

INIOMBONG IWOK


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litical analysts that the opposition may struggle to mount a credible challenge against President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in the 2027 general election without forming a broad-based alliance.

Across party lines, re-  
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# Persistent power outages belie government's repeated promises

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## BIRTHDAY FELICITATION TO PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU GCFR

I warmly felicitate with His Excellency, **President Bola Ahmed Tinubu**, on the occasion of his birthday. This special day offers an opportunity to celebrate a distinguished leader whose lifelong commitment to public service, democratic ideals, and national development continues to shape the progress of our dear country.

Your resilience, vision, and dedication to building a stronger and more inclusive Nigeria remain a source of inspiration to many across the nation. As you continue to steer the affairs of the country under the Renewed Hope Agenda, I commend your steadfast leadership and your determination to deliver meaningful reforms that will uplift the lives of Nigerians.

On behalf of my family and supporters, I pray that Almighty God grants you continued wisdom, strength, and good health to lead Nigeria to greater heights.



**Happy Birthday, Mr. President.**  
**IGP (Rtd) Muhammed Abubakar Adamu**  
Walin Lafia

# NCC



## NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

CELEBRATES

- MR PRESIDENT -

@74

THE BOARD, MANAGEMENT, AND STAFF OF THE NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION (NCC) CONGRATULATE PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU, GCFR ON THE JOYOUS OCCASION OF YOUR 74TH BIRTHDAY.

THIS MILESTONE OFFERS US AN OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE YOUR COMMITMENT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, ESPECIALLY AS YOUR LEADERSHIP CONTINUES TO PROVIDE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR CRITICAL SECTORS OF THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY, INCLUDING TELECOMMUNICATIONS WHERE DIGITAL INNOVATION REMAINS ONE OF THE KEY DRIVERS OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

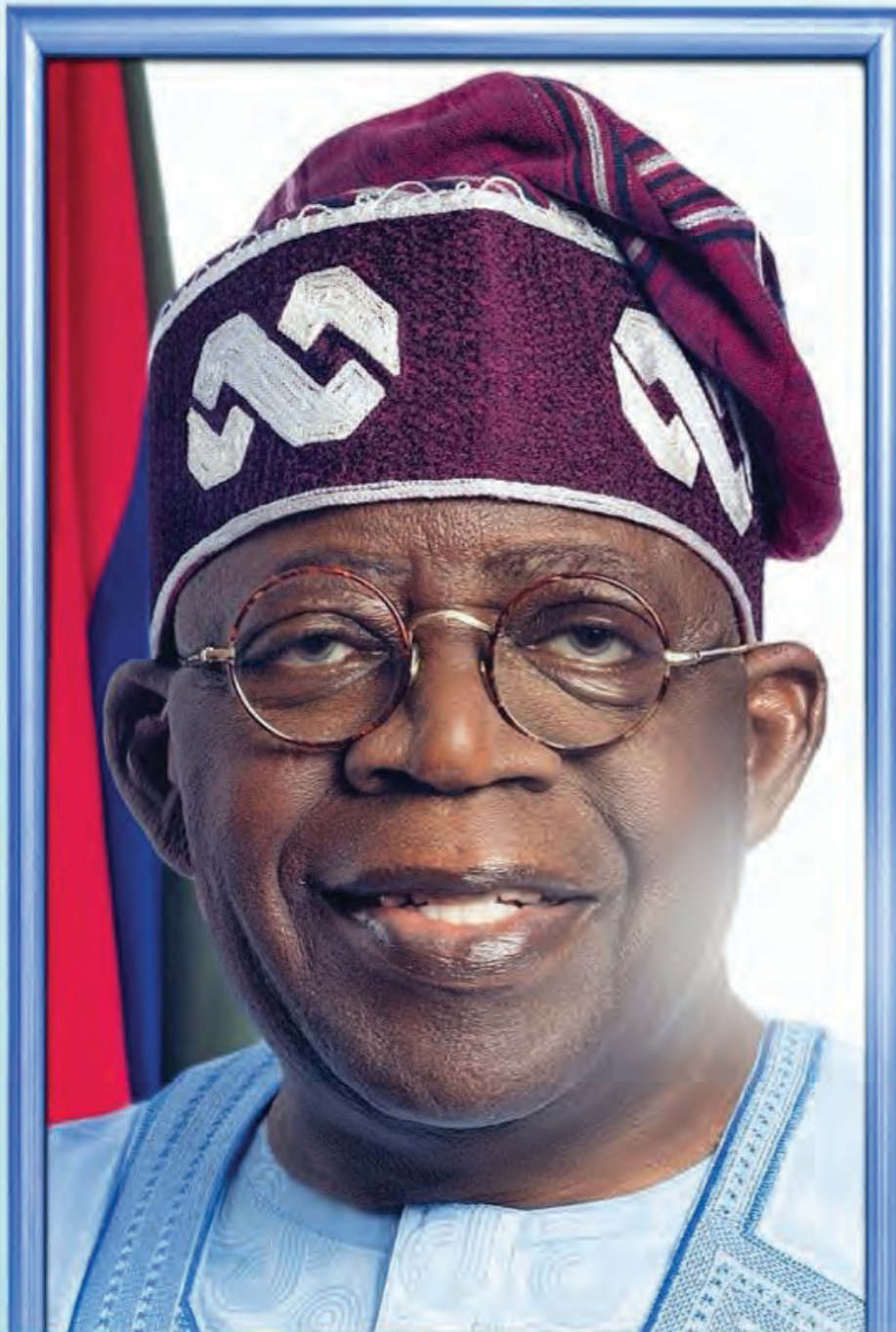
UNDER YOUR ADMINISTRATION, THE EMPHASIS ON DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND POLICY REFORMS HAS STRENGTHENED THE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION. AS SUCH, NCC REMAINS ALIGNED WITH YOUR RENEWED HOPE AGENDA AND UNFLINCHING COMMITMENT TO DEEPENING BROADBAND PENETRATION, ENHANCING REGULATORY EXCELLENCE AND FOSTERING A ROBUST DIGITAL ECONOMY.

AS YOU MARK THIS SPECIAL DAY, MAY YOU BE BLESSED WITH MORE WISDOM AND GOOD HEALTH TO CONTINUE GUIDING THE COUNTRY TOWARDS GREATER UNITY, PROSPERITY, AND STABILITY. WE WISH YOU MANY MORE YEARS OF IMPACTFUL LEADERSHIP.

CONGRATULATIONS, YOUR EXCELLENCY!

*Signature*

**DR. AMINU MAIDA**  
EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN/CEO  
NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS  
COMMISSION (NCC)



**BOLA AHMED TINUBU GCFR**

PRESIDENT, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED  
FORCES  
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

INIOMBONG IWOK

**A** growing wave of defections into Nigeria's ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) has deepened concerns among po-

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# Persistent power outages belie government's repeated promises

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L-R: Kashim Shettima, vice president; Bola Ahmed Tinubu, president; Oluremi Tinubu, first lady, and Godswill Akpabio, senate president, at the 2026 APC National Convention, held on Saturday March 28, at the Eagle Square, Abuja.

## Port development: Don't put your eggs in one basket, Nigerians tell FG

■ Hail UK deal, but point to other ports that need attention

OBINNA EMELIKE

**W**ith the sealing of a £746 million deal between Nigeria and the United Kingdom during President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's recent visit to the United Kingdom (UK), hope rises for the face-lift of Lagos sea ports.

As the president dis-

closed, the landmark financing deal between the UK Export Finance (UKEF) and the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) and Federal Ministry of Finance, will support the refurbishment and expansion of the Lagos Port Complex (Apapa Quays) and the Tin Can Island Port Complex, two of Nigeria's major national maritime infrastructure.

Many have also com-

mended the president on the deal, considering the congestion and pressure on the two major maritime infrastructure in Lagos.

"Traffic in Apapa is a bit manageable now, but that does not in any way reflect activities at the ports, which keep increasing every time. The expansion is a welcome development. All the stakeholders should encourage

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## Mixed reactions trail education minister's planned policy on common entrance

■ As stakeholders urge caution, point to flip flop Sweden example

CHARLES OGWO

**T**he Nigerian education sector has been thrown into turmoil following the minister's controversial move to scrap the Common Entrance Examination and replace it with the Learner's Identification Number to track pupils' academic trajectories, igniting a firestorm of reactions.

Tunji Alausa, minister of education, who was in Lagos for the Eid holidays, said the reform was for Nigeria's basic education sector, as the government unveils plans to abolish the National Common Entrance Examination, replacing it with a centralised Learner Identification Number (LIN) system to track pupils' academic journeys.

Tunji Alausa, minister

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NIGERIAN AIRSPACE MANAGEMENT AGENCY

## CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE

The Management and Staff of the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA) warmly felicitate with His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, on the joyous occasion of his 74th birthday.

Your Excellency, your visionary leadership, steadfast commitment to national development, and dedication to the progress and unity of our great nation continue to inspire confidence and hope among Nigerians.

As you mark this significant milestone, we pray for continued strength, wisdom, and good health as you steer the affairs of the nation toward greater prosperity.

We wish you many more years of impactful service to Nigeria and humanity.

**Happy 74th Birthday, Your Excellency.**

Signed: Management & Staff  
Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA)



His Excellency

**Bola Ahmed Tinubu** GCFR  
President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces  
Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Engr. Ahmed Umar Farouk  
Managing Director/CEO  
Nigerian Airspace Management  
Agency (NAMA)

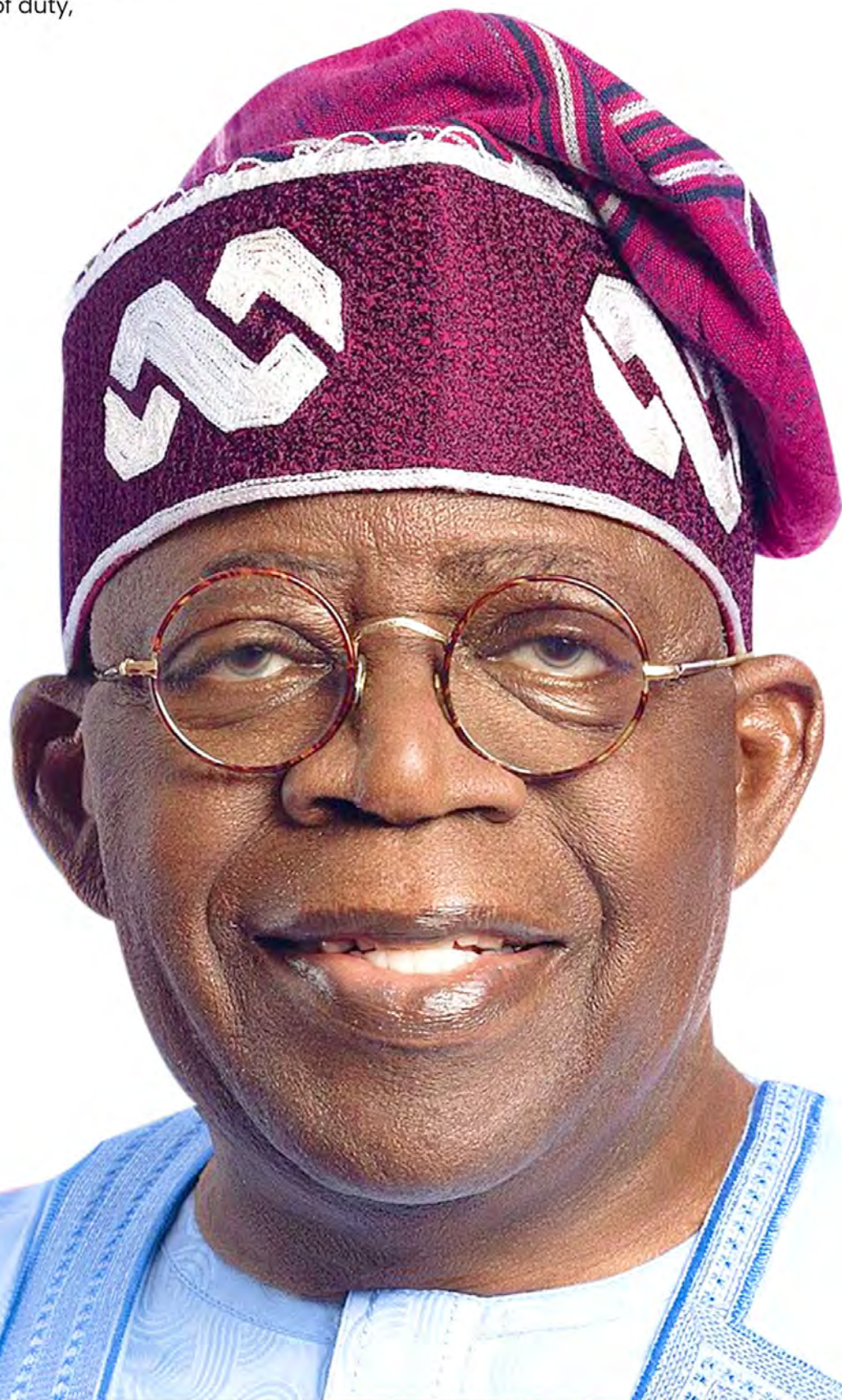
# A LEADERSHIP THAT CONTINUES TO INSPIRE NATIONAL PROGRESS

Your Excellency's leadership stands as a testament to resilience, vision and an unwavering commitment to national progress. Through experience, conviction and a deep sense of duty, you continue to inspire confidence in Nigeria's journey toward stability, growth and shared prosperity.

Congratulations on 74 years of impact.

His Excellency, President  
**BOLA AHMED  
TINUBU** **GCFR**

Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces  
Federal Republic of Nigeria



# News

## FG's project BRIDGE to unlock opportunities within Nigeria's digital economy - Olorode

JOHN SALAU

**A**folabi Olorode, the acting managing director/CEO of Quest Merchant Bank, says the Federal Government's (FG's) project BRIDGE will help in unlocking opportunities within Nigeria's digital economy.

BRIDGE is an acronym for 'Broadband Infrastructure Development for Digital Economy' initiative designed to expand Nigeria's fibre-optic infrastructure and accelerate broadband penetration across Nigeria.

"Project BRIDGE represents a critical step in strengthening Nigeria's digital backbone and unlocking the immense opportunities within the country's digital economy," Olorode stated, following the bank's appoint-

ment as the transaction advisor for the initiative by 'Bosun Tijani, the minister, Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy.

The project is expected to deploy approximately 90,000 kilometres of open access fibre-optic cable, strengthen nationwide connectivity and enable inclusive digital and economic growth.

As transaction advisor, Olorode stated that Quest Merchant Bank will support the ministry and project BRIDGE implementation unit in structuring and implementing the project's financial and commercial framework.

He added that the mandate includes developing bankable investment structures, supporting investor engagement, and designing the public-private partnership framework required to facilitate successful project

execution and long-term sustainability.

"We look forward to applying our transaction advisory and infrastructure finance expertise to help deliver a robust and investable framework that will attract private capital and support long-term national development."

Yetunde Falore, head, investment banking, Quest Merchant Bank, stated that the bank aligns with the criticality of the project and will bring its expertise to help drive a timely, efficient and successful project delivery as the transaction advisor.

"Nigeria's digital economy is entering a defining phase, and infrastructure initiatives such as Project BRIDGE will play a central role in expanding connectivity, deepening digital inclusion, and supporting sustainable economic growth," Falore stated.

She noted that by acceler-

ating broadband penetration and strengthening Nigeria's digital backbone, the initiative is expected to unlock opportunities across key sectors—including education, healthcare, agriculture, commerce, and the wider innovation ecosystem.

According to Falore, the project will leverage a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) set up and project break-ground by third quarter (Q3) 2026.

Under the appointment, Quest Merchant Bank will support the ministry and project implementation team in structuring and delivering a financially robust SPV by shortlisting qualified private sector participants to partner with the FG (backed by World Bank, Africa Development Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction & Development) to deliver private sector led, wholesale open Access Fibre Company.

## We will conduct fair, credible election - Oyo electoral commission

...To address voter apathy in LG polls

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan

**T**he Oyo State Independent Electoral Commission (OYSIEC) has assured of fair and credible local government and councilorship elections in the state.

Speaking on the elections scheduled for December 29, 2026, the commission said it would abide by the rules and guidelines of the electoral process to deliver a credible election that would be acceptable by all political parties and citizens of the state.

Babatunde Adeniyi, the OYSIEC Chairman gave the assurance when the executives of the Oyo State Correspondents' Chapel of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) led by its Chairman, Yinka Adeniran paid him a courtesy visit in Ibadan.

According to him, all the processes leading to the election are in top gear, we will ensure to comply with all relevant laws and conduct a credible election that will be acceptable to all," he said.

The Chairman solicited the support of the media and political parties in the state to be able to deliver on his mandate and as well address the issue of voter apathy that usually characterised local government elections in the state.

He appreciated the media for the support they have been

given to him in the past before assuming office as the chairman of the commission and promised to leverage on it.

"This visit will not be taken for granted; media practitioners have done well as the bridge between the rulers and the followers.

"You have really assisted us with your adequate and balance reportage, we are happy and grateful for your constant support," he said.

According to him, "The activities of the election have commenced and there is no way we will be able to deliver a transparent and credible election without your support."

Also speaking, Remi Ayoad, OYSIEC commissioner, called on all political parties in the state to participate in the forthcoming local government and councilorship elections in the state.

Earlier, Yinka Adeniran, chairman of Correspondents' Chapel of NUJ, described the OYSIEC Chairman as a unionist who has won many battles for the good of the downtrodden.

Adeniran said that unionism in Adeniyi would bring about a radical change to the commission and pledged the commitment of the Chapel members to support him to achieve result.

"We believe in your ability to deliver a credible and fair election and deepen democracy at the grassroots for the good of the state," Adeniran said.



L-R: Israel Nnejiwuie, assist district superintendent, Assemblies of God Nigeria, Lagos mainland district; Temideri Samuel Odumomi; Outgoing Minister in Charge (AGC) Rosanwo Rev Collins Ottor & Evangelist Josephine Ottor; Rev Samuel Oshodipe, retired presbyter, AG and his wife Bolanle Oshodipe, during the Retirement Sendoff & 70th Birthday Celebration of Rev Collins Ottor & Evangelist, Josephine held at AGC Rosanwo in Lagos.

## Cleric urges global collaboration, peaceful coexistence to tackle insecurity

HAPPY ZAROKADA, Yola

**D**aniel Mbaya, president of the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN), has called on the federal government to strengthen collaboration with international partners in addressing terrorism, banditry, and kidnapping across the country.

Mbaya made the call at the 79th General Church Council Conference, known as Majalisa 2026, held in Hong Local Government Area of Adama-wa State, Northeastern Nigeria

He emphasised that peaceful coexistence remains a vital tool for nation-building.

The three-day conference,

held from March 25 to March 27, was themed 'Peace Church in a Prevailing Storm' and aims to promote fellowship, offer prayers for the nation and humanity, and reinforce the sanctity of human life.

Highlighting the impact of insecurity on the church, Mbaya disclosed that EYN currently has over 20,000 widows and more than 130,000 orphans as a result of activities by Boko Haram insurgents.

He described 2025 as one of the most challenging years for the church. He further noted that 87 girls abducted from Chibok in 2014 remain missing, while about 70 local church councils were still displaced as of the end of 2025.

The EYN President urged Nigerians to embrace a culture of peace, stressing that the growing global insecurity demands collective responsibility and cooperation among nations.

Also speaking, Don Fitzkee, a representative of the Church of the Brethren in the United States, commended EYN for maintaining its commitment to peace despite ongoing challenges.

He noted that the U.S. Church has continued to provide support, with its largest disaster relief efforts in the past decade directed towards EYN.

In his remarks, James Musa, the EYN general secretary, said the conference

serves as a platform to deliberate on issues affecting the church, the nation, and the global community.

Musa reaffirmed the Church's commitment to preaching peace and promoting love among neighbours while calling on the government to prioritise the protection of lives and property.

A participant, Martha Mbaya, expressed the optimism over the church's growth despite security challenges.

She also said that the conference had strengthened her commitment to peace building and pledged to promote harmony in her community.

The conference attracted ministers and members from within and outside Nigeria.

## AXA Mansard to reduce waiting time at hospital with new WhatsApp ChatBot

MODESTUS ANAESORONYE

**I**n an attempt to reduce waiting time and ensure prompt access to care at its over 2,000 partner health facilities nationwide, AXA Mansard Health, Nigeria's leading Health Management Organisation has launched its WhatsApp bot, Karis.

By adding Karis to their WhatsApp contact, over three hundred thousand enrollees of AXA Mansard Health will now be able to obtain treatment approvals, confirm authorizations, check their plan status, access plan benefits, purchase health plans, and get prompt assistance during medical emergencies.

According to Tope Adeniyi, CEO AXA Mansard Health Limited, this new solution is another way the organisation seeks to express its customer first value. "It is another way we are using to tell our customers that we deeply care

about them, and we stop at nothing to ensure access to healthcare is simple, affordable and convenient", he said.

Adeniyi noted that the manual process of authorization before treatment has been a pain point, which could discourage people from wanting to go to the hospital. He explained that with Karis, authorization can now be done via a ubiquitous platform like WhatsApp.

"With this new solution, our enrollees at the point of care can experience our service speed. Also, they can quickly ask Karis what their plans cover or otherwise, so we have empowered them. They can now search for hospital or specialist healthcare by interacting with Karis. It's about making healthcare personalised for our customers", he noted.

He added that Karis is not just a tool, but part of a wider vision to ensure healthcare is accessible, personalized, and stress-free for everyone:

# News



L-R: Darlington Nwankwo, Divisional Head, Renewable Energy, Mobility and Tourism, Sterling Bank; Tunde Onakoya, convener, Chess in Slums Africa, and Abiola Adelana, head of Tourism and Creative Arts Business at Sterling Bank, at the Coffee and Arts Uncover Naija Arts Exhibition hosted by Sterling Bank in Lagos, recently.

## UNA-Nigeria advocates women's empowerment via digital education, AI

NGOZI OKPALAKUNNE

The United Nations Association of Nigeria (UNA-Nigeria) has highlighted the importance of empowering women and girls through digital education, artificial intelligence, and health equity. UNA-Nigeria emphasised this at a one-day forum it hosted with the Nigeria Institute of International Affairs in Lagos to mark the 2026 International Women's Day (IWD).

Speaking at the event, which held under the theme, "Rights. Justice. Action: Empowering women and girls through digital education, AI, and health equity," president of UNA-Nigeria, Oluremi Olutimo affirmed that digital innovation and technology can bridge gender gaps, enhance access to opportunities, and promote women's rights.

Olutimo who is a professor said: "We inhabit a period marked by swift technological progress, where digital education and artificial intelligence are reshaping the modalities of learning, labor, and healthcare access."

"Nonetheless, substantial segments of women and girls still encounter significant barriers to these emerging opportunities. This situation necessitates not only reflection but also tangible intervention."

Stating that the theme of the event, encapsulates a clear commitment, he added that the notion of rights underscores the imperative that all women and girls should have equitable access to education, technology, and healthcare.

To him, justice calls for addressing and dismantling systemic obstacles that impede inclusion and equity.

Explaining further the professor added: "Action highlights the need to transition from discourse to deliberate and measurable initiatives that foster enduring improvement"

He regretted that despite notable progress worldwide, gender-based disparities persist in access to education, digital resources, healthcare, and positions of influence.

"Such inequalities constrain opportunities and impede holistic, inclusive development."

"The triad (Rights, Justice, Action) reflects an integrated commitment. Rights affirm the essential entitlements of women and girls to education, health, safety, and societal participation. Justice demands fair systems and structures, ensuring that policies, technologies, and institutions actively address and rectify gender-based disparities. Action signifies the necessity of moving beyond rhetoric to the implementation of practical, sustainable measures."

"Digital education serves a transformative function by equipping women and girls with competencies essential for engaging fully in contemporary economic and social spheres."

"Concurrently, artificial intelligence presents a nuanced landscape of potential benefits and challenges. When inclusively designed, AI can enhance access to information, healthcare, and economic prospects; yet, if inadequately regulated, it risks perpetuating existing biases and exacerbating inequalities."

In his goodwill message, Secretary General of the World Federation of United Nations Associations, Aziel Philippos Gouladris commended UNA-Nigeria, saying that the forum would positively impact the lives of women and girls in Nigeria.

