Dangote does for Nigeria. His foundations and donations, are investments that advance his businesses. They are not charity in the way we look at it.

Who builds a \$20 billion refinery without any confirmed sources for the supply of crude, the raw material to run it? What business plan did lenders perse to hand Dangote \$20 billion?

Many may be fooled. The few who are not are wondering what the drama was about, if not to navigate unconventional routes to confirm that Dangote gets what he wants.

Dangote got what he wanted. He will get more if he asks. Regulatory agencies that are famous for tardiness were thoroughly worsted in the Dangote drama.

The sucker punch would be that the leaders of NNPC and a Nigerian oil firm were refining crude in Malta for the Nigerian market. Dangote said the quality of the Maltese import was poorer, in response to the regulatory agency's queries on

Dangote's products. Plainly put, Dangote thought his enterprise was being sabotaged by the unfair competition from Malta.

Dangote got the President's ears. Tinubu conceded to everything Dangote wanted, with the sweetener that he can pay for the crude in Naira.

Tinubu's government that cancelled subsidy with his inauguration speech handed a subsidy to Dangote. The applause is deafening. People see this as a right decision. Every waiver that has been awarded to Dangote is subsidy. That is the real name. The footnote that other domestic refineries will pay for crude oil leaves the question, which domestic refineries?

Will Tinubu investigate the Malta refinery that Dangote alleged was doing underhand business with NNPC Limited?

Ordinary folks are hungry and angry. They will not be allowed to protest. They are too poor to merit attention or dispatch in their affairs unlike Dangote who can protest without hindrance and get results post-haste.

The President asks Nigerians to be patient. Was Tinubu patient in purchasing two presidential jets? Patience was forbidden in getting a N21 billion palace for the Vice-President. Dangote's matters, too, abhor patience. What are patient Nigerians expecting? When will they get it?

What conditions are attached to the latest waiver to Dangote? When he gets 450,000 barrels of crude daily, what do Nigerians get? Is he refining for export or domestic consumption? Should we even know the terms of the contract? Who will determine the price of Dangote's products?

President Tinubu snatched fuel subsidy from the poor public. He has created subsidy for the richest man in Africa, Dangote. Do we have to be Dangote to be heard? We all cannot be Dangote.

President Tinubu should allow Nigerians to participate in Nigeria's affairs.

If the President realises that we are all Nigerians, he would be kinder in managing the genuine grievances that he just decisively dismisses.