## Dangote plans refinery expansion to 1.4m bpd as ECCIMA seeks S'East investments

REGIS ANUKWUOJI, Enugu

The Dangote Group has announced plans to expand its petroleum refinery capacity from 650,000 barrels per day to 1.4 million barrels per day, in a move aimed at doubling output and leveraging economies of scale.

The disclosure was made by the Datunbosun Jinadu, regional director, South East, Dangote Cement, who represented the President of the Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote, at the ongoing 37th Enugu International Trade Fair.

The event, organised by the Enugu Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (ECCIMA), with the themed "Empowering MSMEs for Global Competitiveness."

Jinadu stated that the expansion is part of the company's broader 2030 vision,

which is anchored on boosting local production and promoting industrial self-reliance in Nigeria.

He also revealed that the group is scaling up its fertiliser plant capacity to 12 million metric tonnes, while its polypropylene plant is undergoing expansion to meet rising demand.

According to him, polypropylene is widely used across multiple industries, including packaging for containers, bottles and food items. Its lightweight and moisture-resistant properties also make it valuable in textiles for fibres, ropes, carpets and upholstery, as well as in the automotive, medical and construction sectors.

"We are expanding our capacity because of our conviction that Nigeria's economic transformation must be anchored on local production and industrial self-reliance," Jinadu said.

He added that the Dangote Refinery remains a flag-

ship example of local content development in Nigeria's energy sector, noting that it has stimulated local supply chains by engaging Nigerian contractors, engineers, technicians and service providers.

The project, he said, has created thousands of jobs, while also fostering skills development and technology transfer, positioning it as a catalyst for national economic transformation.

Nnanyelugo Onyemelukwe, president of ECCIMA, earlier in his remarks, commended the Dangote Group for its contributions to Nigeria's economic growth and industrial development.

He, however, called on the conglomerate to deepen its investments in the South East, particularly through the establishment of a cement factory in the region.

"It is obvious that Dangote PLC has added immense value to the Nigerian economy,

operating across multiple sectors and still expanding," Onyemelukwe said.

"While we commend your presence in the South East, we urge the group to consider establishing one of its cement plants in the region, which significantly contributes to and consumes your products."

He further praised the group's growing footprint across Africa, noting that it employs thousands of people, the majority of whom are Nigerians.

Onyemelukwe also described the Dangote Refinery as a major boost to the availability of petroleum products in the country, expressing optimism that it would help address challenges related to supply.

Onyemelukwe concluded by applauding the leadership and workforce of the Dangote Group for their resilience, innovation and commitment to driving economic growth in Nigeria and across the African continent.

## Investments rebound in Rivers as PHCCIMA remains resilience, welcomes NicotaWines

KELECHI ESOGWA-AMADI, Port Harcourt

Effort by the Rivers State Government and the Port Harcourt Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (PHCCIMA), to woo investors back to Port Harcourt after their mass exodus out of the city during the militancy era, has started to yield positive results.

PHCCIMA, Wednesday, ushered NicotaWines, a Lagos-based wine importation and distribution company, into the Port Harcourt business space.

Chinyere Nwoga, president of PHCCIMA, while receiving a delegation from the company, emphasised the Chamber's unwavering commitment to

global best practices.

She said that the Chambers remained a robust platform for business growth, accessible to both current and future investors.

"PHCCIMA is strategically positioned to support innovative enterprises like NicotaWines. We urge you to seize the opportunity at the upcoming NACCIMA AGM by securing a booth to showcase your products and forge valuable connections with industry leaders nationwide," she told the delegation.

Nwoga further encouraged NicotaWines to formalize membership with PHCCIMA to tap into its extensive network and resources. She also invited the company to leverage the forthcoming edition of Commerce Port

Harcourt magazine for enhanced visibility and targeted advertising of its premium offerings.

Earlier, Ehichioya Nicholas Isesele, founder and MD/CEO of NicotaWines, expressed enthusiasm for the

collaboration.

"We focus on quality, innovation, and affordability, delivering exceptional value for money. Our products are targeted at fine restaurants, high-end events, and professional event planners," he said.

Isesele assured that his company was poised to do business with any interested investor, distributor or partner, and requested for PHCCIMA's collaboration to explore the Port Harcourt market.

"We are open to business opportunities and would appreciate PHCCIMA's support in pitching NicotaWines to reputable agencies and embassies to expand our footprint," he said.

Key PHCCIMA members present to witness the meeting included High Chief, Emeka Ezekwe, chairman of the Professional Services and Consultancy Trade Group; Joseph Habib Sule, PHCCIMA Elected Council member and MD/CEO of El-Nafajo Ltd, and Ernest Elochukwu, chairman of the PHCCIMA Membership Committee and MD/CEO of Nestello Gateway Group.

All expressed confidence in the potential for sustained collaboration that would benefit both the chamber and the wine importer.



PHCCIMA President, Chinyere Nwoga (centre) in a group picture with the delegation and some PHCCIMA members



# TRANSMISSION COMPANY OF NIGERIA FELICITATES WITH President Bola Ahmed Tinubu

ON HIS  
**74<sup>th</sup>**  
BIRTHDAY



**T**he Management of Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) felicitates with His Excellency, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, on the occasion of his 74th birthday celebration today, Sunday, 29th March 2026.

As you celebrate this milestone, TCN acknowledges your steadfast commitment to democratic values, economic reforms, and national unity. TCN is committed to supporting the achievement of Mr President's power sector vision, through the development of a more robust and sustainable transmission network.

Congratulations on your birthday, Sir. May this mark the beginning of a more prosperous year ahead.



**Engr. (Dr.) Sule A. Abdulaziz**  
**MD/CEO, TCN**

## NDDC supports NYSC Radio with assorted equipment

...Identifies culture as unifying force in Niger Delta

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

The radio station operated by the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) at the national headquarters has run into some luck as it has got donation of broadcast equipment.

The donation was made by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) to boost its capacity to communicate and enhance youth development in the country.

This is as the NDDC has identified what unites the people of the Niger Delta, and named culture as such a veritable tool. The NDDC thus reaffirmed its commitment to preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of the Niger Delta, stressing the need to continually promote the rich traditions of ethnic nationalities across the Niger Delta region.

On the NYSC radio, Samuel Ogbuku, the NDDC managing director, speaking during the presentation of the communication equipment at the NYSC National Directorate Headquarters in Abuja, said the intervention would galvanise the NYSC's initiative in providing a strategic platform for national integration.

Ogbuku, who was represented by Mary Nwaeke, Director of the NDDC Liaison Office, Abuja, said that the NYSC plays a strategic role in bringing young people together.

According to the NDDC

boss, "When you support the NYSC, you are empowering the nation because the scheme brings together youths from all parts of the country.

"Communication is very important, and we must ensure that it is done effectively. The NDDC recognises communication as a vital tool for national growth and development."

He added that the NDDC was committed to identifying and addressing institutional gaps to support national development.

The NDDC boss explained that the intervention included a complete inverter system with a lithium battery for an uninterrupted power supply; a 2-kilowatt Italian-made, energy-efficient radio transmitter compliant with National Broadcasting Commission regulations; and the full renovation of the station's wiring system in both recording and



Mary Nwaeke, Director, NDDC Liaison Office, Abuja, (middle) cuts the tape to hand over broadcast equipment to the National Youth Service Corps, at the NYSC National Directorate Headquarters in Abuja. With her is Emeka Mgbemena, the NYSC Director, Media

live studios to eliminate audio noise and enhance sound quality.

Also speaking, Olakunle Nafiu, a brigadier-general,

who is the director-general of NYSC, commended the NDDC for the donation, describing it as timely and impactful.

Nafiu, who was represented by Emeka Mgbemena, the Director, Media, said the equipment would enhance operations at the NYSC radio station and improve training for corps members in broadcasting, and described the donation as a major boost to the Scheme's broadcasting capacity. He said it helps trained ones to get good jobs in media houses.

At the Niger Delta Arts and Culture Expo in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Ogbuku said the cultural event reflects Nigeria's enduring strength in unity despite its diversity.

The event, with the theme: "Rhythm of the Niger Delta: Music, Dance and the Heartbeat of Our People," was said to have brought together stakeholders and cul-

tural groups from across the region, displaying traditional music, dance, and artistic expressions in a vibrant celebration of heritage and unity.

The MD, represented by Abasiandikan Nkono, Akwa Ibom State Representative on the NDDC board, described the Arts and Culture Expo as a powerful platform to celebrate the region's rich heritage through music, dance, and indigenous expressions.

Ogbuku added that the event reinforced the bonds of love, unity, and shared identity among the people of the region, while also showcasing their appreciation for the Commission's efforts to promote cultural integration.

Ogbuku said further: "Our story has changed. Today, the NDDC is receiving commendation at the highest level, including at presidential level. With continued support, we can assure that the best is yet to come."

In her remarks, Amaba Ogbuku, special guest of honour, described the Expo as a powerful reminder of identity and cultural pride. "Without culture, we are nothing."

Also speaking, Ahunna Imoni, the NDDC Director of Culture and Women Affairs, said the Arts and Culture Expo highlights the region's uniqueness and diversity.

She noted: "Culture brings us together. It tells our story, reflects our values, and connects us across generations. This event is not just about performances, but about unity, pride, and shared identity."



L-R: Amaba Ogbuku, Special Guest of Honour; Abasiandikan Nkono, Akwa Ibom State Representative on the NDDC board; and Ahunna Imoni, NDDC Director of Culture and Women Affairs at NDDC; during the Niger Delta Arts and Culture Expo in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

## Saint Lucia and Nigeria: A bold new partnership

ABDULFATAI ABDULSALAMI, Sokoto

In the wake of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2025 state visit, a historic shift is occurring in the middle of the Atlantic. Nigeria and Saint Lucia are transforming their relationship from symbolic ties to a thriving economic and diplomatic partnership. The appointment of H.E. Justin Nwabuisi as Saint Lucia's Honorary Consul to Nigeria marks a new era of strategic collaboration, focusing on trade, technology, and cultural exchange.

The primary challenge for any South-South partnership is logistics. To combat this, the newly established diplomatic framework prioritises direct shipping lanes, reducing transit times and costs. This will enable seamless trade between the two nations, boosting economic growth and development. Digital infrastructure is also a key focus, with plans to invest

in integrated tracking systems and harmonized regulatory standards.

Saint Lucia's expertise in sustainable blue economy and Nigeria's industrial innovation will drive growth. The two nations will collaborate on marine conservation, responsible fisheries, and eco-friendly port facilities. This partnership will set a global standard for maritime cooperation, showcasing the potential of South-South collaboration.

The cultural synergy between Nigeria and Saint Lucia is a potent "soft power" asset. The vibrant energy of Nollywood and Afrobeats will merge with the world-renowned Saint Lucia Jazz and Arts Festival. This collaboration will fuel the "Orange Economy," driving tourism and job creation, and bringing African and Caribbean artistic expressions to a unified global stage.

The partnership includes heritage tourism, genealogical

support, and visa facilitation, reconnecting Saint Lucians with Nigerian roots. Many Saint Lucians trace their ancestry to the Bight of Biafra and Senegambia, making this initiative a meaningful way to honor ancestors and empower future generations.

The Consulate is spearheading a "Heritage Tourism"

initiative, highlighting historical sites such as Calabar, Bonny, and Badagry. This will provide a unique cultural experience for Saint Lucians and Nigerians, promoting cross-cultural understanding and exchange.

The appointment of H.E. Justin Nwabuisi and the launch of the dedicated por-

tal (.info@consulstlucia.ng) marks the official beginning of this chapter. "The timing reflects a convergence of national interests that makes collaboration imperative," says the Consulate. With this partnership, Nigeria and Saint Lucia prove the Atlantic is a highway, not a barrier.

The partnership will have a significant impact on trade and investment. Saint Lucia's advanced manufacturing sector will benefit from Nigeria's vast consumer market, while Nigeria will gain from Saint Lucia's expertise in sustainable development. This collaboration will drive economic growth, create jobs, and improve living standards.

The cultural exchange between Nigeria and Saint Lucia will be a key aspect of the partnership. Saint Lucians will have access to Nigerian markets, and Nigerian artists will gain exposure in the Caribbean. This exchange will promote cross-cultural un-

derstanding, creativity, and innovation.

The partnership is a testament to the power of South-South collaboration. By working together, Nigeria and Saint Lucia are creating a brighter future for their citizens. This partnership will drive economic growth, promote cultural exchange, and set a global standard for maritime cooperation.

With this partnership, Nigeria and Saint Lucia are writing a new chapter in their history. They are transforming their relationship from symbolic ties to a thriving economic and diplomatic partnership. The future is bright, and the possibilities are endless.

As the two nations continue to work together, they will create a legacy of mutual respect and shared prosperity. Saint Lucia is officially open for business with Nigeria. The bridge is built, and the journey has just begun.



Nwabuisi

# Politics

## 2027 poll: Disquiet in Akwa Ibom as governorship aspirants keep mum

ANIEFIOK UDONQUAK, Uyo

There appears to be lack of enthusiasm and subtle disquiet in the political arena as politicians have yet to begin consultations ahead of next year's general election.

The apparent lack of interest, BusinessDay gathered is born out of the hardship people are going through, the endless power outages, the high cost of fuel and the inability of the government to address the challenges promptly.

Also, governorship candidates of the various political parties have yet to openly declare interest in challenging Governor Umo Eno who looks set to fly the flag of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in next year's gubernatorial election.

By this time in 2023, political parties were already in the thick of consultations, both the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the APC were poised for a contest on who would take over from Udom Emmanuel, a banker-turned politician who was rounding off his tenure after eight years in office.

Indeed, it was a two-horse fight between Umo Eno of the PDP and Akan Udofia of the APC in addition to the energy brought into the fray by the candidate of the YPP whose flag bearer, Bassey Albert Akpan gave the other two aspirants a run for their



Governor Umo Eno



John James Udoedehe

money.

But the scenario appears quite different this time around. Apart from veteran politician, John James Udoedehe, who has emerged as the leader of the newly registered African Democratic Congress (ADC) in Akwa Ibom State and may likely fly the party's flag in the governorship race, according to observers, there appears to be no other aspirant for the governorship position in the state, at least, for now.

Udoedehe, formerly of the APC where he served as the interim national secretary, has been known as

the face of opposition in Akwa Ibom State having contested as governor on the platform of the defunct Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) in 2011.

With Eno's defection in June last year to the APC from the PDP and his promise to keep an eye on the PDP, the once popular party that had held sway in Akwa Ibom for more than 16 years, PDP appears to be gasping for breath.

This can be seen at the PDP secretariat which is still being occupied by the police and with the party split into two factions, one faction loyal to Governor Eno while the other faction

was installed by the national exco and pledged loyalty to a faction of the national working committee

Though PDP has maintained that it would field candidates in all elective positions in the state, for now, their statement has yet to be matched by action. They remain in dire strait and may not be able to present a formidable challenge to the APC in Akwa Ibom State.

Though political campaigns have yet to begin in full swing, the politicians appear to be studying the terrain and putting their acts together. For now, no governorship aspirant

has openly indicated interest to challenge Governor Eno.

Last week, Eno warned that he would honour the agreement he reached with stakeholders including party chieftains before his defection, a development which according to analysts underscored the fate of aspirants who might have wished to take part in next year's polls.

Observers said that the agreement had to do with allowing all elected serving politicians to be returned unopposed in their various constituencies across the 31 local government areas of the state.

## What I will do with petrol subsidy if elected in 2027 - Presidential aspirant

SIKIRAT SHEHU, Ilorin

Faduri Oluwadamilare Joseph, a presidential aspirant of the National Rescue Movement (NRM), has said he would be taking a different approach on fuel subsidy policy if elected president in 2027.

Joseph, who declared this while briefing journalists in Ilorin, the Kwara State capital on his ambition to contest presidential elections next year, criticised the removal of petrol subsidy, describing the decision as ill-conceived and lacking adequate planning.

It will be recalled that President Bola Tinubu, during his inaugural address on May 29, 2023, announced the removal of petrol subsidy, a move that triggered a sharp increase in the pump price of petrol nationwide.

Faduri argued that the policy was implemented without sufficient foresight, leading to widespread hardship among Nigerians.

According to him, the absence of necessary proactive measures has

compounded the negative impact of the decision.

The NRM aspirant, a state-certified healthcare professional in the United States, maintained that the subsidy removal has largely benefited the wealthy, while worsening the plight of the poor.

"I will restore petrol subsidy if elected president because it was originally designed to cushion the effects of economic hardship on the masses. The manner in which it was removed has only favoured the rich," he said.

Faduri further noted that the policy has merely increased the financial resources available to state governments without corresponding relief for citizens.

He vowed to change the narrative and assured that any future consideration of subsidy removal under his administration would be carefully planned and implemented only after addressing critical challenges in the nation's power sector, which he said would reduce reliance on petrol consumption.

The 49-year-old aspirant also lamented what he described as misplaced national priorities, noting that while other countries are investing in Artificial Intelligence (AI), Nigeria has been reduced to a "rice-dependent economy," where

food distribution is used as a response to economic hardship. He criticised older political actors, accusing them of lacking fresh ideas, and called on Nigerians to support the emergence of younger leadership.



Faduri Oluwadamilare Joseph

food distribution is used as a response to economic hardship.

He criticised older political actors, accusing them of lacking fresh ideas, and called on Nigerians to support the emergence of younger leadership.

"We need a young leader. Someone produced by the people, not imposed by political godfathers," he added.

Faduri described the 2027 presidential election as a crucial opportunity for Nigerians to decide between meaningful change and the continuation of what he termed a "hopeless situation."

He also pledged to review and reverse policies of the current administration that, according to him, have made life difficult for citizens since 2023.

On concerns about his lack of a conventional political structure, the aspirant insisted that the Nigerian people constitute the real structure, expressing confidence that citizens are ready to support credible leadership regardless of financial strength.

"Hunger does not recognise political structure, and poverty does not depend on political structure. Those who claim to have structures are only deceiving the people. A governor has just one vote. Nigerians will ultimately decide who leads them," he explained.

# Politics

## Rivers' guber aspirants shun declaration amid uncertainty over Fubara's next move

KELECHI NWAUCHA, Port Harcourt

**W**eeks before political parties are due to hold governorship primaries in line with the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) 2027 election timetable, most would-be aspirants in Rivers State have shied away from formally declaring their interest in the race.

Analysts say the hesitation stems largely from uncertainty over whether Siminalayi Fubara, the All Progressives Congress (APC) incumbent, will be allowed to contest a second term.

Fubara, who defected from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the APC after his impeachment battle, is technically in line for re-election in 2027, which INEC has now fixed for Saturday, 6 February 2027.

The commission's revised timetable requires parties to conclude primaries and internal disputes between 23 April and 30 May 2026.

Fubara's bid is, however, clouded by his fallout with Nyesom Wike, minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), who is his political godfather.

The fallout has reportedly been resolved as 'a father and son matter' following President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's intervention. But Wike has repeatedly described backing Fubara's second-term bid as political sui-



Governor Siminalayi Fubara

cide for him.

The minister, while addressing supporters during his tour of the 23 local government areas of the state early in the year, repeatedly said, "We don't know who to vote for yet, but we know who not to vote for," fuelling speculation that he is positioning an alternative candidate.

Despite the inclination of the APC to ensure a second-term ticket for its first-term governors, the possibility of Fubara picking the party's

ticket for 2027 has become a hotly discussed political topic in Rivers State.

Analysts doubt Fubara will get the nod to fly the APC flag in 2027 given Wike's strong influence within the party, even though he is not yet a card-carrying member of the APC.

Wike has been acknowledged by analysts as perhaps, the most influential politician in the state, with a strong say on who picks up what political position.

His strong grip on the state's 'political structure'—seen through the APC and PDP state chapters' formation of the Rainbow Coalition—has enabled his camp to produce chairmen of 22 local government areas, 29 state House members, senators, House of Representatives members, APC zonal and state executives, federal appointees, among others.

Emeka Chukwu, an analyst resident in Obio/Akpor, said: "Wike's grip has silenced potential aspirants. Nobody wants to aspire when Wike has not given him permission to do so."

Magnus Abe, newly appointed chairman of the Board of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) and touted as a likely successor to Siminalayi Fubara, was reported to have shunned calls to contest.

Social media posts claim his response to calls for him to contest was: "Every day Magnus Abe this, Magnus Abe that! You self try contest something na! Make we rest."

Abe, who represented Rivers South East in the 8th Senate, had repeatedly tried to become Rivers State governor. His 2023 attempt against PDP's Fubara and APC's Tonye Cole failed.

Others rumoured as likely aspirants include Boma Iyaye, NDDC executive director of Finance and Administration; Dax Alabo George-Kelly, BCDA executive secretary; Dumo Lulu-Briggs, businessman and Kalabari chief; Felix Obuah, former RIWAMA sole administrator,

and Martin Amaewhule, state House of Assembly speaker.

Iyaye, a Wike ally, is being strongly touted as the FCT minister's preferred replacement for Fubara. The NDDC Executive Director of Finance and Administration, who hails from Ogu/Bolo LGA, satisfies the 'Riverine/Upland Arrangement,' which balances political positions between the state's riverine and upland areas.

Sources claim Wike, during his tour of the state early in the year, indicated he is favourably disposed to Iyaye taking over at the Brick House (Rivers State Government House).

Iyaye, like the others, has not indicated his intention to run for the office of governor.

Despite this, Fubara's yet-to-be-declared bid remains strong. His supporters, perhaps backed by a sizeable percentage of citizens, vow 'to pay APC back with its own coin' if the party denies him a second-term ticket.

Analysts further suggest that the Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi-led African Democratic Congress (ADC) in Rivers State might be the ultimate beneficiary of the silent faceoff between Fubara and his godfather, Wike.

As of now, no governorship aspirant has emerged from the ADC platform in the state.

Observers say the party might be waiting for "marginalised defectors from the APC and PDP." They add these could include state Governor Siminalayi Fubara.

## APC chieftain says Wike most qualified to lead Tinubu's re-election campaign

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

**N**yesom Wike, former governor of Rivers State and now FCT minister, who is leading a faction of the rival People's Democratic Party (PDP), has been recommended to lead the re-election charge of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The recommendation came from Princewill Dike, a member of the APC in Rivers State, who urged President Tinubu to see the minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), as most qualified politician for his 2027 Presidential Campaign Council (PCC) Director-General.

Dike, a Port Harcourt-based legal practitioner, stated this while expressing confidence that Wike has the political capacity to campaign and ensure Tinubu's re-election in the 2027 general election.

Wike has led both his PDP and the APC in most sections of Nigeria in what is now termed APCDP where he has created factions from each of the two powerful political parties to form what he calls 'Rainbow Coalition' which he uses to back the President and to crush

some state governors.

Dike emphasised that the FCT minister had even as a governor demonstrated his political ingenuity in displacing his political opponents, declaring that as Director-General of PCC, Tinubu's reelection would be guaranteed.

The lawyer, who is a strong political associate of the minister, boasted that with Wike as Tinubu's campaign director-general, other presidential candidates would find the game tough.

Dike stated: "I have hitherto asserted that should the political wonder boy of Rivers State, Wike, become PBAT's re-election Presidential Campaign Council DG, his opponents would be in trouble."

He highlighted reasons Wike, in his opinion, is most qualified to lead the All Progressives Congress (APC) PCC.

"He has a humongous political network across the wider spectrum of the federation. He knows how to generate the campaign funds without disturbing Mr. President.

"Rather than embezzle campaign funds as usually the case, he will even add his own money. He will even work 24 hours criss-crossing the length and breadth of the states

to achieve results.

"Wike knows the right politicians who can deliver. He is widely loved by Nigerians, particularly the youths."

Dike further added: "Recently, he delivered the FCT Area Council election candidates to the APC. Even as a PDP member; the only one won by the PDP was under his rainbow coalition alliance. The serving Senator, Ireti Kingibe, did not win

even in her unit!

"He is a goal-getter with the unction of the Midas touch; anything he touches turns gold."

He went on: "It is, therefore, my fervent prayer that P-BAT should pick the star boy of his administration, Minister Wike, to be the Presidential Campaign Council DG of his re-election."

According to him, in 2014, a renowned lawyer, Odein Ajumogobia,



a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), said he withdrew from the 2015 gubernatorial race of Rivers State under the platform of the PDP, because "Wike knew politics at the tip of his fingers, as he himself knew the law at the tip of his fingers."

He chronicled Wike's political victories in the state, which included defeating the incumbent governor in 2015, where his candidate lost the governorship election; also defeating a powerful minister in the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari and Director-General, Presidential Campaign Council (PCC), APC, in 2019, where his party (APC) did not win any elective seat in Rivers.

Dike added: "In 2023 general elections, Gov Wike (as he then was), who was a thorn in Buhari's flesh cum his administration, delivered his successor and all the elective seats in Rivers State, including Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who was of an opposition political party."

He did not mention that opponents usually heap all manner of accusation on the ways of Wike and how he wins elections by allegedly crushing the opposition. Most Wike supporters however see it as capacity and boast about it.

# Politics

## 2027: Tinubu faces electoral backlash over insecurity, mounting hardship

AKOMBO AONDONA, Abuja

As 2027 presidential election draws nearer, opposition forces in Nigeria and international arena are maneuvering to unseat President Bola Tinubu by capitalising on widespread public discontent over severe economic hardship and worsening insecurity. The opposition strategy, which is still in its formative stages, focuses on creating a "granite alliance" designed to challenge the incumbent APC government.

Insecurity, coupled with economic hardship, is widely identified as the primary challenges facing President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration and the central narrative of the opposition ahead of the 2027 general election.

Critics argue that the persistence of insecurity, particularly in the North, has led to a loss of confidence in the government, with some observers predicting a reduction in the voting margins that secured Tinubu's victory in 2023.

Opposition leaders, including former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, Peter Obi, and Chibuike Amehi, are actively working to build a united front to avoid the fragmentation that occurred in 2023.

Capitalising on insecurity and economy, the opposition figures are leveraging rising banditry, kidnapping, and inflation to paint the administration as incompetent and insensitive to the suffering of Nigerians.

There is a significant focus on mobilising the northern voting bloc, with opposition actors arguing that the region is experiencing increased insecurity and feeling neglected under the current administration.

Opposition figures argue that insecurity—an issue Tinubu used against his predecessors—has become his main vulnerability, overshadowing claims of economic progress.

Continued insecurity is seen as a unifying issue that could fuel a unified opposition movements, a potential ADC coalition.

However, there seems to be challenges and counter-strategies and incumbency advantage of President Tinubu considered as master strategist who is actively expanding his support base, tightening the APC's grip through strategic alliances, and exploiting the benefits of incumbency.

The 2027 race is widely seen as a tough contest, with observers noting that for the opposition to succeed, they must present a unified candidate and a credible alternative vision, rather than relying solely on criticism of the current administration.

President Tinubu has indicated that his administration was aware of both domestic and foreign collaborators behind insecurity in Nigeria, vowing that the nation will not bow to terror.

While not publicly releasing a list of names, the president has stated



Protest over suffering

that anyone—even those appointed by him—who undermines national security or fails to follow orders will be dealt with.

He is engaging global partners for support in combating security challenges, particularly in dealing with networks that provide funding or logistical support.

The president has pledged to enhance the welfare of security forces to effectively fight these networks.

His administration has said that tackling the funding and leadership of these groups was a key aspect of solving the ongoing security issues in Nigeria.

The security crisis has been linked directly to the decline to agricultural produce, as farmers fear for their lives.

Opposition figures argue that insecurity—an issue Tinubu used against his predecessors—has become his main vulnerability, overshadowing claims of economic progress.

The government says it is focusing on security reforms, such as the potential implementation of state police and proactive military efforts, to stabilise the nation before the election.

Political analysts believe that while the APC retains a significant structural advantage due to incumbency, the 2027 election may be decided by the effectiveness of the administration's efforts to address the security and economic crises, failure of which may lead to significant electoral backlash.

International opposition



Insecurity in Nigeria

Rising insecurity in Nigeria threatens to overshadow President Bola Tinubu's "Renewed Hope" agenda and damage his international reputation ahead of the 2027 election by undermining foreign investment, eroding confidence in his economic reforms, and raising concerns about regional stability.

According to Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS International), in the early 2026, several countries have shown reluctance to accept, or have rejected, ambassadorial nominees from the Tinubu administration, primarily due to a diplomatic policy rejecting appointees with less than two years remaining in a presidential term.

Here are the key countries and international actors involved in the diplomatic tensions with the Tinubu administration:

### India:

Reportedly to have rejected or signaled difficulty in accepting Nigerian ambassadorial nominees (such as Amb. Muhammad Saidu Dahiru to New Delhi) based on the tenure policy.

### United States

United States alleged backing of opposition. Some political observers, such as Prophet Ayodele, have claimed that a planned coalition of Nigerian opposition parties, including figures like Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi, is seeking support from the US to challenge President Tinubu in 2027.



Hungry children

There is no formal U.S. plan under President Trump to support Bola Tinubu's re-election in Nigeria. Instead, there is a "delicate balancing act" following Trump's threats of military intervention regarding security issues, prompting Nigeria to affirm its sovereignty.

While Washington provides strategic security support, training, and counterterrorism assistance, the relationship has been described as "drifting" and marked by mutual disengagement.

Reports indicate that US lawmakers considered targeting Nigeria for potential sanctions or visa restrictions, with some sources mentioning potential visa restrictions for Nigerian entities. Additionally, concerns were raised regarding consular issues following a diplomatic incident involving Venezuelan deportations.

### United Kingdom

While listed as having granted agreements to some envoys, there have been public commentaries criticising the administration for seeking support from a nation (UK) that recently characterised Nigeria as highly corrupt, suggesting a cynical view of the relationship. Some analysts believe that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's recent UK visit was in this regard as what the eyes were seen.

### ECOWAS Member States (Niger, Mali, Guinea):

Relations have been strained due to the Tinubu administration's firm stance against military coups, leading to the departure of these nations from the bloc and a loss of regional influence.

### Abuja Embassy Landlord Disputes:

Numerous countries were listed by the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) as defaulting on ground rent, leading to a potential diplomatic stand-off. These include Ghana, Thailand, Russia, Turkey, Ireland, Germany, Venezuela, Zambia, Indonesia, Equatorial Guinea, Egypt, Chad, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, China, and South Africa.

### Here is how insecurity may impact Tinubu's international image Undermining Foreign Investment (FDI):

Multinational companies continue to divest, citing a hostile economic environment and insecurity.

While President Tinubu travels internationally to promote Nigeria as a safe investment destination, high-level diplomatic engagements are undermined by domestic realities of insecurity, such as school attacks and kidnappings. Critics argue that this creates a "tragic denial" of the pain Nigerians face, hindering efforts to attract long-term foreign partnerships.

### Regional Stability Concerns

The inability to secure Nigeria's porous borders has led to the movement of displaced militant groups into the country, causing concern among neighbouring countries in the ECOWAS region, which may portray the government as weak or incapable of managing regional security challenges.

The failure to control internal security, which Tinubu once criticised his predecessors for, erodes his image as an effective economic manager. Continued security spending without adequate safety results contributes to international perceptions that Nigeria's security sector is ineffective, despite receiving larger budgets.

Increased violence in the North-East, North-West, and North-Central regions, along with incidents of communal clashes, invite international watchdogs to scrutinise the administration's human rights record, weakening the image of the country as a stable democracy, according to RSIS International.

To mitigate these risks, the Tinubu administration is actively seeking international support for security equipment and intelligence sharing, particularly with France and the UK, as part of its strategy to show it is tackling the crisis.

However, until concrete results are achieved on the ground, the international narrative may remain that the insecurity is hindering Nigeria's development.

# HAPPY 74TH BIRTHDAY

*to a Pillar of National Development*

*We join fellow Nigerians at home and abroad in celebrating His Excellency, Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, on his 74th birthday.*

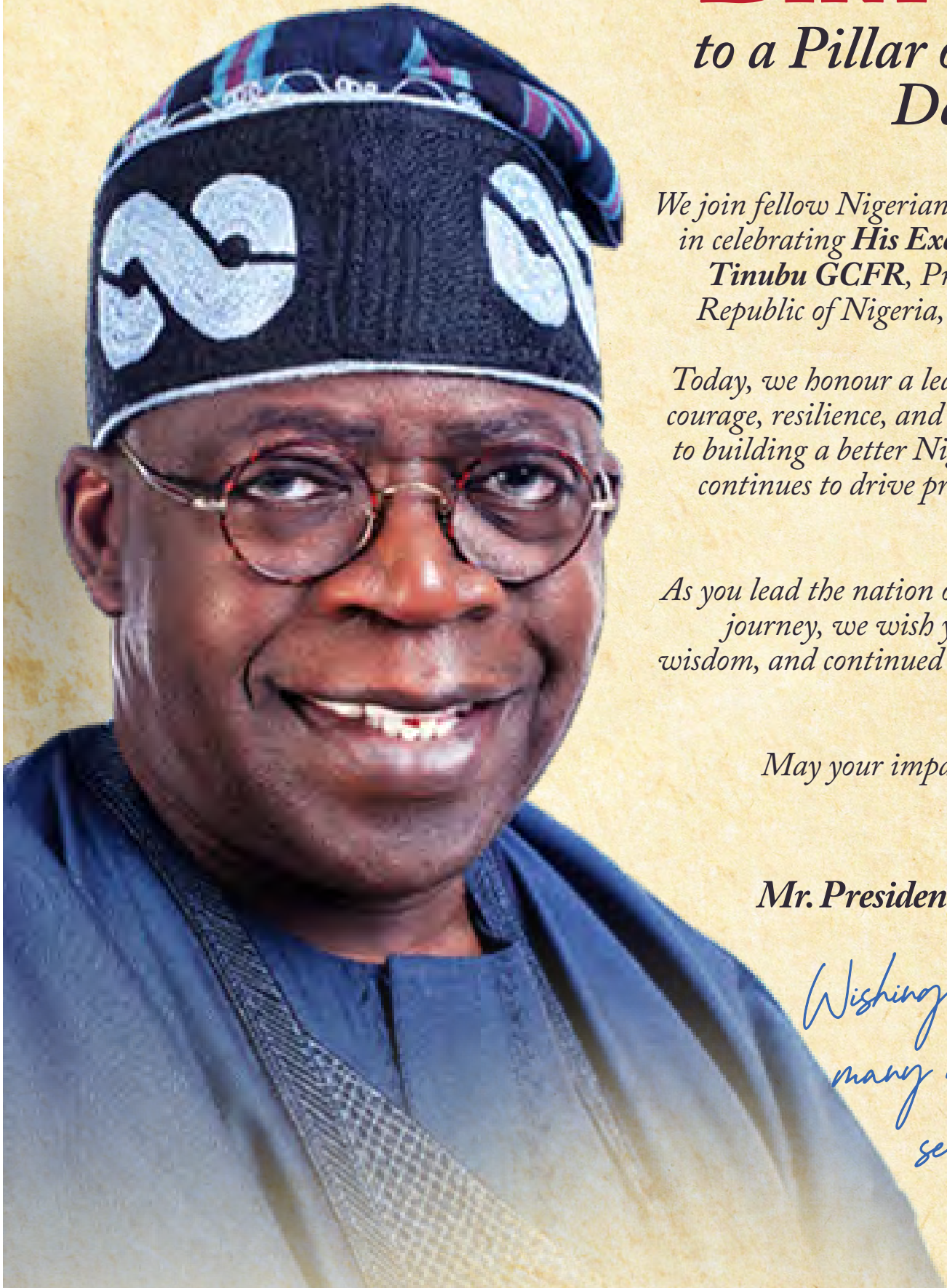
*Today, we honour a leader whose life reflects courage, resilience, and a strong commitment to building a better Nigeria. Your leadership continues to drive progress and strengthen national unity.*

*As you lead the nation on the Renewed Hope journey, we wish you renewed strength, wisdom, and continued success in your service to our dear country.*

*May your impact endure and inspire generations to come.*

**Mr. President, Happy Birthday**

*Wishing you good health and many more years of dedicated service to Nigeria*



LAGOS STATE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL



# From The Parliament

## RED CHAMBER

## Fresh defections loom as APC Convention rekindles realignments ahead of NASS resumption

TOPE OMOGBOLAGUN, Abuja

Fresh waves of political defections may be set to unsettle the National Assembly as the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) holds its national convention at Eagle Square in Abuja, with lawmakers returning from the Eid-el-Fitr break amid heightened speculation over shifting alliances and emerging opposition coalitions.

The convention, which has drawn top party leaders, governors and federal lawmakers, is already being seen as more than a routine gathering.

For many within and outside the APC, it represents a strategic convergence point where loyalties are tested, grievances aired quietly, and future alignments subtly negotiated ahead of the 2027 election cycle.

The timing is significant. The National Assembly is expected to resume plenary on Tuesday, and insiders say the familiar pattern of defections that has characterised recent legislative sessions could intensify as politicians reposition early.

In both chambers, defections have become a recurring feature, often announced at the start of plenary with letters citing “irreconcilable differences” or “division within party structures.” However, beneath those formal justifications lies a deeper game



of political survival and access to power.

Several lawmakers, particularly from opposition parties, are believed to be weighing their options, with some already attending APC events or maintaining close contact with party leaders.

The convention provides an opportunity for such lawmakers to signal interest, test reception, and potentially finalise moves.

The APC's dominance at the federal level continues to make it an attractive destination, especially for legislators seeking political security, committee influence, or alignment with the executive ahead of future elections.

The convention is not just about party administration; it is a marketplace of political interest.

Yet, while the ruling party appears to be consolidating, a parallel development in the opposition space is adding a new

layer of intrigue.

Talk of a possible alliance between Peter Obi and Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) potentially under the platform of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), has gained traction in recent weeks. Though no formal announcement has been made, the mere speculation is already sending ripples through the political establishment.

The idea of an Obi-Kwankwaso ticket is being framed by some opposition figures as a strategic merger capable of challenging the APC's dominance by combining regional strengths and voter bases.

Obi's appeal among urban and youth voters, particularly in the South-East and parts of the South-South, could complement Kwankwaso's influence in Kano. For lawmakers, this evolving scenario presents both an opportunity and

a dilemma.

On one hand, a credible opposition coalition could offer an alternative platform for those reluctant to join the APC but dissatisfied with their current parties. On the other hand, the uncertainty surrounding such an alliance including its structure, leadership and viability may push risk-averse politicians toward the relative stability of the ruling party.

This is a moment of calculation for politicians especially lawmakers.

“Do you move now to the APC and secure your place early, or do you wait and see if a strong opposition coalition emerges? That is the question many lawmakers are asking.

Within the National Assembly, recent months have already seen a steady erosion of opposition ranks, raising concerns about the weakening of legislative checks and balances.

Civil society organisations have warned that continued defections could further tilt the balance of power in favour of the executive, undermining democratic accountability.

The anticipated new round of defections could deepen those concerns, particularly if it involves high-profile lawmakers or significant blocs from opposition parties.

There is also the question of how party leaderships will respond. Opposition parties, already grappling with internal divisions, may find it difficult to stem the

tide if members perceive better prospects elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the APC will be under pressure to manage incoming members without exacerbating internal rivalries or alienating existing stakeholders.

At the convention ground, much of this political maneuvering remains behind the scenes, even as public attention focuses on speeches, resolutions and party structure.

However, seasoned observers note that the real significance of such gatherings often lies in the informal conversations and side meetings that shape future developments.

As lawmakers prepare to reconvene, the atmosphere in Abuja is one of anticipation. Will the next plenary session open with another wave of defection letters? Will the opposition coalesce around a new platform, or continue to fragment?

For now, the signals are mixed but unmistakable: Nigeria's political landscape is once again in motion, with the APC convention serving as a catalyst and the National Assembly as the immediate theatre where the consequences will unfold.

The coming weeks will likely determine whether the current drift toward one-party dominance continues, or whether emerging alliances can alter the trajectory.

Either way, the interplay between defections, party strategy, and electoral calculations is set to define the next phase of legislative politics in the country.

## GREEN CHAMBER

## Reps' leadership may face shuffle as Agbese eyes Labour Party

GODSGIFT ONYEDINEFU, Abuja

A potential defection by Philip Agbese, deputy spokesperson of the House of Representatives, is set to trigger a leadership contest within the green chamber, as lawmakers prepare to resume plenary Tuesday after the Sallah break.

Agbese, who represents Ado/Ogbadibo/Okokwu Federal Constituency of Benue State, is said to be concluding plans to leave the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) for the Labour Party ahead of the 2027 election. While the move has yet to be formally announced, there are indications that only procedural steps remain.

His expected exit carries implications beyond party alignment. By convention, spokesperson roles in the National Assembly are retained by the majority party. Should Agbese defect, the APC would be required to nominate a replacement, setting



off a quiet contest within its ranks for one of the more visible positions in the House.

The process will fall under the leadership of Tajudeen Abbas, Speaker of the House with attention likely to focus on how quickly the ruling party moves to fill the gap and maintain its hold on the chamber's messaging structure.

Agbese's planned move is closely tied to the prolonged internal crisis within the APC in Benue State, which has deepened since the 2023 general election.

The dispute pits Governor

Hyacinth Alia against the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, George Akume, in a contest for control of the party's structure in the state.

Alia's emergence as governor marked a political shift for the APC in Benue, but it did not resolve underlying tensions.

Akume, a former governor and a central figure in building the party's network in the state, has retained significant influence, particularly among federal lawmakers.

Since then, both camps have struggled to assert control.

Allies of the governor accuse Akume of mobilising National Assembly members against the state government, while Akume's supporters argue that the governor has marginalised key stakeholders and consolidated decision-making within a narrow circle.

Efforts to reconcile the factions have so far failed. Interventions by the presidency, the APC national leadership, and the Tor Tiv, James Ayatse, have not produced a lasting resolution.

In December 2025, Vice President Kashim Shettima warned that the dispute could have “grave consequences” if unresolved ahead of the next election cycle.

The standoff has effectively split the APC in Benue into rival blocs, with implications for candidate selection and party cohesion as 2027 approaches. For lawmakers aligned with either side, political calculations are increasingly shaped by where they stand within that divide.

Agbese is widely seen as aligned with the Akume camp, placing him

at odds with the governor, who is expected to play a decisive role in determining APC candidates in the state.

His reported planned move to the Labour Party is therefore viewed as both a strategic repositioning and a response to the uncertainty within the APC.

Sources familiar with the development said the defection is largely settled, but has been delayed by the need to formally notify the Speaker and the ongoing legislative recess.

“He has concluded the process. What remains is the formal announcement, which will be done in line with House procedures,” a lawmaker said.

When the House reconvenes, the development is expected to move from speculation to formal action. Beyond the immediate vacancy it would create, the episode underscores how internal party disputes at the state level are beginning to shape alignments within the National Assembly.

# From Other Lands

## Zelenskyy makes surprise visit to Saudi Arabia amid Middle East security role

**TAOFEEK OYEDOKUN  
with Agency Report**

**V**olodymyr Zelenskyy arrived in Saudi Arabia on Thursday in an unannounced visit, just days after disclosing Ukraine's growing security role in the Middle East amid the ongoing Iran war.

"Arrived in Saudi Arabia. Important meetings are scheduled," the Ukrainian president said on X, sharing a video of his arrival. "We appreciate the support and support those who are ready to work with us to ensure security."

He did not provide further details on the purpose of the trip. However, last week, Zelenskyy revealed that Ukrainian officials are assisting Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait and Jordan in countering drone attacks and building air defense systems. Kyiv is also exploring a potential role in securing the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz.

In exchange, Ukraine is seeking access to advanced



air-defense systems held by Gulf states—capabilities it urgently needs to counter Russia's sustained missile strikes.

Ukraine has, over the course of the war, emerged as a leading producer of cost-effective, battle-tested drone interceptors, which have become central to

its defense against Russia's more than four-year invasion.

Zelenskyy's visit comes as European allies intensify pressure on Russia's oil exports, a critical source of funding for the war.

At a meeting in Finland, Keir Starmer said Western allies must escalate efforts against Moscow's

so-called "shadow fleet" of tankers used to circumvent sanctions.

"we should go after the shadow fleet even harder," the British prime minister said, addressing members of the Joint Expeditionary Force, a 10-nation coalition monitoring Russian maritime activity.

Starmer announced that the

U.K. military would now be authorised to board such vessels in British waters, aligning with similar measures adopted by allied nations.

"Together, we must close off critical sea routes to this vital trade, to keep up the pressure on (Russian President Vladimir) Putin and to help change the narrative of this war," he added.

In a recorded message, Zelenskyy underscored the importance of targeting Russia's energy revenues.

"So please keep the pressure on Russia — its tankers and shadow fleet must not feel safe in European waters," he said.

**Tanker attack raises tensions**

Separately, Turkish authorities confirmed that a sanctioned oil tanker was struck by a naval drone near the entrance to the Bosphorus Strait, highlighting the growing risks to maritime routes linked to the conflict.

The vessel, identified as the Altura, was carrying about 140,000 tons of crude oil when it was hit early Thursday, approx-

imately 14 nautical miles north of the strait. Officials said the attack damaged the ship's bridge and engine room, but none of the 27 Turkish crew members were injured.

Transport Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu described the incident as an "attack by an unmanned sea vessel," without attributing responsibility.

The tanker, owned by Turkey-based Pergamon Maritime, has been under European Union sanctions since October for its role in transporting Russian oil outside Western restrictions.

Ukraine has previously acknowledged deploying naval drones against Russian targets in the Black Sea. Earlier this month, Moscow accused Kyiv of using a similar system to sink a Russian-flagged liquefied natural gas tanker in the Mediterranean near Libya.

The incident underscores how the war's maritime dimension is expanding, even as Ukraine deepens its security footprint in the Middle East and Gulf region.

## Moscow transfers upgraded drone technology to Tehran as war lingers

**R**ussia is moving to supply Iran with a new batch of drones, including upgraded variants of systems originally provided by Tehran to Moscow during the early phase of the Ukraine war, according to U.S. and European officials.

The development comes as Iran intensifies drone attacks across the Middle East — targeting Israel, Gulf states and U.S. military installations — following joint U.S. and Israeli strikes on its territory. While Iran maintains its own stockpile of Shahed drones, Russian modifications developed on the battlefield in Ukraine have significantly enhanced their capabilities, particularly in navigation and resilience.

Officials say contacts between Moscow and Tehran have accelerated in recent weeks. One European intelligence official described discussions as "very active," though uncertainty remains over the scale and frequency of the transfers. A U.S. defense official said it is unclear whether the shipment is a one-off or part of a sustained pipeline, and none of the sources could confirm how many drones are involved or their operational impact.

Questions also persist over Russia's strategic calculus, as supplying advanced munitions to Iran could come at the ex-

pense of its own war effort in Ukraine.

Speaking after a Group of Seven meeting in Paris, Marco Rubio downplayed any immediate effect on U.S. operations in the region.

"There is nothing Russia is doing for Iran that is in any way impeding or affecting our operation or the effectiveness of it."

Intelligence assessments suggest the shipment may already be en route, though the method of transfer remains unclear. European officials pointed to recent Russian convoys moving through Azerbaijan into northern Iran, officially described as humanitarian aid deliveries, as a possible cover.

Russian authorities said trucks carrying 150 tons of food and supplies crossed into Iran, while additional shipments of medicine were transported by rail. However, officials caution that if drones are being moved by land, volumes are likely limited. One European official suggested any transfer could be largely symbolic — aimed at reinforcing ties rather than shifting battlefield dynamics — while noting that Moscow is also assisting Iran with targeting.

The Kremlin has publicly denied the reports. Spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissed claims of drone transfers as "false news stories."

Despite that denial, Western intelligence points to deepening military-technical cooperation between the two countries. The U.K.'s latest defense assessment indicates Russia has provided Iran with training, intelligence and expertise in drone warfare and electronic countermeasures. In return, Tehran is said to be sharing information "quite generously," including sensitive insights during recent conflicts.

Still, the relationship has not been without friction. According to European officials, Iranian leaders were "deeply disappointed" by Moscow's limited support during its 2025 confrontation with Israel, which escalated into U.S. strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities.

The roots of the partnership date back to 2022, when Vladimir Putin signed a \$1.7 billion agreement to acquire Iranian Shahed drones after launching the invasion of Ukraine. Initially shipped in parts, the drones were later assembled domestically at a production facility in Tatarstan, where output has since expanded rapidly.

Russian engineers have since refined the systems, introducing decoy drones to overwhelm air defenses, as well as upgrades such as jet propulsion, onboard cameras, anti-jamming systems, radio links, artificial intelligence navigation and satellite connectivity.

## US denies pressuring Ukraine to cede Donbas for security guarantees

**M**arco Rubio, US secretary of state, on Friday pushed back strongly against claims by Volodymyr Zelenskyy that Washington is pressuring Ukraine to cede territory to Russia as a condition for security guarantees under a potential cease-fire deal.

Speaking after a Group of Seven meeting in France, the U.S. secretary of state dismissed the allegation, calling it inaccurate and misleading.

"That's a lie," Rubio said. "And I saw him say that. And it is unfortunate he would say that because he knows that's not true and that's not what he was told."

The rebuttal followed remarks by Zelenskyy in an interview with Reuters, where he suggested the U.S. was linking future security guarantees to Ukraine's withdrawal from the eastern Donbas region — a key battleground largely occupied by Russian forces but still partially held by Kyiv.

"The Americans are prepared to finalize these

guarantees at a high level once Ukraine is ready to withdraw from Donbas," Zelenskyy told Reuters.

Rubio rejected that characterization, clarifying that Washington had merely communicated Moscow's position to Kyiv rather than endorsing it.

"We've told the Ukrainian side what the Russians are insisting on," he said. "We're not advocating for it. We've explained it to them. It's their choice to make. It's not for us to make for them. We've never told them they have to take it or leave it. The role we have played is to try to figure out what both sides want, and see if we can bridge the middle ground."

The Ukrainian presidential office did not immediately comment on the apparent divergence in positions.

The Donbas region — Ukraine's industrial heartland — remains central to the conflict. Vladimir Putin has demanded full control of the territory; a move analysts say would give Russia a strategic foothold to threaten other

parts of Ukraine.

Rubio also disclosed that recent U.S.-Ukraine discussions took place last week in Florida, but noted that no further meetings are currently scheduled.

He added that while Washington has not yet redirected weapons intended for Ukraine to the Middle East, such a move remains a possibility as the U.S. recalibrates its military priorities.

"If we need something for America and it's American, we're going to keep it for America first," Rubio said. "But as of now, that has not happened."

However, reports indicate that some U.S. air defense resources are already being repositioned. American Patriot missile systems have been moved from Europe toward the Middle East as Washington responds to escalating tensions with Iran.

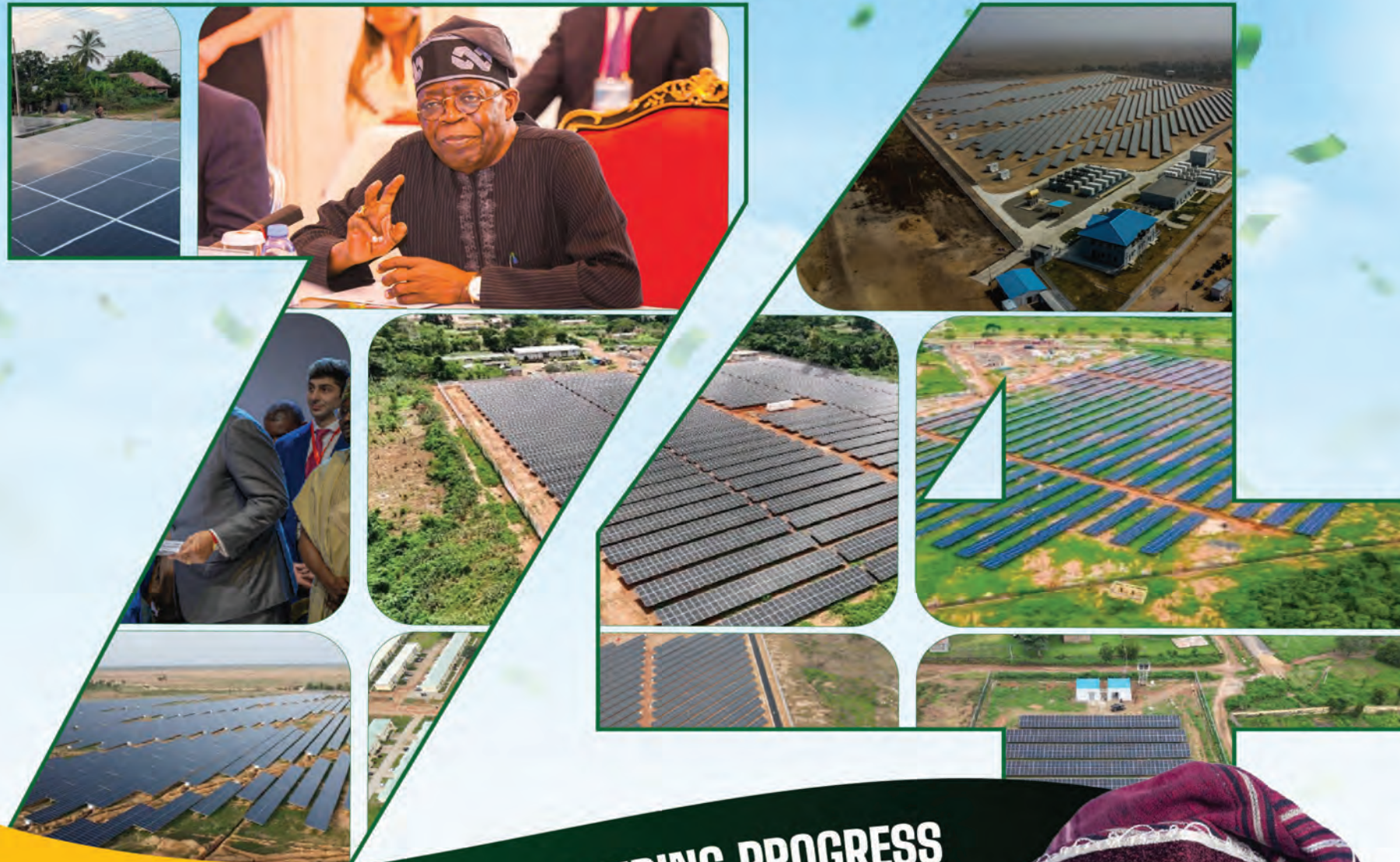
Zelenskyy has warned that the shift could leave Ukraine exposed, saying Kyiv will "definitely" face shortages of Patriot systems as the conflict in the Middle East intensifies.



The Entire Management and Staff of the Rural Electrification Agency (REA) Warmly Celebrate His Excellency

# PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU GCFR

On the Occasion of his  
**74<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY**



**CELEBRATING A TRAILBLAZER POWERING PROGRESS AND LIGHTING-UP MILLIONS OF NIGERIANS**

**Under your bold leadership and for the 1st time in the history of the nation's energy sector, you have:**

- ✓ Initiated a structured means of addressing electricity access gap in Nigeria.
- ✓ Delivered a holistic mapping of unserved and underserved communities through the NESIP.
- ✓ Over 1,000 mini-grids are currently being project-deployed.
- ✓ 50 Interconnected mini-grids are being constructed, in collaboration with the 11 DISCOs, to inject over 200MW of electricity.
- ✓ 15 hybrid mini-grids constructed, powering 15 federal universities and 3 university teaching hospitals.



**ABBA ABUBAKAR ALIYU**  
MD/CEO, REA

## Snapshot of Transformative Initiatives and Milestones Driving the Federal Government's Renewable Energy Evolution through the Rural Electrification Agency

**450+**

Mini-Grids completed nationwide, over 500 in the pipeline, in line with His Excellency's ongoing renewable energy scale-up efforts being implemented by the Rural Electrification Agency (REA), which includes the biggest publicly funded renewable energy intervention, the \$750 million Distributed Access through Renewable Energy Scale-up (DARES).

**800+**

Young and industry-ready Nigerians trained and certified in renewable energy, in line with His Excellency's "Nigeria First" initiative, targeted at improving local skills and expertise development as well as local content, to secure the future of the multidimensional infrastructural development the President is driving in the energy sector. This includes the revolutionary NEXTGEN RESCO initiative.

**160+**

Renewable Energy Service Companies (RESCOs) active within the sector, a testament to high private sector participation following His Excellency's investor-friendly policies and the REA's facilitation of strategic investments in the clean energy sector. Through the policy direction of the Federal Ministry of Power, the renewable energy sector is experiencing unprecedented growth in private sector participation.

**50**

Interconnected mini-grids under construction to relieve the burden off the national grid and expand electricity access to millions of underserved communities using innovative renewable energy technologies.

**400+**

Grid extension projects completed, connecting last-mile communities using transformer systems and distribution lines. These projects have been deployed through the Federal Government's Capital Budget, enabling sustainable resource allocation for energy access projects

**\$750M**

Programme designed to energize 17.5 million Nigerians through the deployment of 1,350 mini-grids. Through the ongoing implementation of the Distributed Access through Renewable Energy Scale-up (DARES) programme, His Excellency has proven the nation's capacity to implement big ticket, utility-scale clean energy projects.

**N100B**

Energy access funding activated by His Excellency to facilitate the implementation of the National Public Sector Solarization Initiative (NPSSI), a purpose-fit initiative designed to deploy fiscally sustainable renewable energy facilities across public institutions nationwide.

**\$425M**

Investment secured for local renewable manufacturing, strengthening His Excellency's strategy on local content and industrial growth, to position the nation as the renewable energy hub of the continent. The President's "Nigeria First" initiative has created a favorable investment climate to optimize beneficial natural resource deposits across States, opening up a manufacturing potential of over 2.2GW.

**1**

National Electrification Strategy and Implementation Plan (NESIP), a holistic plan now serving as the nation's first deliberate, strategic and innovative mapping mechanism, boosting investor confidence and strengthening the process of providing energy access to Nigerians.

**1**

Renewable Asset Management Company (RAMCO), an asset management and sustainability mechanism designed to collateralize existing assets to attract private sector funding and sustain a balance sheet of over \$200 million, for sustainable project development.



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## Built with public funds, priced beyond the public: Rethinking student housing

A federally funded student hostel at the University of Lagos, built to ease a long-standing accommodation crisis, now sits at the centre of a troubling contradiction. Reports indicate that bed spaces in the newly completed Femi Gbajabiamila Hall of Residence cost as much as N950,000 per session, placing it well beyond the reach of many students it was designed to support. For undergraduates already navigating rising living costs, this “solution” risks becoming another barrier rather than a bridge to access.

The tension is difficult to ignore. A project financed with public funds under the Zonal Intervention Project (ZIP) framework and supported by additional budgetary allocations is operating at pricing levels comparable to private hostels. At a university where accommodation supply remains critically low relative to demand, the expectation would be that public infrastructure expands affordability. Instead, it appears to be mirroring the very market pressures it was intended to moderate.

This reflects a broader and more persistent issue in Nigeria’s public sector: the gradual shift from public service provision toward quasi-

commercial operations. The distinction between sustainability and commercialisation is critical. While institutions may need to recover costs, pricing structures that effectively exclude a large portion of intended beneficiaries undermine the purpose of public investment. When access is determined primarily by ability to pay, the social function of such infrastructure is weakened.

The scale of the accommodation gap further sharpens this concern. With tens of thousands of students competing for a limited number of university-managed bed spaces, the demand for affordable housing remains acute. In this context, high-cost options do little to relieve pressure. Instead, they push students toward difficult alternatives, long daily commutes from distant suburbs, overcrowded informal housing, or, in some cases, compromised academic engagement due to fatigue and time constraints.

Beyond pricing, the issue raises questions about ownership and accountability. Publicly funded projects are collective assets, yet the way they are presented can blur this reality. When infrastructure is strongly associated with individual political figures, it can create the impression of personal contribution rather than public provision. This perception risks weakening civic expectations around transparency, oversight, and equitable access.

The absence of clear and consistent frameworks governing the naming and operational structure of such projects contributes to this ambiguity. Without well-defined standards, public infrastructure can drift toward models that prioritise visibility and revenue over long-term public value. This, in turn, limits scrutiny and reduces pressure for alignment with the original purpose of the investment.

The implications extend beyond a single institution. Across sectors, there is a growing pattern in which publicly funded assets are expected to generate revenue at levels that resemble private enterprises. While this may address short-term financial constraints, it often does so at the expense of inclusivity. In education, where access remains uneven, such an approach risks deepening existing inequalities.

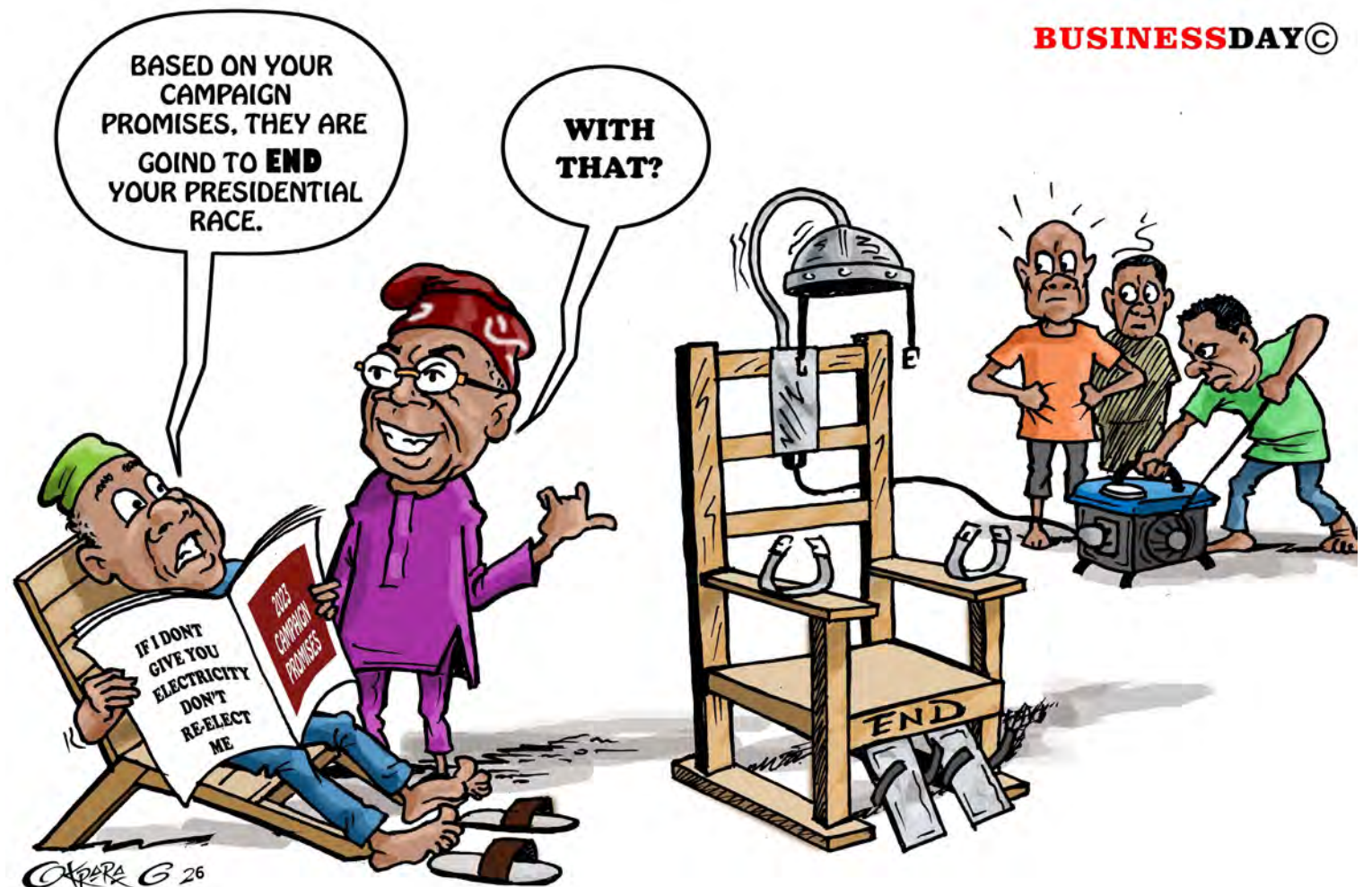
Addressing this challenge requires a clearer alignment between policy intent and implementation. Public student housing should be structured around affordability, with pricing models grounded in cost-recovery principles rather than market maximisation. Transparency is equally important. Publishing cost breakdowns, operational models, and maintenance frameworks would allow for more informed public scrutiny and help ensure that pricing decisions are justified and proportionate.

There is also a need for stronger institutional oversight. Clearer guidelines on the management and positioning of publicly funded projects would reduce ambiguity and reinforce the principle that such assets exist primarily to serve public needs. Ensuring that operational decisions reflect this principle is essential to maintaining trust.

At its core, the issue is about purpose. Student accommodation is not an auxiliary service; it is a foundational component of access to education. When the cost of shelter approaches or exceeds what many students can reasonably afford, the broader goal of expanding educational opportunity is compromised.

Public investment carries with it an implicit contract: that resources will be deployed in ways that advance collective welfare. When that contract is diluted, whether through pricing, positioning, or policy drift, the result is not just inefficiency but erosion of trust in public institutions.

Reclaiming the purpose of student housing requires more than new construction. It requires a consistent commitment to ensuring that such infrastructure remains accessible, accountable, and aligned with the needs of those it is meant to serve. Without that alignment, the system risks producing well-built facilities that fall short of their most important objective, expanding opportunity.



BUSINESSDAY©

# Issue

## The dimming fate of traditional journalism in the global South as digital journalism gains traction

OJO EMMANUEL ADEMOLA

Traditional journalism in the Global South stands at a profound crossroads, confronted by the accelerating sweep of digital transformation. The world of media—once anchored in institutions that shaped public life through print, radio, and terrestrial television—is undergoing a reconfiguration so sweeping that it challenges long-held assumptions about how societies gather, interpret, and value information. The digital tide has not only altered audience behaviour but has changed the very grammar of journalism. As digital journalism gains traction, traditional newsrooms in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean are grappling with dwindling influence, plummeting revenues, and shifting public trust.

This transformation is not occurring in isolation. It is unfolding within a global media ecosystem where the Global North—particularly Europe and North America—has already undergone a decade of digital disruption. The contrasts between the two regions reveal both shared challenges and stark inequalities that shape the fate of journalism in the Global South.

### One. Structural decline of traditional journalism

Traditional journalism in the Global South has long served as a stabilising institution, yet today it faces significant disruption. Younger audiences are increasingly disengaged from legacy media, preferring digital platforms that align with their mobile-centred lifestyles. According to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report, more than 70% of young adults in Africa and Asia now access news primarily through smartphones, compared with roughly 50% in Europe. The convenience of instant updates, short-form videos, and personalised feeds has diminished the appeal of traditional broadcasts and newspapers.

Moreover, political actors, business leaders, and celebrities now bypass traditional media, opting instead for social platforms and podcast hosts with substantial online followings. This shift further erodes the influence of legacy institutions. In Nigeria, Kenya, India, and Brazil, political communication increasingly unfolds on X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and WhatsApp, often reaching millions before traditional outlets can respond.

Across the Global South, traditional media houses



operate under precarious financial conditions. Many rely heavily on government advertising or donor funding, unlike their counterparts in the Global North, where subscription models and diversified revenue streams—such as The New York Times' digital subscription success—provide some buffer. The added pressures of digital transformation have put the survival of many Global South newsrooms at risk.

### Two. The rise and entrenchment of digital journalism

Digital journalism has firmly established itself as the dominant force in shaping public discourse. It is agile, visually rich, and data-driven. Creator-led news ecosystems have emerged, where individuals rather than institutions hold sway through authenticity and digital presence. This resonates powerfully across regions where trust in political systems and traditional media has waned.

In the Global North, digital journalism has matured into a sophisticated industry with advanced analytics, multimedia integration, and AI-driven content strategies. In contrast, the Global South's digital journalism is expanding rapidly but unevenly. Social media penetration in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, stands at roughly 30%, compared with over 80% in Europe. Yet the

influence of digital platforms is disproportionately high due to their role in political mobilisation, entertainment, and community discourse.

Multimedia storytelling—especially video—has become central to news consumption. TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram dominate the attention economy, with short-form video emerging as the preferred format for audiences under 35. Algorithms now determine how information is encountered, with search engines and AI-powered systems filtering and ranking content. This algorithmic mediation sidelines traditional news sources lacking the digital optimisation necessary to compete.

### Three. Contextual realities of the global south

The digital shift in the Global South is shaped by complex cultural, institutional, and infrastructural factors. Some newsrooms have embraced digital-first strategies, multimedia integration, and data journalism, while others struggle with limited bandwidth, skills gaps, and inadequate financial investment.

Unlike the Global North—where broadband penetration exceeds 90% in many countries—the Global South faces persistent digital divides. In sub-Saharan Africa, broadband access remains below 40%, and data costs are

among the highest in the world. These structural constraints slow the adoption of digital journalism and limit audience reach.

Digital journalism in the region is therefore not just a technological transition but a societal one. Issues such as press freedom, political interference, media literacy, and economic inequality determine the pace and success of adaptation. In some contexts, digital journalism empowers reporters and citizen journalists to circumvent censorship. In others, it exposes them to new vulnerabilities—including harassment, surveillance, and the rapid spread of misinformation.

The Global North, by contrast, benefits from stronger institutional protections, higher media literacy, and more robust regulatory frameworks. These differences shape the quality, credibility, and sustainability of digital journalism across regions.

### Four. The economic disruption: A battle for survival

The decline of traditional journalism is underpinned by harsh economic realities. Advertising revenue has shifted decisively to digital platforms, influencer partnerships, and targeted campaigns. Google and Meta now control more than 60% of global digital advertising, leaving traditional media—especially in the Global South—struggling to

compete.

Print circulation has declined, radio listenership has fragmented, and television audiences have migrated online. In South Africa, newspaper circulation has dropped by more than 50% in the past decade. In India, once the world's fastest-growing print market, circulation has begun to contract as digital adoption accelerates.

Independent newsrooms and community broadcasters face severe financial pressure, often lacking the resources to invest in digital infrastructure. Economic fragility also leaves media organisations vulnerable to editorial compromise, undermining public trust and accelerating audience flight.

In the Global North, philanthropic funding, subscription models, and public-service media provide partial buffers. The Global South, however, lacks comparable safety nets, making the economic disruption far more existential.

### Five. AI's disruptive impact on journalism in the global south

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping journalism in profound ways. AI-powered news summaries, automated reporting, and recommendation engines present both opportunities and threats. While AI can improve efficiency and support multilingual reporting, it also reduces website traffic by providing direct answers without linking back to original sources.

In the Global North, major news organisations are experimenting with AI-driven workflows, automated fact-checking, and personalised content delivery. In the Global South, however, AI adoption is constrained by cost, limited technical expertise, and inadequate regulatory frameworks.

There is also a geopolitical dimension: AI models are predominantly trained on data from the Global North, raising concerns about cultural bias, linguistic exclusion, and the marginalisation of Global South narratives.

Without strategic adoption, many Global South newsrooms risk falling further behind global standards, deepening the information inequality between regions.

### Six. What this means for the future of journalism in the global south

The future is neither bleak nor simple. Traditional journalism will evolve, but its dominance has unmistakably diminished. A hybrid ecosystem is emerging, where digital-native platforms shape public discourse while

legacy institutions reinvent themselves through video, creator partnerships, and AI-enhanced workflows.

The success of journalism in the Global South ultimately rests on a conscious and context-aware transformation that addresses the structural, economic, and technological pressures reshaping the media landscape. This transformation requires sustained investment in media literacy to help citizens navigate misinformation and strengthen democratic participation, alongside regulatory reforms that create a fairer competitive environment between local news organisations and powerful global technology companies. It also demands a deliberate expansion of technological capability, particularly in areas such as artificial intelligence, where readiness remains uneven and often under-resourced. Equipping journalists with advanced digital storytelling skills is equally essential, ensuring they can thrive in an era defined by multimedia formats and algorithmic distribution. Underpinning all of this is the urgent need for sustainable funding models—ranging from philanthropy and membership schemes to community-supported journalism—that can secure the financial resilience of newsrooms and safeguard editorial independence. Together, these interconnected priorities form the foundation upon which a revitalised and future-ready journalism ecosystem in the Global South can be built.



•Ademola is first African Professor of Cybersecurity and Information Technology Management, Global Education Advocate, Chartered Manager, UK Digital Journalist, Strategic Advisor & Prophetic Mobiliser for National Transformation, and General Evangelist of CAC Nigeria and Overseas




**NASENI**

National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure

*Felicitates His Excellency,*  
 President **Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR,** @




His Excellency,  
 President **Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR,**  
 President, Federal Republic of Nigeria

The Management of the National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI) congratulates the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairman of the NASENI Governing Board, His Excellency, Bola Ahmed Tinubu (GCFR), on the occasion of his 74th birthday.

NASENI expresses deep appreciation for the President's visionary leadership and unwavering support for the Agency's mandate of driving Nigeria's industrialization through science, technology, and innovation. Under his guidance, NASENI amongst other laudable projects, has continued to implement transformative reforms and strategic programmes aimed at promoting local manufacturing, strengthening home-grown technological capacity to empower young innovators and create sustainable jobs in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda.

The Agency particularly acknowledges the President's encouragement for flagship initiatives like Innovate Naija, which promotes indigenous innovation and technology solutions; Irrigate Nigeria, aimed at boosting agricultural productivity through solar-powered irrigation systems; the Asset Restoration Programme, focusing on reviving idle and abandoned assets across the country; and development of the Renewable Energy and Innovation Park in Gora, envisioned as a national hub for renewable energy technology, green manufacturing, and advanced skills development.

NASENI notes that these initiatives reflect the administration's commitment to building a resilient, technology-driven economy that empowers Nigerians and strengthens the nation's industrial base.

As Your Excellency marks this milestone, the NASENI family wishes you continued wisdom, strength, and sound health as you steer our nation toward greater prosperity and sustained economic transformation.



Signed:

**Khalil Suleiman Halilu**

The Executive Vice Chairman/CEO

National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI)

# Tracking Governance

## with UCHE ANICHUKWU



# Governor Peter Mbah, another Lee Kuan Yew remaking Enugu

NNAMANI ARINZE DARLINGTON

When Dr. Peter Ndubuisi Mbah took the oath of office as Governor of Enugu State on May 29, 2023, the state carried a well-known reputation: a civil service state. For decades, Enugu's economy had revolved around government jobs, federal allocations, and modest industrial activity. Water scarcity was chronic, "sit-at-home" orders paralyzed commerce, infrastructure lagged, and young people migrated in search of opportunities elsewhere. The state's GDP stood at approximately \$4.4 billion, with limited private-sector dynamism.

Today, barely three years later, that narrative has been dramatically rewritten. Enugu is rapidly emerging as a destination of choice for business, investment, tourism, and high-quality living. Under Mbah's leadership, the state is shifting from consumption and bureaucracy to productivity, innovation, and private-sector-led growth. Thus, many now hail him as our own Lee Kuan Yew. Lee Kuan Yew was the visionary statesman, who lifted Singapore from a Third World backwater in 1965 to a First World economic powerhouse within a generation through discipline, meritocracy, infrastructure, education, and relentless investment attraction.

Pre-2023, Enugu State exemplified the classic post-colonial African state model with a heavy reliance on civil service salaries, limited diversification, and governance that prioritized politics and patronage. Roads, healthcare facilities, schools and other social infrastructure earnestly sought a revamp and fresh air. Tourism potential lay dormant despite natural assets like the Nsude Pyramids, Ngwo Pine Forest, and Awlum Waterfalls.

Meanwhile, Mbah was a successful private-sector entrepreneur before his initial stints with the public sector as Chief of Staff and subsequently a former Commissioner for Finance and Economic Development. After that stint, he returned fully to the private sector where he built the Pinnacle Oil and Gas, a firm, which he founded and built from ground zero to a multi billion dollar leader of the petroleum downstream subsector at the time he returned to lead the current economic revolution in Enugu State. Thus he entered office with a technocratic blueprint to grow the state's GDP sevenfold to \$30 billion by 2031, eradicate poverty, and reposition Enugu as Nigeria's premier hub for investment, tourism, and livability.

His administration has increased the state budget from N166 billion he inherited in 2023 to a record N521.5 billion in 2024, N971 billion in 2025, and a historic N1.62 trillion in 2026. Importantly, he reversed the prevalent national culture of recurrent expenditure-heavy budgets. The least capital expenditure for each of the aforementioned budgets under him has been 80 percent. In fact, capital expenditure got 86 percent in 2025, while recurrent expenditure got 14 percent. This underscores how bullish he has been in cutting cost of governance and wastefulness to build infrastructure and other enablers that support investment and economic growth.

Again, Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) has surged in unprecedented scales. By reforms such as the introduction of technology, plugging



of leakages, and revival and optimization of moribund assets, he raised the state's IGR from N26.8 billion in 2022 to N37 billion between June and December 2023, N188.5 billion in 2025 and N406.7 billion in 2025.

Over 1,000km of roads have either been constructed or reconstructed. And this includes rural roads and bridges as well as dual carriageways like the Enugu-Ugwogo Nike-Opi-Nsukka Road, the Owo-Ubahu-Amankanu-Neke-Ikem Road, in addition to several other rural farm-to-market links. Mbah has raised water production from occasional 2 million liters to over 120 million liters, even as he battles frontally the reticulation challenges. This is a massive step towards totally ending decades of scarcity in Enugu capital city.

In one fell woop, he constructed five ultra-modern transport terminals and rolled out 100 CNG buses (while another 100 buses are underway). 2,000 environment-friendly city taxis are on the way too. He launched Enugu Air with three aircraft in July 2025 and the airline has grown to six planes already. And he plans to grow it yet again to 20 aircraft as part of his plans to make Enugu an aviation hub for West and Central Africa, with routes stretching to Asia, America, and Europe., etc.

The flagship New Enugu City covers 10,000 hectares with 26km<sup>2</sup> currently being developed. The smart city features residential zones, an industrial park, medical centres, sports arenas, and dedicated power. These are not mere promises; they signal a deliberate move toward a livable, investment-ready metropolis.

Mbah's administration has delivered over 265

Smart Green Schools, which are solar-powered, digitally equipped facilities with STEM-focused curricula across all 260 wards. These will take between 800 to 1,000 students each, who will receive one nutritious meals meal daily. The school is totally free - uniform, free tuition, free tablets, and more. Importantly, whereas UNESCO benchmark for budgetary allocation to education is 15 to 20 percent, the Mbah Administration has consistently allocated 32 to 33 percent of the state's annual budget to the sector.

In healthcare, 260 Type-2 primary facilities have been delivered in virtually all the 260 wards alongside the recruitment of 2,500 health workers. The nearly completed 300-bed Enugu International Hospital aims to capture a slice of Nigeria's \$1 billion annual outbound medical tourism spend, positioning Enugu as a medical tourism destination.

Perhaps the shift from civil service state status to a diversified economy is most evident here. Mbah is building the youths digital capacity in a scale never before witnessed. Another name for Enugu State today is tech and ICT. Initiatives include the Enugu Tech Festival ("Coal to Code"), training thousands of youths in digital skills as well as the \$20 million technology investment for local manufacturing - the Enugu Haier Factory, a partnership between his administration and Haier Group, the world's largest manufacturer of appliances, with global revenue exceeding \$60 billion in 2025. Haier Group portfolio of international brands include GE Appliances, Mabe, Candy, Sanyo Aqua, Hoover, and Fisher & Paykel.

To facilitate investment, Mbah has taken radical steps such as laws, policies, and regulations, to reposition land administration in the state. Land administration has been digitized via the Enugu Geographic Information System (ENGIS), slashing bureaucracy and improving ease of doing business. There are also the Enugu State Properties Protection Law to checkmate the activities of land grabbers. He equally signed a new Land Use Regulation into law in 2025.

Tourism is a cornerstone of the \$30 billion vision. The historic Presidential Hotel has been renovated to five-star standards, the International Conference Centre revived, and iconic sites upgraded: Nigeria's first commercial zipline at Ngwo Pine Forest, a 600-metre canopy walkway at Nsude Pyramids, enhanced Awlum Waterfalls, and Nike Lake Resort as a luxury eco-destination. The goal is to attract two million visitors annually, with tourism projected to drive significant IGR through hospitality, events, and cultural festivals.

Agriculture has seen tractor assembly plants, 260 Smart Farm Estates, and digital registration of over 67,000 farmers, creating agro-industrial value chains. There is equally the Enugu State Public Ranch Management Law, the Enugu State Sports Development Fund Law, and the Enugu State Environmental and Climate Protection Law.

The Mbah administration takes the credit of confronting and ending the illegal sit-at-home upon assumption of office in 2023. Security has tremendously improved with the construction and installation of AI-enabled Command and Control Centres which has all the surveillance systems installed by Mbah in the state. He equally set up over 150 AI-embedded patrol vehicles manned by a special police unit, the DRS (Distress Response Squad).

Lee Kuan Yew inherited a broken system riddled with corruption and bigotry in 1965. What did he do? He radically enforced meritocracy, anti-corruption, world-class education, infrastructure, and pro-business policies, irrespective of whose ox was gored. In a generation, he turned Singapore into a global financial and logistics powerhouse with one of the highest GDP per capita figures on earth.

In Enugu State, Mbah has moved governance from share patronage to meritocracy, irrespective of where you come from. He hired the best from around the country and beyond, imposed performance targets on appointees and civil servants.

Want to be his friend? Perform or bring ideas that would help build Enugu State into a \$30bn economy. Simple. He is so focused and serious-minded that he does not entertain idle talks and gossips. He has not merely governed Enugu State in the past 34 months; he has reimagined and reengineered Enugu's destiny.

As Africa grapples with governance challenges, Mbah's Enugu experiment offers a replicable blueprint: visionary leadership rooted in private-sector efficiency, data-driven targets, and people-centred development. If sustained, Enugu may well become the Singapore of Africa and Governor Mbah its Lee Kuan Yew.

Tomorrow, as the governor often says, is not coming. In Enugu, it is already here.

•Nnamani Arinze Darlington is the Special Assistant to Governor Mbah on Media

# Bliss with Nonye Ben-Nwankwo

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## How my cancer journey started – Blessing CEO

Social media influencer and self-acclaimed relationship therapist, Blessing Okoro, popularly known as Blessing CEO, has come online, claiming she is down with stage - four cancer.

In an emotional laden video, Blessing said she is overwhelmed and powerless as she said she has no clue on what to do because she needs to go in for surgery as soon as possible.

"I have been diagnosed with breast cancer. At this point, an urgent surgery is needed for amputation to stop the spread or to know how far the spread has gone or if they are going to take off one of the breasts or the two. It was a hard decision to come here. But the truth is when predicaments like this come to you, you become powerless. I might not be able to do anything, to work or to influence. Resources have gone into this. And that is why I have come out to plead. If I have ever touched you before, if my words have shown any positivity in our life, if you have ever said you love me, this is the time to show it.

"Thank you so much for the love. My phone is buzzing. God bless you all. Nothing is too small. I just want to be fine. I hope to start the surgery as fast



as possible. I need all the love. I have never been this clueless all my life. I thought I was so strong. Being strong is now my biggest weakness."

Blessing, who is publicly soliciting for funds, said she has put up her property for sale in order to raise funds for her chemotherapy.

She said, "Give me all the encouragement, advise and love I gave to all of you. I want it all back. I need it now. For all those who have been admiring my wigs, I want to auction them. I need money for chemo. After selling off my wigs, I will sell off my clothes. I thank you so much for the love and the

contribution and the prayers. I appreciate. It has been overwhelming because I don't even have a clue of what to do."

Talking about how the cancer journey said, Blessing said it was unexpected news.

"I feel there should be a lot of awareness when it comes to cancer. A lot of people are ignorant about cancer. Before now, I was so ignorant of it. It started last year, as a lump on my breasts and I went to the hospital and they took me for biopsy and the result came out after two weeks. The doctor said it wasn't cancerous. I told him I didn't want to remove it then because I had a lot going on with me. The doctor said I could remove it anytime I wanted.

"In January, I went back and told the doctor I was ready to remove the lump. He said we would need to do another biopsy because we couldn't use the previous one. We did and the result came out and it said it was cancerous and we need to remove the breast because it had spread. The doctor is not guaranteeing anything until the open me up to see if it has spread to the other breast. I am hoping I will be able to create the awareness because a lot is going on with me.

"I am not the kind of person that comes out on social media to beg. But predicaments like this can weaken you. I am already tired. Nobody wishes to come and beg. Things are so tight for everybody in this country.



### Joke Silva now AMVCA 12 Head Judge

Award-winning thespian, Joke Silva, has been announced as the head judge for the 12th edition of the Africa Magic Viewers Choice Award set to hold soon.

In a press conference held in Lagos recently, Africa Magic, in partnership with Multichoice Nigeria, made this announcement.

The veteran actress, Joke Silva, said she is excited about the awards and she is looking forward to a great show.

She said, "It is with great honour that I assume the role of the head judge of AMVCA 12. It is a platform that recognises and celebrates excellence in African TV. It is not to reward visibility alone but to honour the depth of craft. It is a celebration of our culture that defines who we are. African stories matter.

"I am looking forward to the nominations to see those who have been nominated. I want to see who the audience will vote for. I like the fact that there is the voting category and the non voting category.

I am looking forward to the fashion. It is really fascinating."

According to Atinuke Ngozi Babatunde, Executive Head, Content and Channels, Multichoice, the AMVCAs remain dedicated to celebrating the incredible talent in the African film and television industry. She highlighted the amazing people who contribute both in front of and behind the cameras, as well as the viewers who continue to support the hard work of the industry. She thanked everyone for being an integral part of the AMVCA journey saying this edition promises to be another defining chapter.

"We are being intentional to recognise the excellence of the ecosystem. African stories continue to reflect who we are and how we connect to the world. The AMVCA has always been a continental platform and we are expanding that vision. African story telling is not one story but many stories and they all deserve to be told.



## Nigerian Breweries launches Big Fiesta

Several cities in Nigeria are set to experience mega entertainment explosion as Nigerian Breweries has unveiled Big Fiesta, a new cultural platform designed to bring Nigerians together through music, experiences, and shared moments across cities.

The platform was introduced at an exclusive Big Fiesta Media Luncheon held in Lagos, recently where leading media professionals, cultural tastemakers, entertainment figures and industry stakeholders gathered for a lively afternoon that melded conversation, culture and celebration.

Across Nigeria, this period represents the first true wave of people stepping back outside after the early months of the year, travelling home, reconnecting with loved ones, and returning to concerts, festivals and shared social experiences. Big Fiesta recognises that cultural rhythm and amplifies it through a coordinated calendar of experiences across multiple cities.

Speaking at the unveiling, Sarah Agha, Marketing Director, Nigerian Breweries Plc, described Big Fiesta as a natural extension of the company's commitment to creating moments that bring people together.

"At Nigerian Breweries, our purpose is to build the joy of togetherness, and in a country like Nigeria, that couldn't be more relevant. We are a people who love to celebrate everything, not just the occasions themselves, but the moments that bring us together, whether it's family, friends or even strangers. That's why we continue to invest in creating experiences that reflect how Nigerians connect and celebrate, because for us, it's not just about building brands, it's about creating meaningful moments that people can share."

The Big Fiesta calendar will unfold across several cities, bringing together a wide range of cultural and entertainment experiences powered by Nigerian Breweries' diverse portfolio of brands.

Highlights include Amstel Malta Village in Enugu, Onitsha and Aba; Heineken's Young Jonn Live concert in Abuja and City of Cities Live in Port Harcourt; the Flavour Concert in Aba powered by Life Beer; The Phyno Experience in Enugu with Tiger; and Desperados' vibrant Road Block Party in Lagos, among many other events across the country.

Other experiences include Afro Wonderland in Lagos, the Mak Town Festival in Makurdi, and Songs & Stories with Cobhams in Abuja, alongside cultural celebrations such as Egbaliganza in Abeokuta, creating a diverse calendar that reflects how Nigerians celebrate across different communities.

The event also featured a lively fireside conversation themed "From Legendary Christmas to Big Fiesta: How Big Celebrations Shape Culture, Creativity & Business," with industry voices including MI Abaga, Sarah Agha, Uche Pedro, Godwin Tom, Kiekie and Samuel Onyemelukwe.

## Amstel Malta Hosts AskAsisat for International Women's Month

In celebration of International Women's Month, Amstel Malta, Nigeria's leading premium malt brand, hosted a special edition of #AskAsisat, an Instagram Live session featuring its newly unveiled Brand Ambassador, Asisat Oshoala. Moderated by media personality Osas Irianele, the session gave fans exclusive access to one of Africa's most accomplished footballers.

The live session created an engaging space where fans asked questions about Oshoala's journey from Lagos to global football stardom, her record-breaking achievements, and the principles that guide her on and off the pitch. With participation from over a hundred consumers, the session reflected Amstel Malta's "Be Your Best" message, encouraging Nigerians to pursue excellence with discipline and consistency.

In line with this year's International Women's Day theme, "Give to Gain," 100 standout fans were rewarded N30,000 each, a total of N3 million, for asking insightful questions and en-

gaging actively throughout the livestream.

Fans described the session as "rewarding" and "exciting," praising Oshoala for her authenticity and encouragement. During the conversation, the football star shared practical insights on discipline, focus and consistency, values that have shaped her journey to becoming one of Africa's most decorated athletes.

Speaking on the initiative, Francis Obiajulu, Senior Brand Manager, Amstel Malta & Hi-Malt at Nigerian Breweries Plc, said the session was designed to bring Oshoala's inspiring story closer to consumers.

"Asisat Oshoala embodies the essence of what Amstel Malta stands for. Her achievements are the result of years of discipline, resilience and belief in her journey. With #AskAsisat, we wanted to bring her inspiring story directly to fans and celebrate the curiosity, dedication and consistency that reflect our 'Be Your Best' message. This session showed that growth comes from showing up and striving for more."

# Feature

## Seizures, revenue and export revival: Ag Compt. Afeni's new order at Ogun customs command

IFEOMA OKEKE-KORIEOCHA

For years, the Idiroko border in Ogun State has been synonymous with smuggling and illicit cross-border trade. But a new enforcement drive by the Nigeria Customs Service (NIS) is beginning to alter that narrative.

Since assuming office as Acting Customs Area Controller of the Ogun Command, Oladapo Afeni has intensified intelligence-driven operations that have led to major seizures, a sharp rise in revenue generation and the revival of export activities at the border. This feature examines how Afeni's leadership is reshaping customs operations at Idiroko and tightening the net around economic saboteurs.

For decades, the Idiroko border corridor in Ogun State has occupied a complex place in Nigeria's economic landscape. Sitting along one of West Africa's busiest land routes, the corridor links Nigeria with neighbouring Benin Republic and serves as a critical gateway for trade under the ECOWAS framework.

Yet, alongside legitimate commerce, the area has long been notorious for smuggling networks that exploit the labyrinth of bush paths and creeks dotting the border.

Today, however, the narrative is shifting. Since his appointment as Acting Customs Area Controller of the Ogun I Area Command of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Idiroko, Oladapo Afeni has embarked on an aggressive campaign aimed at dismantling smuggling syndicates while restoring legitimate trade at the border.

Through a mix of intelligence-driven operations, strategic patrols and closer collaboration with host communities, the command has intensified enforcement along the corridor, recording seizures worth billions of naira within a short period.

Evidence of the renewed crackdown became clear on March 16, 2026, when Afeni announced that the command had intercepted contraband worth over N1.4 billion within six weeks.

The seizures reflected the wide range of goods trafficked through the corridor. Among the intercepted items were 1,204 bags of foreign parboiled rice, equivalent to two trailer loads, 2,547 parcels of cannabis sativa, and 545 kegs of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) totalling 13,625



litres, roughly equivalent to a tanker load.

Other seized items included 36 cartons of Bardinet syrup, eight packs of perfume oil, 13 used tyres, 50 bags of imported sugar, eight bales of second-hand clothing, 15 sacks of used clothing, five sacks of used ladies' handbags, two sacks of used footwear and two used vehicles.

For customs authorities, the seizures illustrate the evolving tactics of smugglers who often diversify their cargo in a bid to evade detection.

But beyond economic contraband, the command's operations also revealed the growing threat of environmental and cultural trafficking.

During one of the operations, officers intercepted four live pangolins, one of the world's most trafficked endangered species. The animals were subsequently handed over to Green Fingers Wildlife Conservation for protection and rehabilitation.

In another discovery that caught the attention of authorities, officers recovered

two antiquities believed to be cultural artifacts being smuggled across the border.

Following expert assessment, the artifacts were transferred to the National Museum at Baptist Girls' College, Idi-Aba, Abeokuta, ensuring their preservation as part of Nigeria's cultural heritage.

Afeni attributes much of the command's success to a shift toward intelligence-based enforcement.

Rather than relying solely on routine patrols, the command has increased surveillance of known smuggling routes while strengthening intelligence gathering from border communities.

One such operation occurred on March 11, 2026, when officers acting on intelligence intercepted a truck with registration number APP-740-YD along the Agbara axis.

The truck was found carrying 2,539 kegs of vegetable oil, each containing 25 litres.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the products

had been smuggled through the creeks in smaller consignments before being consolidated for transport.

Just days earlier, on March 4, Customs officers intercepted a Sino truck loaded with 4,325 cartons of foreign spaghetti, each weighing 10 kilograms.

According to Afeni, the persistent smuggling of staple commodities poses serious challenges for local industries.

"By removing these illicit goods from the market, we are ensuring a competitive trade environment that protects our local vegetable oil industry and safeguards the health of our citizens," he said.

He stressed that the command's operations are aligned with the broader economic agenda of the federal government under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, which prioritises domestic production and economic stability.

The crackdown has also relied heavily on collaboration with other government agencies.

As part of this effort, the command formally handed over 2,547 parcels of cannabis

sativa to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Idiroko Special Command.

Afeni disclosed that the cannabis shipment comprised 2,055 coconut-size parcels weighing 710 kilograms and 15 bread-size parcels weighing 381 kilograms.

Similarly, the recovered antiquities were transferred to the National Museum to ensure their proper documentation and preservation.

Such inter-agency cooperation, officials say, is essential to tackling the complex networks behind cross-border crime.

While enforcement operations have intensified, the command has also recorded notable progress in revenue generation.

Afeni disclosed that the Ogun I Area Command generated N285.6 million during the period under review.

The figure represents an increase of N259.2 million compared with revenue recorded during the same period in 2025, translating to a remarkable 1,082 percent growth.

According to the acting comptroller, the revenue was generated from baggage assessments as well as auction sales of Premium Motor Spirit intercepted during anti-smuggling operations.

"I would like to reiterate that the revenue activities of the command comprise importation and exportation of legitimate goods, goods traded under the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme, and the assessment of merchandise contained in baggage," Afeni explained.

Perhaps, the most symbolic development under Afeni's watch has been the resumption of export activities at the Idiroko border post.

For years, the absence of structured export operations at the corridor limited its potential as a trade hub. But

recent developments suggest a shift.

According to Afeni, the command recorded the movement of 95 metric tons of goods with a Free On Board value of N305.7 million.

The development marks a significant improvement compared with the same period in 2025, when no export trade was recorded at the border.

For traders and transport operators in the region, the revival of export activities represents renewed economic opportunities.

Afeni also credits the support of traditional rulers, community leaders and border residents for the command's progress.

Border communities, he noted, have played an important role in providing intelligence that helps customs officers track smuggling routes.

He also commended the media for its continued support and balanced reporting of the service's activities.

Afeni further expressed appreciation to the Comptroller-General of Customs, Bashir Adewale Adeniyi, and the management of the service for their support and confidence in the command.

Despite the recent successes, Afeni insists that the fight against smuggling remains far from over.

Smuggling networks, he said, constantly adjust their tactics in response to enforcement measures.

But the command, he maintains, will continue to stay ahead through intelligence and strategic monitoring.

"Our war on smuggling continues," Afeni said. He continued, "Although smugglers may attempt new tactics to evade our checks, they will remain unsuccessful. Through high-level intelligence and strategic monitoring, we are always one step ahead of economic saboteurs," he stated.

For now, the results appear to support his claim. With billions of naira worth of seizures recorded, endangered wildlife rescued, cultural artifacts preserved and legitimate export activities gradually returning, the Ogun I Area Command is beginning to redefine the story of the Idiroko border.

And at the centre of that transformation is a message the acting controller hopes will resonate across the corridor: the era of unchecked smuggling is drawing to a



# The Worshipper

## Palm Sunday portrays Christ's kingship, triumphant entry into Jerusalem

Stories by JOHN SALAU

For many Christians across Nigeria and the globe at large Palm Sunday is more than a mere celebration of waving palms to a deep rooted spiritual and doctrinal belief of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

The day is also significant to many Orthodox churches in that it is the first day of the 'Holy Week'; a week that characterised the passion, death, and victory of Jesus Christ over death at Calvary.

The week starts with the celebratory march that portrays Christ's entry into Jerusalem cumulating into activities of Easter celebration, which is one of the most anticipated holidays of the year.

Easter is marked by a season of religious observances, traditions and celebrations leading up to the day and observed by millions across the world.

For Christians, Easter commemorates the resurrec-



tion of Jesus Christ, which is a fundamental belief in Christianity that ends with Easter Sunday; a day that characterised Christ's victory over death - the day he rose from the dead.

Across the world, Christians mark Easter celebration with Lent, an annual 40-day

period of fasting and personal reflection. Lent represents the 40 days that Jesus spent fasting and praying in the desert before starting his public ministry.

"Palm Sunday means different things to different religious organizations, especially the leaders. The Roman Cath-

olic and American churches perceive it differently from most Pentecostals.

"The Pentecostals, being who they are, perceive it also differently. Some, like Romans chapter 14 will say, one man esteems one day different from others, but some others see all days alike. They don't

see anything special in it," said Joseph Ojo, the presiding bishop of Calvary Kingdom Church (CKC), Lagos.

According to him, Palm Sunday is a day of victory, by entering into Jerusalem triumphantly. "It's a day that Jesus brought joy into Jerusalem riding on the horse; depicting his kingship over not only Jerusalem, but over the world."

Lent is also marked by self-discipline followed by spiritual practices, like daily prayer or acts of charity. However, Sundays are not traditionally counted in the 40 days, as they are considered days of celebration rather than fasting.

For this year, Palm Sunday is celebrated on March 29, the last week of Lent that represents the day Jesus entered Jerusalem waving palm branches.

This is followed by Maundy Thursday on April 2, also called Holy Thursday. In Christendom, 'Maundy' means foot-washing, which

refers to Christ washing the feet of his disciples as narrated by the Bible's New Testament.

Afterwards, they gathered for the Last Supper, a final meal together before Christ is crucified, and prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he was arrested. Some Christians choose to have a feast on Holy Thursday to commemorate the Last Supper.

Good Friday is celebrated on the Friday before Easter and marks the day Jesus was crucified and died. Followed by Holy Saturday on April 4 - a day before Easter Sunday, which represents the day Christ's body rested in the tomb before resurrection.

For many Christians, Holy Saturday is characterised as a time of waiting, reflection and anticipation for Easter, while Easter Sunday characterised his resurrection. "My charge to Christians is just that we should embrace it, give thanks to God for the victory that Jesus brought over the forces of darkness," Ojo said.

## Why Church doctrinal teachings should align with modernisation

The recent doctrinal clarification by the Jehovah's Witnesses (JW) has again re-kindled the debate about the Church's position on doctrinal teachings and modernization, especially in a technology driven society.

As of March 2026, Jehovah's Witnesses updated its policy allowing members to accept medical procedures involving their own stored, autologous blood.

The Governing Body clarified that allowing one's own blood to be stored and then re-infused is a personal decision.

According to the body, this change allows members to decide whether to have their blood removed, stored, and reinfused during surgery, though strict bans on receiving donor blood remain.

This updated policy marks a notable adjustment in a long-standing, 75-year stance of (JW), which is now being framed as a 'clarification' of doctrine.

However, the use of stored, pre-donated blood from another person still violates JW religious doctrines.

While some say it is a long overdue doctrinal update, some are of the opinion that it came too late in the day after many have lost loved ones to what is termed as 'needless'

teachings that places doctrinal teachings far above human lives.

"What we knew years back, may not be the same today. It takes a courageous leader to come to the fact and say; there's a new understanding of this scripture," Joseph Ojo, national president, United International Association of Pentecostal Bishops (UNIAPEB Global) College, said.

According to him, doctrinal teachings should be flexible to accommodate current realities of today's world. He added that some denominations believe baptism must be done in the name of the 'Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit.' While some denominations teach that baptism is only in the name of Jesus Christ.

"But the central truth of it is that the name of Jesus Christ offers salvation. It doesn't matter whether you pronounce it from right

or from left. Jesus Christ is Lord," Ojo said.

The Archbishop cited William Kumuyi, the general superintendent of the Deeper Christian Life Ministry, who in the recent past has had to revisit some of the church's teachings and practices.

According to Ojo, it takes a leader with courage to review doctrinal teachings or believe. "Pastor Kumuyi has been revisiting some of the things he taught before. This was the way we taught before, but that's not exactly what the scripture says.

"This law in Deeper Life is not scripture, but we did this or said it, so that people can be put in the right way.

"That's one of the things I respect that man for. Not everyone will be able to come out and explain that kind of thing that way," Ojo said.

While the JW doctrinal update continues to generate

reaction, a recent court rulings, including one in Scotland, have allowed doctors to perform blood transfusions on children when lives are at risk, despite objections based on the faith's teachings.

Toyin Kehinde, senior/founding pastor, Agape Generation International Church, said the mode of delivery could change, but the doctrine itself might not change. "So, the way, the manner, the form of presentation can change based on whatever is happening in the present condition where you are presenting, but the truth remains eternal. It does not change."

Kehinde said that the way and manner of delivering the 'good news' to people who are digital natives will be different from those who are illiterate. According to him, people can leverage innovative modes of delivery without altering the message. "So, the way we are presenting the gospel in such a way would definitely be different than the way we used to present the gospel in the days when literacy was very low."

He added that the doctrine of the Church are eternal, and are not subject to change. They are eternal means that they are not subject to changes, either with time or location, or age, or people, or tribe, or tongue, or whatever. The Bible says, forever, O Lord, your word is set in heaven. The book of Revelation says, you should not add to it."



## Pope, new Archbishop of Canterbury to meet in April

Sarah Mullally, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, will meet Pope Leo XIV during her visit to Rome, scheduled from 25 to 28 April.

The announcement was made two days after her official installation as the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of the Anglican Communion, at the Canterbury Cathedral.

"I look forward to meeting His Holiness soon and to continuing to strengthen the bonds of friendship and our shared commitment," Mullally stated in acceptance of Pope Leo's letter on her installation.

The letter commemorated the 60th anniversary of the Common Declaration of 24 March 1966, which marked the first formal ecumenical declaration between the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church, signed

by Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey.

On the occasion, Cardinal Kurt Koch delivered a letter of good wishes and blessings from Pope Leo to Archbishop Mullally at the start of her public ministry in the Church of England and worldwide Anglican Communion.

"I am deeply grateful for his kind letter and for the assurance of his prayers on the occasion of my installation as Archbishop of Canterbury. His words of encouragement and his invocation of the Holy Spirit are received with deep appreciation," Mullally said in a statement released by Lambeth Palace.

She assured that Pope of her desire to serve as an instrument of communion within the Anglican Communion and to seek the full and visible unity to which the Lord calls us all.



# The Worshipper

## Highland for Kumuyi in Thailand

BANJI OJEWALE

**A**mong Thailand's over 71 million citizens are some one million+ Christians boxed into Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, along with other independent groups like the Church of Christ in Thailand, CCT, which is considered the oldest and largest Protestant umbrella organization in this southeast Asian kingdom. Muslims post a figure of 7.5 million. But there's an overwhelming majority of tens of millions of followers of Buddhism, one of the globe's largest faiths which teaches an oriental version of Stoicism. Founded about 3000 years ago by Gautama Buddha, it is the national non-theistic religion and philosophy of Thailand.

Now, when foremost evangelist of our age, Pastor William Folorunso Kumuyi of Africa, arrived in Thailand for a 3-day Global Crusade with Kumuyi, GCK, from March 13 2026 and met a religious potpourri on the ground, he discovered what many have called a strange harmlessness of sharp differences. Theirs aren't contumacious contentions capsizing the Thai order, as disparities of this nature do elsewhere; the system is a benign arrangement made possible by a consistent government tradition that not only protects marginal sectarian groups, but also budgets princely sums to aid them to quietly practice their faiths.

The founder and General Superintendent of Deeper Christian Life Ministry, DCLM, saw them all as one single mass of humanity needing less of denominational and doctrinal disharmony, whether benevolent or bestial. Human beings weren't created by God for destructive discriminations. Preacher Kumuyi also recognized the Thais as those Jesus Christ came to die for under God's Salvation plan for man to make Heaven, regardless of colour, class, culture or caste. But accessing this afterlife programme designed for all men and women must be at God's own terms. Generational man-made contraptions have failed, leading to Divine intervention.

Therefore, each day of the Crusade at the National Sports University, Mahasarakham Campus (Physical Education) Stadium venue of the Thailand GCK, Kumuyi mounted a higher plane away from the jaded religious teachings that didn't help man in pre-Christ era. He delivered his trademark messages: salvation, holiness, thirst for Heaven, and hope for a



beleaguered world. The Nigerian preacher warned that man is wont to assume that he needs to go first for his needs of physical security, health, food, shelter, clothing etc. before being given homilies on spiritual imperatives.

Kumuyi said he had been sent by God to present the Thais and the entire world a better deal. He spoke of Jesus Christ as the Solution to those challenges that had repeatedly defeated them and denied them the joy their Creator has for them. All this benevolent God desires to measurelessly satisfy those material expectations is for man to uproot his sinful nature. That sinful state cannot attract His blessings. It will birth the reverse: poverty, deprivation, destitution, acrimonious divisions, wars, sorrow, violence, famine, plagues, failure of policy at all levels of governance, supranational, national and subnational.

Why? Because every product of crooked and transgressing man is destined to be correspondingly wayward, flawed and froward and therefore incapable of processing an agreeable end. His conduct has alienated him and his society from a Holy God and His Heaven. The best of our strides in civilization and science and technology won't help. The more of these without the God factor would only give us the anguished experience of the mariner in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 1798 poem, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner. The sailor

and his crew were dying of thirst in the midst of a vast expanse of undrinkable sea water. He cried: "Water, water, every where, And all the boards did shrink; Water, water, every where, Nor any drop to drink."

Our world with all its totems of prosperity and advancement, the greatest man has witnessed, isn't living in the peace and joy promised by those conditions and their modern inventions and discoveries. Their sophistication is glossy tinsel. They can't transition from potentiality to reality, from promise to performance. Deep in the midst of latent plenty, there's lingering poverty.

Pastor Kumuyi told the teeming Thai attendees of his outreach that the way out of this suicidal snowballing snare is to accept the Salvation programme of God through Christ. The convener of GCK said: "We have come together to learn more about Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world...He brings light to those who sit in darkness...He will touch and transform every life. He will heal the sick, and whatever the problem is, Christ is the Solution. He is saying to all, Come unto Me, all that labour, and I will give you rest...This is the Saviour calling all sinners to repentance. He is the Healer and the Conqueror Who can deliver the world from its sicknesses and plagues brought by Satan through man's rejection of God's

commandment in the Garden of Eden."

This is the message that must issue from true messengers of God prior to any pronouncement of prayer of healing, prosperity, healing or deliverance. The Power of the Gospel of Christ is what Kumuyi feeds on to reach Heaven for miracles, signs and wonders in his Ministry. Remarkably, faith in Jesus as the Precursor to all blessings was also the theme of Kumuyi's Daily Manna devotional on Friday, March 13, the first day of the Thai crusade.

The Lord was there again for the revered cleric as he preached and asked the Thais to give their lives to Christ and then expect Him to heal the sick, to make the lame to walk, the deaf-mute to be delivered, the blind to see, the demon-possessed to be liberated, the weak to receive strength, the hopeless to savor hope, the dead to live again.

Reports have trickled in of "an unforgettable, heaven-on-earth experience" as Kumuyi pleaded for the Thais to have an encounter with the supernatural. "Lives were transformed and faith was ignited" as crutches were lifted to announce the healing of the lame. From among the massive crowds were verified claims of blind persons seeing after the prayer of the man of God. It was an electrifying atmosphere rarely seen in Thailand.

If, as all the world reasonably expects, the Thais won't easily let

go of such a gripping evidence of the supernatural visitation through Kumuyi's GCK, there's a grave summons from God for more follow-up to the work of Kumuyi in the land of the Buddhists. They aren't going to be satisfied with the one-touch trip of GCK. They would want more on a regular basis, until the Gospel is firmly rooted in this land with more than 90% of its citizens Buddhists.

Pastor Kumuyi has cleared the way for more missionary expeditions in Thailand. His success there has proved that the Lord has scant consideration for cultural or religious resistance to the Word. He is also not moved by our timidity or weakness. What He wants is to get willing vessels of honour to deliver His Gospel, resistance or not, fear or not. His Word will fill the missing link, as it did when Kumuyi took it to Thailand.



• Ojewale is a writer in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria.

## Cover

# Persistent power outages belie government's repeated promises

TAOFEEK OYEDOKUN

**A**cross Nigeria, weeks of worsening power outages have crippled homes and businesses, forcing millions into a daily routine shaped by uncertainty. Freezers thaw, shops shut early, and entire neighbourhoods fall silent under the weight of a grid that has once again failed to deliver.

When Bayo Adelabu, minister of Power, stepped forward on Tuesday to apologise and promise a turnaround, it should have offered reassurance. Instead, it was met with doubt.

"I can tell you, with the committee that we have set up, and commitments from gas suppliers, and the timeline for repair of the gas pipelines, two weeks from now, we should start seeing improvements in supply. Two weeks," Adelabu said.

For many Nigerians, it sounded familiar, too familiar.

The promise of imminent improvement has become a recurring line in the government's response to power crises. But with each repetition, and little visible change, public confidence has eroded.

"We've heard this 'two weeks' before," Adenike Babatunde, a small business owner in Lagos, said. "It comes and goes, but the darkness stays."

## Power that never comes

Nigeria's electricity paradox remains stark. While the country has an installed generation capacity of over 12,000 megawatts, actual output frequently falls below 4,000 megawatts, far short of what is needed to power a population of more than 200 million people.



Energy experts say at least 30,000 megawatts of stable electricity is required to sustain economic growth and industrialisation.

The gap between capacity and reality is felt most acutely at the household level.

"We can go for days without light," Olatunji Adio, a resident of Igando area of Lagos. "When it comes, it's for maybe one or two hours. You can't plan anything."

Nigeria's power sector, heavily dependent on gas-fired plants, has been repeatedly disrupted by gas supply constraints, pipeline maintenance challenges, and liquidity issues. Even when power is generated, transmission and distribution bottlenecks often prevent it from reaching consumers.

For households and businesses, alternatives are increasingly unaffordable. Petrol prices hover around N1,400 per litre, while diesel has climbed above N1,800, placing generator use beyond the reach of many. Solar power, a viable escape, remains too expensive for most Nigerians.

"Running a generator now is like

running a second business," said Femi, a barber. "A larger percentage of what I make goes into fuel."

## Anger spills into the streets

As outages persist, frustration is no longer confined to complaints, it is spilling into confrontation.

A viral video that began trending on Friday captures a group of women standing their ground against officials of an electricity distribution company who arrived to disconnect their supply. Speaking in Yoruba, the women accused the company of failing to provide electricity for months.

"We have not had light, yet, you still want to disconnect our wire? For three months you have not given us power. We all sleep outside now," they said.

They formed a human shield around the ladder brought by the officials, preventing them from climbing the pole. When one official attempted to shove a woman aside, others quickly surrounded him, their resistance turning into a collective protest.

In another video, an enraged man confronted officials attempt-

ing a similar disconnection. "There is no money, no light, nothing... yet you still want to disconnect the power?" he said.

These moments capture a deeper shift, from quiet frustration to visible resistance. For many Nigerians, the issue is no longer just about power supply, but fairness.

"You can't punish people for what you didn't provide," said Femi, earlier quoted. "Give us light first, then talk about disconnection."

## The banding divide

At the centre of the anger is the controversial banding system, which classifies consumers based on expected hours of electricity supply.

In theory, the system aligns tariffs with service levels. Band A customers are expected to receive up to 20 hours of electricity daily, while those in lower bands receive significantly less.

In practice, many consumers say the reality falls short of the promise.

"We are not even asking for 24 hours," said Adenike, earlier quoted. "Just give us something consistent. Don't put us in a lower band and then treat us like we don't matter."

For those in lower bands, many of whom are also unmetered, the system feels less like a framework for fairness and more like a hierarchy of access. They report receiving little to no power while still facing rising bills and the threat of disconnection.

## Committees and broken trust

Government officials say efforts are underway to address the crisis. Adelabu noted that a committee has been set up to ensure gas suppliers meet their obligations to power plants.

"We already have a committee that is working on this to track

compliance with the domestic supply obligations of these gas companies to our power plants," he said, adding that improved payment flows would encourage supply.

But for many Nigerians, committees have become synonymous with delay rather than delivery.

"What we need is light, not meetings," said a frozen food seller who now relies on generator to power her freezers. "Every time there's a problem, they set up a committee. But nothing changes."

## A promise that lingers

The current crisis has also revived memories of a campaign promise made by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu before he was elected.

"By all means necessary, you must have electricity and you will not pay for estimated bill anymore," Tinubu said.

He went further, tying the pledge to electoral accountability.

"If I couldn't keep the promise and you, and I come back for a second time, don't vote for me. That's the truth. Unless I give you adequate reasons why I couldn't deliver."

Today, for many Nigerians navigating long nights without power, that promise feels increasingly distant.

## Between endurance and revolt

There is a growing sense that patience is running out. For years, Nigerians have adapted buying generators, rationing power use, and adjusting daily routines. But as outages worsen and costs rise, adaptation is giving way to anger.

As the government renews its pledge and consumers brace for another uncertain wait, one reality remains unchanged: the lights are still off. And in the darkness, trust continues to flicker.

## Mixed reactions trail education minister's planned policy on...

Continued from page 3

Alausa emphasised that the new policy would see continuous assessment replacing traditional examinations.

"The common entrance examination will be phased out in favour of a more comprehensive evaluation system. This shift marks a significant departure from the high-stakes testing that has historically governed the transition from primary to secondary school.

"It will be replaced by continuous assessment (CA), which will reflect the performance of the pupil from primary one. Even if a pupil is transferring from one school to another, he will take his record along to his new school," he said.

However, stakeholders are wary that Nigeria might be toying the path of Sweden, which in 2009, replaced textbooks with screens, 15 years later, and the country is spending \$120 million to bring them back.

According to Indian Defence Review, 15 years after Sweden began replacing many printed textbooks with computers, that direction is being reconsidered.

"The UN Report says the country has allocated €104 million between 2022 and 2025 to bring printed books back into schools. The aim was to ensure students once again have paper textbooks for core subjects."

Blessing Ema, an academician, expresses worries the scrapping of common entrance examination with learner's identification number could be a ploy to enrich some people with software contracts, which would be discarded after a while.

"They will go and give somebody a contract to develop the platform, create the software. They will continue to embezzle public funds with unnecessary policies.

"At the end of the day, when another regime comes, it would scrap the learner's identification number initiative, and possibly reintroduce common entrance," she said.

Ema emphasised that scrapping the common entrance with the introduction of learner's identification number is never the solution to Nigeria's education crisis.

"Scrapping the Common Entrance examination with Learner's ID Number is not the solution, it is like treating ma-

laria with just paracetamol; it will not go away," she noted.

Mercy Nnokam, a teacher in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, said scrapping common entrance is not a bad idea if LIN is well-implemented.

"LID would help keep track of pupils' data and will also show records of enrolment, drop out as well transfer from one school to another.

"It will reduce exam stress; but common entrance exams prepare the pupils to take responsibility into another level of learning, hence, the pupils tend to work harder," she noted.

Chioma Ihejirika, a teacher in Lagos, believes common entrance has not been relevant, except for public schools.

"Private schools don't care about common entrance. LIN is as good as NIN; so, we still have not made any progress.

"With all the dilapidated public schools everywhere, how would they introduce LIN?" she queried.

Ihejirika maintains that LIN would be a superior option, if well executed, but otherwise, a disaster.

"Nigeria is just good at copying the al-

ready working system without knowing the process. We're not fully equipped with infrastructure, electricity, teacher training, and digital access to rely heavily on systems that require strong technological support.

"It's a case of wanting to run when we can't even crawl. Moreover, Sweden that adopted this digital method is going back to analog because technology has only succeeded in causing more harm than good. Pedagogy is still the right way for education," she emphasised.

Christopher Nmeribe, a school proprietor, sees the scrapping of the common entrance examination as a bold but a risky move.

Nmeribe said, while it may reduce examination pressure and malpractice, Nigeria currently lacks the strong data systems and infrastructure needed to fairly track students through a Learner's Identification Number, and without that, standards could drop.

He emphasised that Nigeria was not yet fully on track, because according to him, the experience of Sweden shows that rushing reforms without solid groundwork can backfire.

"If implementation is weak, which you can expect will be the case, especially with poor electricity, internet access, and teacher training, Nigeria may end up reversing the policy later at a higher cost.

"In Nigeria's current reality, I think a hybrid system, continuous assessment plus a standardised examination would likely be more reliable," he said.

Jessica Osuere, chief executive officer at RubiesHub Educational Services, described common entrance as a standardised access to secondary schools, and something pupils looked up to years ago, which makes them to be more serious with their studies.

"The common entrance provides a uniform benchmark for comparing pupils from diverse primary schools, helps in merit-based selection, and promotes fairness and national integration, at least, in principle by giving children from different regions equal opportunity to compete.

"I doesn't know why the government wants to scrap it; maybe when we see the policy document, we would understand the reasons which were not given during the announcement," she said.

# Port development: Don't put your eggs in one...

Continued from page 3

it," Abimbola Awoniyi, a maritime executive, said.

He also noted that it is payback time for the ports, which have earned trillions of naira in revenue to the government across the years.

In the same vein, Edwin Udoye, a freight forwarder, pointed out that the government has increased all charges at the ports, and that its agencies, especially Customs make outrageous revenue every day, hence the planned refurbishment, according to him, is not out of place as long as it will not disrupt business at the ports.

"The current charges at the ports are many and very high. It should not only be hike in fees and charges all the time, the government should also take care of the port infrastructure to encourage smooth operations, efficiency and safety for the workers," Udoye said.

Yet, others, who also commended President Tinubu on the deal, think that the planned refurbishment should not be for Lagos ports alone, as other port facilities across the country equally need, even more attention.

They are insisting that Nigeria can have as many ports as possible, but that they all should be fully operational, rather than the situation where only ports in Lagos are fully operational.

Expressing his concern over the trend, Frank Ngwu, a professor of Strategy, noted that Egypt has over 40 seaports, Morocco has 10, but Nigeria has only two major seaports despite its extensive coastline.

While the development is creating a significant infrastructure gap, it also queries why port facilities in the Eastern ports of Calabar, Warri and Port Harcourt are not optimally utilised.



The professor blamed the congestion and increased costs on the limited infrastructure, concentrated primarily in the Lagos Port Complex and Tin Can Island Port, insisting that it is hindering Nigeria's ability to fully benefit from the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Shadrach Onoriode, a Warri-based politician, argued that the government seems intentional at concentrating full port operations at Lagos ports, while many are lying fallow across the Eastern ports.

"They told us that big vessels are not coming to Calabar Port because it is shallow. But they can dredge it. They told us that Port Harcourt and Warri ports have safety and security issues, yet crude oil drilling is ongoing, and they close their eyes to organised oil theft.

The government needs to be sincere with us because everything is either in Lagos or Abuja. That is very bad for 36 states and over 200 million people," Onoriode, a former NPA senior staff, decried.

He called on President Tinubu, NPA and the UKEF to consider Eastern ports in the planned refurbishment.

For Marcel Nkwagu, an entrepreneur and member of the Enugu Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (ECCIMA), the federal government needs to consider other ports outside Lagos to ease the congestion, costs and logistics for businesses.

"I still import from Lagos while Port Harcourt is closer. I don't mind going to Warri or Calabar ports, but are they functional? It seems the government doesn't want those ports to function at full capacity and also doesn't mind the revenue it is losing," Nkwagu noted.

He argued that if the government and its supporters cite insecurity, shallow waters, restive communities, among others as reasons Eastern ports are not getting face-lift and business, why then are elections held in those areas despite the so-called challenges and why is the government not giving opportunities to private developers as it does in Lagos.

"We are not saying stop work in Lagos.

No, increase the work at Lagos ports, but also give face-lift to other ports outside Lagos so that businesses that depend on the ports can breathe. The high cost of logistics is killing our business, when closer ports can reduce cost by half," he said.

Taking it from a political perspective, Kunle Anjorin, a politician, argued that President Tinubu is a 'Lagos man,' and a former governor here and needs to serve his constituency.

"He feels he needs to prove that he comes from here. I don't see anything wrong with that because other presidents have done the same while in power," Anjorin said.

But in a seeming balancing argument, Dele Badore, a maritime lawyer, noted that the planned refurbishment is not a new project, rather it has been on stream since late 2023 or early 2024 but the government has not secured finance to fund it until now.

"When the NPA proposed the \$USD1 billion port redevelopment project, there is a portion that will go to the Eastern ports, particularly Rivers port.

I don't know the scope of this recent funding from the UK, but the truth remains that Lagos is still a host to Nigeria's most viable seaports.

Investors will naturally put their money where the returns will be high, including refurbishment," Anjorin said.

Rather than envy Lagos, Anjorin urged other states to make efforts, investment commitments and safety to attract investors or lure the federal government for approvals of big projects like deep sea ports.

"As for Akwa Ibom Deep Seaport, the major bottleneck is funding. It requires \$4.2bn. I am not sure the FG sees that as a potentially lucrative project. So, I see it stalling until Akwa Ibom finds reliable in-

vestors like Lagos did with the Lekki port.

"As for Cross River, I think the state has secured \$3.5bn for the project. I am not sure what is holding back the project. I think Akwa Ibom and Cross River should team up and set up one deep seaport. Not sure how two deep seaports should be sited in two contingent states," he concluded.

But Onoriode and Nkwagu countered the above, saying that if the federal government wades in, the Akwa Ibom Deep Seaport will become a reality and that nothing stops two deep seaports being close to each other.

"How far is the Apapa Port to Tin Can and the Lekki Port is also there. We need the federal government to refurbish Eastern ports and support development of deep seaports here too. It shouldn't be all about drilling and exporting crude oil. There should be more port facilities for other exports and imports too. This will reduce costs for businesses here and boost revenue from taxes," Onoriode said.

On his part, Nkwagu lamented that if there is a major security issue or environmental issue like a tsunami in Lagos, other ports put together cannot handle the huge volumes of Apapa and Tin Can ports.

"Refurbish ports outside Lagos to increase their capacity to handle more cargoes, reduce congestion at Lagos ports, the associated traffic on Lagos roads, costs and logistics for businesses close to those ports," Nkwagu charged the federal government.

In their conclusion, many concerned people noted that giving attention to ports outside Lagos is equity, diversification, new openings and giving businesses in those areas opportunities to thrive on lower operational costs, amid more revenue for the government.

## 2027: Fragmented opposition faces fierce battle against Tinubu as APC...

Continued from page 3

cent political movements have tilted momentum in favour of the APC, reinforcing its dominance at both federal and state levels. Analysts say the trend, if sustained, could further weaken already fragmented opposition parties such as the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the Labour Party (LP), unless they adopt a coalition strategy similar to the one that brought the APC to power in 2015.

In the past months, several high-profile politicians, including lawmakers, former governors, and influential grassroots mobilisers, have defected to the APC.

The PDP has lost about seven governors to the APC in the last one year. The party is now left with two governors—Bala Muhammed of Bauchi State and Seyi Makinde of Oyo State.

Although motivations vary from political survival to alignment with federal power, the cumulative effect has been a steady consolidation of the ruling party's influence going into 2027 polls.

Kunle Adebayo, political analyst, noted that defections are not just symbolic but structural in their implications.

"What we are seeing is not just movement of individuals but the transfer of political machinery, structures, loyalists, and resources. When these figures move, they don't go alone. That significantly weakens the opposition at the local and state levels," he said.

He added that Nigeria's electoral sys-

tem, which often rewards incumbency and widespread political networks, gives the APC a clear advantage as it absorbs more actors into its fold.

**Fragmented opposition faces uphill task**

Despite dissatisfaction in some quarters over economic hardship and governance concerns, analysts argue that public discontent alone is not enough to unseat an incumbent government.

Yusuf Babalola, political analyst, told BusinessDay that the opposition are not helping themselves as it appears they have not learned from the mistake of 2023. He said that the way the opposition politicians were going they would make the election look easy for President Tinubu again.

"Certainly yes; looking at the 2023 election result, we would all agree that without alliance, they have no chance against the president.

"In 2023, what gave him victory was the division among opposition, Peter Obi was in LP, Atiku Abubakar in PDP and Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso was in NNPP. The opposition votes all together would have cost the APC the election," he said.

Babalola further pointed out that a viable opposition was needed to unseat the president, arguing that without that, they would lose again. He warned that ego appeared to be the biggest challenge facing opposition politicians, with none of them willing to give up their ambition for the other.

"Sincerely, who among the opposition members will bring down his ego to

be vice president to the other? Everyone wants to be the president which is not possible."

For, Political Strategist, Zainab Sule, the opposition's biggest challenge is internal division.

"The PDP is battling internal crises, the Labour Party is still struggling with institutional cohesion, and smaller parties lack national spread. Individually, none of them has the capacity to confront a well-entrenched APC," she said.

Sule stressed that without a unified front, opposition parties risk splitting votes, thereby inadvertently strengthening the ruling party's chances.

"If they go into 2027 divided, it will be a repeat of 2023—perhaps even worse. The APC doesn't need to win overwhelmingly; it only needs the opposition to remain fragmented," she added.

**Lessons from 2015 coalition**

Political watchers frequently reference the 2015 elections, when opposition parties merged to form the APC, ultimately defeating the incumbent PDP government. That coalition brought together diverse political interests under a single platform, creating a formidable electoral force.

Many pundits say the reality is that the opposition stands no chance of defeating the incumbent, Tinubu, in the 2027 presidential election without a strong and united coalition like 2015.

They argued that the president is even more sure-footed given the current political landscape, where the ruling party,

the APC, now controls about 31 states across the federation.

"History has shown that coalition-building can be decisive. The 2015 election remains a clear example, where a united front unseated a sitting president. Building such a coalition is, in my view, the most viable pathway for the opposition to defeat President Tinubu," Hameed Muritala, a communication and development practitioner, told BusinessDay.

Muritala stressed that for this to happen, major opposition parties like the PDP, Labour Party, and ADC would need to set aside their differences and work towards a common goal, but stated that with the current realities, such a coalition appears unlikely, which ultimately weakens the opposition's chances.

Similarly, Ibrahim Lawal, political historian and professor, believes the opposition must learn from 2015 precedent, stressing that the APC itself is a product of alliance politics.

"It succeeded because different blocs agreed to set aside differences for a common goal. The current opposition must replicate that model if they are serious about power," the professor noted.

Lawal warned that failure to build consensus could render opposition campaigns ineffective, regardless of the candidates they field.

**APC's strategic consolidation**

In the last two years within the ruling party, the influx of new members is being framed as a sign of confidence in the Tinubu's administration.

Party leaders argue that their governance agenda and political inclusiveness are attracting support.

A senior APC official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, described the defections as "organic growth."

"People are joining us because they see stability, structure, and a clear pathway to development. The APC is not just a party; it is a platform with national reach and vision," he said.

The official dismissed claims that defections are driven solely by opportunism, insisting that many politicians are aligning with what they perceive as a viable governance agenda.

**Critics cite weak ideological foundations**

Some analysts argue that Nigeria's party system lacks strong ideological grounding, making defections easier and more frequent. Adebayo pointed out that the absence of clear ideological distinctions between parties contributes to political fluidity.

"In many cases, politicians are not moving because of policy differences but because of access to power and resources. That is why alliances become crucial—because ideology alone does not hold parties together," he explained.

He added that this fluidity benefits the ruling party, which can leverage state power to attract defectors.

However, with the 2027 general election less than a year and with political elites repositioning themselves, questions remain about how ordinary Nigerians will respond at the polls.

# Real Estate Market Updates

with **CHUKA UROKO**

A Diary of Developments, Transactions, Appointments

## Residential developments expanding in Lagos as developers tap identified gaps

At a time when some investors are holding back, and some ongoing projects are being delayed or stalled, Lagos is witnessing a phenomenal increase in the number of pipeline projects, especially at the high-end luxury residential markets of Ikoyi and Victoria Island.

Of particular interest is a submarket in Victoria Island, which is experiencing development expansion as developers build in response to identified demand gaps in that area.

This submarket is the North West region of Victoria Island, geographically bounded by Ozumba Mbadiwe Avenue to the North, Akin Adesola Street to the East, Adeola-Odeku Street to the South, and Ahmadu Bello Way to the West.

Developers have found that, in this region, there is demand for residential apartments that are in proximity to offices. The region benefits from its proximity to major commercial corridors like Adeola Odeku Street, Ozumba Mbadiwe Road, Kofo Abayomi Street, and adjoining arterial routes.

While close enough to

serve professionals working in the island's business districts, the area retains a more residential identity compared to the commercial-heavy core VI. This positioning has made it particularly attractive for prime residential living, serving professionals and affluent families seeking modern accommodation within the area.

This explains why, over

the past 12 months, the submarket has been expanding, particularly within the residential segment. More notably, its development pipeline is now dominated by deluxe and luxury apartment projects.

These include Elysian Rise, Reportage Tower, Trimnell Tower, The Alfred, Kadars Gate, The Gaia, Ozumba Mbadiwe Tower, Xamira

Heights, Amoretto Luxury Apartments, 11 Goriola, and Hebron Tower, with recent completions including La Paz Apartments, The Oak Residence, and Bluerock Residences.

Another major driver of the development expansion is land cost, which has become a competitive advantage for the submarket. The average land price in this area is about

2 million per square metre.

This price shows it is a more affordable alternative to the core VI and South West area, while remaining strategically closer to commercial hubs than the cheaper South East region, which has an average land price of 1.7 million per square metre.

Unlike core VI and South West, where limited land availability has driven up prices, North West still has more land available for sale, allowing developers to acquire property at lower costs without sacrificing proximity to established commercial infrastructure.

Home buyers are also attracted to this part of Victoria Island because of the calmness of the inner streets, which has become a market differentiator. Luxury developers are strategically capitalising on the serenity of the region.

In contrast with the more commercially active corridors with busier arterial routes, such as Churchgate Street and Sanusi Fafuwa Street in the core VI, North West's inner streets, such as Sapara Williams Close, and Goriola Street, exhibit a different urban character.

These inner streets are largely insulated and are better positioned to accommodate low to medium-density residential developments, offering a quieter living environment. This locational advantage also strengthens the investment case for developers and capital partners seeking to deliver high-end residential projects within a calm district.

In its recent report on this submarket, Estate Intel, a data-driven market intelligence platform focused on the African real estate and construction industry, notes that the development expansion in this submarket is "A Familiar Pattern Repeating Itself."

The platform recalls that, four years ago, it examined the South West region of Victoria Island, which began to experience an uptick in development activity in 2022, indicating increased investor interest in the area.

Among other factors, it added, this was a result of the revision of the Victoria Island Model City master plan in 2013, which laid the groundwork for a broader focus on the area's other regions beyond core Victoria Island.



## Shut out: Why mortgage eludes workers even at single-digit rates

The Ministry of Finance Integrated (MOFI) Real Estate Investment Fund (MREIF) came as an escape for loan-seeking workers, especially those on low income. It is aimed at solving the affordability issues in the housing market.

MREIF is a public-private initiative launched by the federal government. Its primary goal is to bridge Nigeria's housing gap by offering low-interest, long-term mortgages to eligible Nigerian citizens while supporting real estate development through off-take guarantees.

As against commercial rates offered by money deposit banks, which are in the region of 25-27 percent, MREIF offers 9.75 percent interest rate on its loans, which it makes available to eligible developers and home seekers.

Despite the 'low' interest

rate, many Nigerians, particularly civil servants, are still shut out of this facility. Complex processes, high interest rates, and low wages make access nearly impossible for an average worker in the country.

With a loan limit of up to N100 million, a 9.75 percent interest rate, and a 20-year repayment tenor, MREIF is quite an attractive mortgage, but not for a low-income earner.

In Nigeria, people with an income below N1.2 million per annum in Nigeria are classified as low-income earners. The country's national minimum wage stands at N70,000 per month, meaning the average worker's annual income is N84,000.

Adeniyi Akinlusi, former chief executive of Trustbond Mortgage Bank and currently the MD/CEO, Lekki Worldwide Investments Limited (LWIL), explained to Busi-

nessDay why workers on minimum wage are unable to access a mortgage.

Akinlusi explained that, based on the terms of mortgage structuring, which requires repayment of not less than one-third or 33.3 percent of a borrower's monthly income, a borrower on N70,000 per month has to deduct approximately N23,100 for loan repayment.

Given a monthly payment of this sum for a 30-year mortgage, as required by law, a mortgage loan borrower will have to contribute only N8.3 million for the 30 years.

With the N8.3 million, it remains to be seen where the worker will buy a three-bedroom house, for instance, even in a low-income market in the outskirts of Nigerian cities like Lagos and Abuja.

Maurice Onyekwelu, an estate developer in Lagos, told

BusinessDay that there is no decent accommodation for N8 million in a good location, citing a low-income estate located along the Lagos-Badagry Expressway where three-bedroom bungalows sell for between N25 and N30 million per unit.

"Besides that, there is also hardly a 30-year mortgage available for loan applicants," Onyekwelu noted, adding that the 10 percent equity contribution will also pose a challenge because 10 percent of N30 million, for instance, is N3 million. "How many civil servants earning N70,000 minimum wage have N3 million for equity contribution?" he queried.

MREIF has been described by housing industry players as a good initiative by the federal government to advance the cause of housing in the country.

## Investing in London market: What investors need to know

Many foreign investors, including Nigerians, have strong footprints in the London property market for various reasons, at the top of which are the maturity of the market and the country's stable currency, which aids investment decisions.

Return on investment is almost predictable, unlike the Nigerian market, where currency volatility and other adverse macroeconomic conditions, particularly inflation, rubbish investments, and render the market unattractive.

London remains one of the world's most compelling and globally respected property investment markets, according to Ugo Arinze, Onyx Property Team lead.

The London-based realtor says there are certain things investors need to know about

that market, including a combination of legal transparency, long-term demand, international appeal, and capital resilience, which make the market attractive to investors from virtually every corner of the world.

"But it is also one of the most regulated markets — and in 2025, the regulatory landscape shifted in some important and consequential ways.

Whether you're a UK-based investor looking to build or expand a portfolio, or an international buyer — particularly from the United States — acquiring London property for the first time, understanding the legal and tax framework from the outset is what separates a well-structured, profitable investment from an expensive and avoidable learning curve," she said.

Art

# Ikechukwu Ezeigwe: Pushing creative boundaries with Zoomorphic art

OBINNA EMELIKE

It has been eight years of practice as full-time artist for Ikechukwu Ezeigwe. But it is not the number of years in practice that matters for the young artist, but the difference and impact he wants to make with his art.

Unlike many of his folks, he ventured into Zoomorphic or Anthropomorphic Art; which he described as the hybrid of animal and human forms to create art. Through this unique painting form and medium of expression, Ikechukwu attributes animalistic character to humans, which can represent positive or negative visualization.

Of course, that form of artistic expression is not popular, he confessed that, “It came about through experimentation”.

In the past eight years, Ikechukwu, who graduated as the Best Painting Student of the Fine Art Department, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Ijanikin Lagos and Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, has passed through the thick and thin, experimenting further in his chosen form of artistic expression, he kept going, and mastering his craft along the line.

Today, his works are out there, in some galleries, with some private collectors and even in corporate spaces. Again, looking back at the eight years, which he described as the most adventurous experience of his life, he thanks God for the teachings he had growing up. “They infuse me with a “never give up” mentality. They built an ‘I can do’ mentality in you. I will say that I have had an exciting time of freedom of thought, freedom of expression and the joy of earning reasonably from that liberty of thought and expression.

Through his tenacity and sheer creativity, Ikechukwu has made Zoomorphic art a household name for many art collectors and enthusiasts. “My art is recognized by a lot of people and it is captivating,” he enthused.

Also looking back at the feats, he has achieved in less than a decade, the Zoomorphic artist noted that his art has evolved through the years since starting as a full-time artist. “My art is my way of addressing global issues in a unique, captivating, interesting and creative way. I have been able to carve a niche for myself in the art space, and that is exciting,” he enthused.

Today, he has had many notable exposures, works and contacts through his art, with more in the pipeline.

“I had my first solo exhibition in 2020 with Omenka Gallery Ikoyi, Lagos titled *Beast Of No Nation*, my second solo exhibition



in 2024 at Alexis Gallery, Victoria Island, Lagos was titled *Monkey Business*. I have had about 10 group exhibitions in all and my next exhibition is brewing,” he said, while insisting that all were possible because of his perseverance at experimenting, developing and following a different form of artistic expression.

What is also going for Ikechukwu is that he is also not following the popular ways or mentality of his generation. While majority of them are in a haste to be out there without sacrificing time to learn more, get the needed mentorship to hone their skills, and bid for their time; he is not in a haste to fame or to make money.

“I used to have that attitude immediately I left school and started full-time practice. But with time, I have learnt to take things slow because art is a lifetime

**“I get my inspiration through reading, movies, traveling and visiting places”. His themes cut across several ideas and topical issues such as politics and leadership, racism and human behavior**



career. I am not going to retire from it. So, when you have that kind of attitude, you will not be in a rush. Everything you want to accomplish, everything you want to see, will happen with time,” he noted.

But he is not just biding his time; he is happy the way his art is going, in terms of creativity, recognitions and earnings despite the harsh economy.

He attributed his ability to stay afloat despite the economic realities of today to the quality relationships he built over the years from art collectors and to the few galleries he has opportunity to deal with.

“These are people who are unapologetically loyal to your work. They have sustained and have continued to sustain me till today. I will advise artists to build quality relationships. Do not be rude or proud. But do not be a ‘door mat’ either. Know the difference. It matters, especially in times like this,” he admonished his folks, especially the emerging ones.

What inspires his art, as well as his themes are also intriguing. “I get my inspiration through reading, movies, traveling and visiting places”. His themes cut across several ideas and topical issues such as politics and leadership,

racism and human behavior.

But he is currently working on wildlife conservation, endangered animals, among others. “These are exciting themes I hope to work on for a long time”.

Meanwhile, he confessed that his art is what it is today because of the quality mentorships, (local and international) he has had and still having.

“My mentors are people who have helped me grow since I began full-time practice; they are people who inspire me to keep improving myself and people whose works challenge me to do better because of their tenacity and excellence”.

Some of his mentors include: Rahman Akar of Signature Gallery Lagos, Femi Williams of Iwalewa Gallery, and Abiodun Olaku of Universal Studios of Art.

But he did not forget the huge family mentorship and upbringing, which he credited, especially to his family.

“I am an extremely optimistic person, probably because of the kind of upbringing I had. I was exposed to the teachings of faith early through the church. In retrospect, that is one of the best legacies my father gave me and my siblings- equipping and exposing us with the right teaching to face life,” he said.

Looking ahead, Ikechukwu has big ambitions for his practice, but prefers slow and steady growth that will allow his art to mature more, command more respect and being sought-after globally.

“I see myself partnering with some of the biggest stakeholders in the wildlife conservation space both nationally and internationally such as the National Geographic and WWF” he said.

He concluded by reassuring that he will keep taking things slowly as art is a lifetime career, which he is not going to retire from.

# Art

## 'Miracle Leaf is about transformation of an artist, and its impact on works I create'

For one week, Josiah C. Josiah, a Lagos-based contemporary visual artist, who majors in painting, invited the public to his open studio, where the focus shifted from metropolitan noise to a tranquil location, from just painting to nature, from art enterprise to conversation and appreciation of the environment. In this interview, the young artist shares with OBINNA EMELIKE, who partook in the open studio titled "The Miracle Leaf" and curated by Ugo Ahiakwo, the rationale for the outing, why the leaf matters, the body of work created from the theme, his art and passion, methodology, parents and boyhood wish for priesthood, among others.

**F**or those meeting you for the first time, who really is Josiah C. Josiah?

My name is Josiah C. Josiah. I am a visual artist based in Lagos State, South-West.

**What is the concept of the studio visit and why is it themed 'Miracle Leaf'?**

Miracle Leaf is a leaf that represents resilience, passion for life and passion to heal. The leaf reflects on the survival of an individual. No matter the environment you find yourself, it emphasizes on adaptation to your environment without unnecessary complaints.

Medically, 'Miracle Leaf' has many health potentials. I explore the leaf to produce herbal tea, which is beneficial to my health.

Psychologically, 'Miracle Leaf' is about the transformation of an artist, its impact on the works I produce and studying of different plants and grasses- the green, flowers and their atmospheric influence on our environment and health.

It is also about individual ecosystem. As individuals, we should understand leaves in our environment and explore them for our health benefits.

**With the above, are you implying that art interacts with nature?**

Yes. Art digs and interrogates nature and its potential. It admires the language of the earth. As an artist, I am in tune with the principles of the earth and nature such as trees and plants. This gives me the feelings to stick more to nature, which I am gladly doing now.

**How do people interact with your art to appreciate the concept and message, like in the 'Miracle Leaf'?**

It depends on the individual. My works are open field for individuals to see and understand their life-journey. My works are vessels to help in directing people towards what they are looking for.

Most often, I get remarks from my patrons about how different my works are. Sometimes, some people are not comfortable with my



works mainly because of the unconventional ideas I employ in my production. I have a lot of audience who criticize my works.

While some criticize my works, probably because of what they don't understand like in the 'Miracle Leaf', some other appreciate my efforts. I feel that some of my lecturers and mentors will be proud of my works, though they may not be like theirs because of the path and approach.

**What about exhibitions?**

I have had solo exhibition and also participated in group exhibitions. I participated in art exhibition at Alliance Francis Ikoyi, Lagos in 2023. The exhibition was titled "Unraveled". There was another exhibition at Rele Gallery at Ikoyi in December, 2025. In 2020 I participated in group exhibition in Abuja.

As for solo exhibition, I have done two exhibitions in my studio in partnership with Signature Art Gallery and Rele Gallery.

**Which of your works has made the most commercial success?**

I am not sure that I have had the best work. I might have created incredible works but each work I make is unique in its own nature and offers special values. So far, I have not painted the best work.

**Why the passion for art?**

For me, arts is a way of life. It is my power to express myself in any perspective. Arts challenges my character and views of the world. It gives me the edge to investigate about ideas or the environment I find myself.

**Where did you train and how did it influence your art?**

I studied at the Federal Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State. I majored in painting. I was drilled with the application of colours. I use colours to describe different meanings to emotions, time and also how to be a working artist; be able to work anywhere, in any mode.

The influence is obvious, especially in the way I work with time. My lecturers at Auchi Polytechnic were thorough and intentional in handling us as students. They showed practicality and ability in molding me artistically.

**My parents wanted me to be a priest, and as a boy, I also wanted to be a priest. But I changed my mind along the line and opted to become an artist**

I can work on canvas without limiting the process. I was inculcated with the discipline of arts, to study, interrogate and interact. I explore arts through colours and plants. I use arts ideas to study plants to understand how they interact with our ecosystem.

**What is your creative technique?**

For me, materiality comes from the mind. It is not just a physical object. It starts from thoughts, ideas or an interpretation. Most times, I use pigment and charcoal when I draw. At another time, I could infuse fabrics and threads, depending on the kind of idea I want to portray at the moment and what I want to create.

Materiality, for me, begins with ideas before it translates to physical content.

**How long have you been an artist?**

I started selling arts right from school. But if it is how long I have been in the business of arts in Lagos, I can say eight years now.

**Did your family support your dream of becoming an artist?**

When it comes to arts, most parents have reservations about their children studying arts in school. At first, most parents will frown at the children. I remember when I told my parents that I wanted to study Fine Art. Their reaction was not encouraging. I had a meeting with my father and he asked me how profitable and lucrative art was for my sustainability in life.

My parents wanted me to be a priest, and as a boy, I also wanted to be a priest. But I changed my mind along the line and opted to become an artist. At first, my parents objected and eventually agreed with me when I gained admission.

**If you were not an artist, what would you have been?**

I would have been doing a lot of things if I were not an artist. I had interest in priesthood, a military personnel, transporter, actor and photography. Yes, I do photography because you know that photography is arts too. Right now, I am a farmer too.

## "Zabi Biyu", AREWA24's hit drama series, returns with season 2

**A**REWA24, the leading Hausa language family entertainment and lifestyle television channel and production studio in Nigeria and West Africa, has returned after the Ramadan with "Zabi Biyu", its hit drama series, for a much-anticipated second season.

Following the success of its debut season, Zabi Biyu captivated audiences across Northern Nigeria and beyond with its compelling storytelling, rich cultural themes, and appealing characters. The series quickly became a fan favorite, praised for its authentic portrayal of love, choices, and the complexities of mod-

ern relationships within a traditional society.

Season 2 promises to build on the success with even more drama, deeper character development, and unexpected twists. Viewers can look forward to a continuation of the story as the characters navigate the consequences of their past decisions while facing new challenges that test their values, relationships, and ambitions.

Speaking on the new season, Celestine Umeibe, chief executive officer, AREWA24, said: "Zabi Biyu represents the kind of culturally resonant drama series we are commit-



ted to delivering to our audiences, especially the youth / young adults. The response to Season 1 was phenomenal, and we are thrilled to bring viewers an even more engaging and captivating Season 2. For our advertisers, they can connect with loyal viewers in a meaningful way, following a highly engaged TV audience across Hausa-speaking communities."

Produced by AREWA24's in-house production team, the series continues the network's mission to create high-quality original Hausa content that reflects the realities and aspirations of its audience.

"At the heart of Zabi Biyu is a story that reflects the lived experiences of our audience, evolving in a way that is more intense and emotionally layered, while staying true to the cultural nuances, language, and everyday realities that resonate across Hausa-speaking communities," Salisu Balarabe, director, Zabi Biyu, said.

Season 2 of Zabi Biyu premiered on March 22, 2026, and will air weekly on Sundays 8pm - 9pm (20:00H WAT) with additional viewing options available on the AREWA24 streaming platform (AREWA24 on DEMAND).

# Travel

## Radisson Blu Kigali: Growing choice destination for Nigerian travellers



OBINNA EMELIKE

**A**way from the lure of some global cities such as London and Dubai, an increasing number of African high-net-worth travellers are going after experiences that combine luxury, culture, and convenience, which are also within the continent.

With such curated experiences in mind, Kigali is quickly rising on that list as a one-stop-shop destinations.

Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda, which is truly the “Land of a Thousand Hills”, and often referred to as the “Singapore of Africa” for its cleanliness, safety, and rapid economic growth, has more to offer as a choice tourism destination in East Africa and Africa at large.

However, at the centre of the city’s African and global tourists’ appeal are world-class accommodation, services and MICE facilities offerings, which are being championed by Radisson Blu Hotel & Convention Centre, Kigali, which is simple iconic.

The landmark property known for its striking architecture and illuminated dome that has become a defining feature of the city’s skyline has, since its inception, become the new address for luxury, culture, and convenience, while its world-class meetings facilities have made it a sought-after MICE destination in East Africa.

With all these going for the hotel, Radisson Blu Hotel & Convention Centre has quietly become one of Kigali’s most sought-after addresses, especially for Nigerian travellers seeking a refined African getaway or business destination.

Space, comfort and elevated hospitality

Luxury for many travellers from Nigeria often means space, comfort and the ability to host. The Radisson Blu Kigali delivers this at scale.

With 291 rooms and suites, the hotel offers a range of accommodation designed for both



leisure and business travellers. At the top end, the 699-square-metre Presidential Suite provides expansive living space, including a private kitchenette, dining area and office space ideal for travellers who arrive with family, business partners or a full entourage.

Each room features a private balcony overlooking Kigali’s famous rolling hills, offering panoramic views that have become a favourite backdrop for visitors capturing the beauty of Rwanda’s capital.

### A culinary experience with global influence

Dining is another highlight of the Radisson Blu Kigali experience. At The Larder, guests can enjoy international cuisine alongside locally inspired flavours, including the hotel’s well-known “Super Breakfast,” which has become a signature offering for guests starting their day in the city.

For something different, Filini Restaurant & Bar, the hotel’s Italian dining concept, brings a contemporary European touch to Kigali’s dining scene, reflecting the city’s growing cosmopolitan character.

### At the centre of Kigali’s cultural and entertainment scene

One of the hotel’s biggest advantages is its location next to BK



Arena, one of Africa’s premier entertainment venues. The arena regularly hosts major international concerts, sporting events, and cultural gatherings.

Recent years have seen global stars and African icons perform in Kigali, attracting visitors from across the continent and positioning the city as an emerging hub for entertainment and events.

Guests staying at the Radisson Blu Kigali are perfectly placed to experience this vibrant scene, with the hotel often becoming a natural gathering point for visitors attending major events.

### Kigali’s growing social and nightlife scene

Beyond the hotel, Kigali offers a vibrant yet refined nightlife. The nearby district of Kimihurura is home to some of the city’s most popular lounges and social venues, where Afrobeats and Amapiano regularly set the soundtrack for Kigali’s evenings.

For Nigerian travellers, the cultural connection between West and East Africa is increasingly visible, with music, fashion and business communities naturally intersecting in the city.

### Wellness, golf and reset

For those looking to unwind, the hotel’s Izuba Wellness Spa offers a range of treatments designed for relaxation and recovery. Fa-

cilities include; treatment rooms, a sauna and steam rooms, providing a calm retreat after a day of meetings, exploring the city or attending events.

Kigali is also becoming a growing destination for golf enthusiasts, with nearby courses offering scenic fairways set against the city’s rolling hills. For many travellers who enjoy combining business or leisure trips with a round of golf, this adds another layer to Kigali’s appeal as a premium African destination.

### A new African luxury destination

As Kigali continues to grow as a centre for diplomacy, investment and tourism, the Radisson Blu Hotel & Convention Centre, Kigali remains one of the city’s defining hospitality destinations.

“Across Africa we are seeing a strong rise in intra-African travel, particularly from markets like Nigeria,” says Rob Kucera, general manager and district director, East Africa, Radisson Hotel Group. “Our goal is to offer guests a world-class experience while celebrating the unique energy and culture that make Kigali such a remarkable destination.”

For Nigerian travellers seeking luxury, culture and connectivity within Africa, Kigali is quickly emerging as an unexpected yet compelling choice and Radisson Blu Kigali is often where that journey begins.

### Enhanced connectivity (RwandAir Lagos–Kigali)

The enhanced flight connectivity between Lagos and Kigali, (moving to daily flights) by RwandAir, significantly strengthens economic ties between Nigeria and Rwanda. This development fosters greater collaboration in trade, tourism, and investment opportunities, while delivering reliable and convenient travel options for passengers.

As Rwanda’s leading 5-star conference hotel, the Radisson Blu Hotel & Convention Centre, Kigali is ideally positioned to welcome this influx of traffic. The

# Perspective

## MISA, death, and the humility of entrepreneurship

SIJIBOMI OGUNDELE

It was in 2022. I was on the road to Abeokuta for one of Governor Dapo Abiodun's campaigns when my phone rang. It was MISA. We had not spoken in close to a year, and at the time, we were on opposite sides in court. I answered, expecting the friction that comes with litigation. Instead, I was met with a voice that was calm, disciplined, and focused on business: "Suji," he said, "I know we are in court, but I need concrete. I have a project, and I need it now, and I hear you have the best."

I sat back, momentarily stunned by the pragmatism of the man. The sheer decisiveness, the brilliant separation of personal interest from professional necessity. He didn't care about the optics of calling an adversary; he cared about the integrity of his project. That was Oga MISA.

This grace was his signature. Our paths crossed again not long after, at a restaurant, where we were both involved in the same land deal. When we eventually sat across from each other, he said, almost immediately, "Yes, I know you are the one coming to buy the land. Don't worry, I will make sure you get it... but I will still beat you in court o."

We both laughed. It was a joke, but it carried the quiet weight of his character. Beneath the strength of a fierce competitor was a remarkably

decent man—a fantastic man in the truest, most unfashionable sense of the word. He possessed a rare kind of emotional intelligence: the ability to protect his interests firmly, without ever allowing malice to define how he dealt with people.

I watched him closely over the years, silently revering him not just as an elder, but as a grandmaster of the game. MISA had been moving heavy pieces on the volatile board of Nigerian real estate for three decades. He understood the mortar, the market, and the minds of long-standing clients who trusted him with their generational wealth.

Even when I was building the Lucrezia—committing heavily to a vision and refusing to compromise on the ultra-luxury standards of the Sujimoto DNA—while others thought I was overreaching, MISA reached out to caution me like a mentor. "Suji, this is not how to do a JV," he said. He advised that while my intense focus on the luxury market was bold, I could not afford to ignore the middle-income sector. The Nigerian economy, he explained, was too volatile to be anchored on luxury alone.

He did not have to say any of this. He had every reason to stay silent. But he didn't. He chose to guide, even in the middle of disagreement. And that, more than anything, told me the kind of man he was.

When I later heard that he had fallen ill and was battling serious medical challenges, the walls of our rivalry crumbled instantly. I reached out. I prayed

for him. But what stayed with me the most was what happened after. In 2025, during one of the most difficult periods in the history of Sujimoto, when we were under intense pressure and facing challenges that tested everything we had built, it was a truly difficult time for us.

During that period, Muritala—a man who was fighting his own battle for his health—reached out to me. Twice. He called to advise me. He called to pray for me. "Never give up," he said, his voice steady with the weight of experience. "This is entrepreneurship. It is tough... and real estate is the hardest of them all." To receive strength from a man dealing with his own struggle, yet still choosing to strengthen another, was a humbling revelation.

It reminded me that kindness is not a weakness; it is strength—and it is rare in its truest form.

Today, he is no longer with us. The man who taught me how to fight with grace has been called to a peace that surpasses all our earthly ambitions—reminding us, in the most humbling way, that the most expensive thing in life is the time we can no longer buy back.

I wish he were still here, so I could tell him that 90 percent of our debts are gone, and that Lucrezia now stands completed.

His passing is a sobering reminder of the absolute truth that governs us all: death is the one debt we cannot escape. It will come for all of us. And if that is where we are all headed, then the true measure of a man is not just in the high-rises he

leaves behind, but in the bridges he chooses not to burn.

**We must be good to one another—while we still can.**

To my fellow entrepreneurs—the disruptors, the fighters—what are we truly fighting for? This life is fragile, and it is far too short to carry the burden of unforgiveness. There is no need for the bitter wars we wage against one another. Let us settle our differences. Let us compete with grace. Let us move forward and build, rather than destroy.

I refuse to let the sun set on my pride. Life can call any of us home at any moment, and I do not want to leave this earth without making my peace. So, I will use this moment to say this, clearly and without hesitation: if I have offended you—knowingly or unknowingly—I am sorry. Please, call me. Let us settle it.

To the family Muritala leaves behind: please know that you have not only lost a father or a husband; we have lost a remarkable man. A true visionary. An inspiring leader. A builder. But beyond all he built, he was a decent man. Even those who stood across from him could not help but respect him.

Muritala Adegboyega Ibraheem taught me that you can stand against a man and still preserve his dignity. He showed me that the true measure of an entrepreneur is not just in what he builds, but in how he treats people along the way.

May Almighty Allah grant him Aljannah Firdaus and grant you the strength to carry forward his legacy. Rest well, my

brother and my friend.

Grit and Grace.



Dr. Ogundele is the group managing director of Sujimoto, the Czar of Luxury Real Estate Development, and the mastermind developer behind the renowned Giuliano. Our other audacious projects, such as the most sophisticated building in Banana Island, LucreziaBySujimoto, the grandiose Sujimoto Twin Tower, the tallest twin towers in Africa; the regal Queen Amina by Sujimoto, a monument to royal affluence; the magnificent high-rise LeonardoBySujimoto; the Sujimoto Farm; an advanced farm estate system that incorporates housing, farm hospitals, hotels, and markets within an ecosystem, creating opportunities for agro-tourism and affordable housing, among other projects that have etched an indelible imprint on Nigeria's skylines, a testament to Sujimoto's unrivalled mastery of modern-day engineering.

GODSWILL OKWUCHI

## Beyond visibility: Why Nigerian brands must build distribution before marketing

Across Nigeria's rapidly evolving business landscape, one recurring pattern continues to undermine the growth of otherwise promising brands: the overemphasis on visibility without a corresponding investment in distribution.

In recent years, marketing has become more accessible than ever. Social media platforms, influencer marketing, programmatic advertising, and digital content have created the impression that visibility alone can drive growth. While these tools are powerful, they often mask a deeper structural issue: many brands are not yet operationally ready for the demand they are trying to generate.

Marketing, in its true sense, is not just about awareness. It is about connecting a product to a customer in a way that leads to consistent and repeatable transactions. Without a strong distribution system, marketing becomes an amplifier of inefficiency rather than a driver of growth.

This challenge is particularly evident in sectors such as FMCG,



fintech, gaming, and retail in Nigeria. Brands invest heavily in campaigns that generate interest, clicks, and even initial conversions, but struggle with fulfillment, last-mile delivery, product availability, or customer experience. The result is a disconnect between brand promise and actual delivery.

Distribution, therefore, must be viewed as a strategic foundation,

not an afterthought. It includes supply chain efficiency, logistics partnerships, retail presence, digital fulfilment systems, and customer support structures. In markets like Nigeria, where infrastructure gaps still exist, distribution is not just an operational function; it is a competitive advantage.

For example, a brand running a high-impact campaign across

Lagos may generate thousands of interested customers within days. However, if the product is not available across key locations, or if delivery timelines are inconsistent, the campaign effectively works against the brand by creating unmet expectations.

The most successful companies globally understand this balance. They invest in distribution capabilities before scaling marketing efforts. In Nigeria, this principle is even more critical due to the complexities of the operating environment.

This is not to suggest that marketing should be deprioritised. Rather, it should be aligned with operational readiness. Marketing should amplify a system that is already capable of delivering value, not compensate for one that is still being built.

For business leaders, the question is no longer "How do we get more visibility?" but "Are we ready to deliver at the level our

visibility demands?"

As Nigeria's economy continues to digitise and consumer expectations rise, the brands that will win are not those that shout the loudest, but those that deliver the most consistently.

In the end, sustainable growth lies at the intersection of visibility and execution and distribution is where that execution begins.

Okwuchi writes from Lagos.



# Perspective

## Saint Lucia and Nigeria: A bold new partnership

ABDULFATAI ABDULSALAMI,  
Sokoto

In the wake of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's 2025 state visit, a historic shift is occurring in the middle of the Atlantic. Nigeria and Saint Lucia are transforming their relationship from symbolic ties to a thriving economic and diplomatic partnership. The appointment of H.E. Justin Nwabuisi as Saint Lucia's Honorary Consul to Nigeria marks a new era of strategic collaboration, focusing on trade, technology, and cultural exchange.

The primary challenge for any South-South partnership is logistics. To combat this, the newly established diplomatic framework prioritises direct shipping lanes, reducing transit times and costs. This will enable seamless trade between the two nations, boosting economic growth and development. Digital infrastructure is also a key focus, with plans to invest in integrated tracking systems and harmonized regulatory standards.

Saint Lucia's expertise in sustainable blue economy and Nigeria's industrial innovation will drive growth. The two nations will collaborate on ma-

rine conservation, responsible fisheries, and eco-friendly port facilities. This partnership will set a global standard for maritime cooperation, showcasing the potential of South-South collaboration.

The cultural synergy between Nigeria and Saint Lucia is a potent "soft power" asset. The vibrant energy of Nollywood and Afrobeats will merge with the world-renowned Saint Lucia Jazz and Arts Festival. This collaboration will fuel the "Orange Economy," driving tourism and job creation, and bringing African and Caribbean artistic expressions to a unified global stage.

The partnership includes heritage tourism, genealogical support, and visa facilitation, reconnecting Saint Lucians with Nigerian roots. Many Saint Lucians trace their ancestry to the Bight of Biafra and Senegambia, making this initiative a meaningful way to honor ancestors and empower future generations.

The Consulate is spearheading a "Heritage Tourism" initiative, highlighting historical sites such as Calabar, Bonny, and Badagry. This will provide a unique cultural experience for Saint Lucians and Nigerians, promoting

“  
Saint Lucia is officially open for business with Nigeria. The bridge is built, and the journey has just begun  
”

cross-cultural understanding and exchange.

The appointment of H.E. Justin Nwabuisi and the launch of the dedicated portal (.nfo@consulstlucia.ng) marks the official beginning of this chapter. "The timing reflects a convergence of national interests that makes collaboration imperative," says the Consulate. With this partnership, Nigeria and Saint Lucia prove the Atlantic is a highway, not a barrier.



rier.

The partnership will have a significant impact on trade and investment. Saint Lucia's advanced manufacturing sector will benefit from Nigeria's vast consumer market, while Nige-

ria will gain from Saint Lucia's expertise in sustainable development. This collaboration will drive economic growth, create jobs, and improve living standards.

The cultural exchange be-

tween Nigeria and Saint Lucia will be a key aspect of the partnership. Saint Lucians will have access to Nigerian markets, and Nigerian artists will gain exposure in the Caribbean. This exchange will promote cross-cultural understanding, creativity, and innovation.

The partnership is a testament to the power of South-South collaboration. By working together, Nigeria and Saint Lucia are creating a brighter future for their citizens. This partnership will drive economic growth, promote cultural exchange, and set a global standard for maritime cooperation.

With this partnership, Nigeria and Saint Lucia are writing a new chapter in their history. They are transforming their relationship from symbolic ties to a thriving economic and diplomatic partnership. The future is bright, and the possibilities are endless.

As the two nations continue to work together, they will create a legacy of mutual respect and shared prosperity. Saint Lucia is officially open for business with Nigeria. The bridge is built, and the journey has just begun.

HOPE MOSES-ASHIKE

## Women power SMEs but lack capital to scale, says GTBank CEO

Women are central to the growth of Nigeria's small and medium-sized enterprises but remain significantly constrained by limited access to capital, Miriam Olusanya, Guaranty Trust Bank's managing director/chief executive officer, said on Thursday, calling for a deliberate redesign of the financial system to unlock their full potential.

Speaking at the Association of Professional Women Bankers (APWB) Women's Marquee event in Lagos, Olusanya said women-led businesses account for a substantial share of economic activity across Nigeria and other African markets, yet are persistently underserved by formal financial institutions.

"Women are not just participants in the financial system; they are multipliers," she said. "When women gain access to finance, the benefits extend beyond individual businesses to households and entire communities. But today, many of these businesses remain undercapitalised and unable to scale."

Her remarks come at a time when Nigeria's financial system is undergoing rapid transformation, driven by digital payments, data-led lending models and broader financial inclusion efforts. While these shifts have expanded access for millions, Olusanya noted that the gains have been uneven, with women disproportionately excluded from credit and formal financial services.

She pointed out that finan-

cial exclusion in Nigeria remains deeply gendered, with women more likely to operate in informal sectors, less likely to have access to structured credit, and underrepresented in decision-making roles across banking and finance.

Despite significant growth in digital transactions, now running into hundreds of trillions of naira annually, she said large segments of the population, particularly women-led enterprises, continue to face barriers in accessing finance needed for expansion.

Olusanya argued that addressing this gap is not just a social imperative but a commercial opportunity for banks and financial institutions. "Inclusion is not charity; it is a growth strategy," she said, adding that expanding access to underserved segments would deepen markets and drive sustainable economic growth.

She identified access to credit as a critical constraint, noting that traditional collateral-based lending models often fail to reflect the realities of informal and small-scale businesses. Instead, she called for greater adoption of data-driven approaches that assess cash flows, transaction histories and business ecosystems to design more responsive financing solutions.

"The future of credit lies



in better use of data," she said. "This is about aligning finance with how businesses actually operate, not lowering standards but improving insight."

Beyond access to capital, Olusanya highlighted structural barriers that continue to limit women's participation in finance, including cultural constraints, lower levels of digital access and literacy, and limited representation in leadership and policy-making roles.

She stressed that true financial disruption must go beyond technology to address these systemic challenges. "Disruption is not just about apps or

platforms; it is about expanding access, reducing costs, improving transparency, and bringing more people into the formal economy," she said.

Drawing on traditional financial practices such as informal savings groups and rotating credit systems, Olusanya noted that women have long played a role in building resilient, community-based financial structures. Today, she said, these models are increasingly being translated into digital platforms, micro-lending tools and payment solutions tailored to real household and business needs.

"This is innovation grounded in lived experience," she said. "When women design financial products, they start with human needs, not technology."

She also emphasised the need for stronger institutions to support scale, noting that innovation alone is insufficient without capital strength, governance and trust. "Financial systems are built on credibility, and credibility must be earned over time," she said.

Olusanya linked the push for inclusion to broader economic opportunities, including rising intra-African trade, which is expected to increase demand for efficient payment systems, trade finance and settlement infrastructure.

She added that recent reforms aimed at strengthening Nigeria's banking system underscore the importance of stability in driving sustainable disruption. "Disruption built on instability is fragile, but disruption built on strength is transformative," she said.

Ultimately, she said, leadership will determine whether the financial system evolves to meet the needs of underserved groups, particularly women-led businesses.

"The question is not whether disruption will happen, but who it will serve," Olusanya said. "If we are intentional

about inclusion, we can unlock significant economic value and ensure that growth is both broad-based and sustainable."

In her opening remarks, Rafiat Onitiri, chairman of the Association of Professional Women Bankers, has urged women in the financial sector to embrace innovation and position themselves as drivers of transformation in an evolving global economy.

Rafiat Onitiri, chairman of the Association of Professional Women Bankers, said the financial services industry in Nigeria and globally is undergoing a significant shift driven by innovation, stressing that disruption should be seen as a force for positive transformation rather than instability. She noted that while traditional banks have made considerable progress, the rise of fintechs has accelerated change by challenging existing models and expanding what is possible. "Disruption is not about negative destruction; it is about positive transformation," she said, adding that the industry must continue to evolve in ways that improve access, efficiency and impact.

She emphasised that the current wave of innovation from artificial intelligence to digital finance has created opportunities for a new generation of female leaders to emerge and shape the future of the sector. According to her, many women are already leveraging these changes to drive inclusion and deliver practical solutions across the financial ecosystem.

# Perspective



DAMILARE DAVOLA

## Introduction

In Africa, just as malaria is rampant and prevalent, so is, food crisis. It is one of the most urgent challenges affecting human lives in the 21st century and even more pitiful for a continent with several evidences of being agriculturally virile. High farming practices and agricultural ventures cannot support livelihoods in Africa. Over 60% of its population are found struggling with food insecurity. You know the statistics are bad when The United Nations' State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2025 report reveals that over 307 million Africans, which is more than 20% of the continent's population, were chronically undernourished in 2024. Projections indicate that by 2030, Africa could be home to nearly 60% of the world's most hungry individuals. Factors like conflict, climate shocks, economic pressures, and systemic inefficiencies have all taken a toll on food systems, while cuts to humanitarian aid are making it even harder to respond effectively.

Top agro-economic analysts are in a prime position to create data-driven, sustainable solutions. By identifying the root causes, shaping policy, and directing investments, these analysts

## Agro-economic analysis: How top analysts can engineer sustainable solutions to Africa's food crisis

can help steer Africa's food systems towards resilience, fairness, and lasting food security.

### Structural drivers of Africa's food insecurity

To grasp Africa's food crisis, we need to understand its economic and environmental roots:

One. Widespread Hunger and Food Insecurity: Recent UN reports show that hunger in Africa is more common than in other parts of the world. Over 20% of people don't have enough to eat — more than double the world average. In areas hit by conflict, like West and Central Africa, food shortages are likely to affect about 50 million people during lean times. This happens because of fighting harsh weather, and high food costs.

Two. Conflict and Safety Issues: Long-lasting fights — in countries like Nigeria, Mali, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo — force millions to leave their homes. This messes up farming and food markets. For instance, the UN's World Food Programme warned that northeast Nigeria was facing its worst hunger problem in ten years. This was because less aid was coming in at the same time as ongoing attacks by militants, which made it much harder to grow and get food.

Three. Climate Variability and Extreme Weather: Particularly in semi-arid areas, climate change exacerbates droughts, floods, and unpredictable seasons. For smallholder farmers, who make up the majority of African agriculture, these occurrences lower yields, deteriorate soils, and raise production costs and uncertainty.

Four. Underfunded Agriculture: Despite the importance of agriculture, food security sectors receive a disproportionately small share of development financing (as low as ~3% compared with 33% for humanitarian aid), which restricts

market development, infrastructure, and technology adoption. When taken as a whole, these structural factors show that Africa's food crisis is a long-term economic problem that calls for comprehensive, empirically supported solutions rather than just a short-term emergency.

### Analyst-led strategies for sustainable food systems

Top analysts must approach the crisis not as isolated problems but with holistic, cross-sector strategies. Below are two domains where analysts can engineer sustainable solutions:

#### One. Data-Led Policy and Institutional Innovations

Analysts perform a role of critical importance in converting raw data into actionable insights for public policy. Governments and regional bodies in the African continent require high-quality, timely data systems that enable real-time monitoring of hunger indicators, crop conditions, prices, and livestock health. They also help policymakers anticipate disruptions and trigger targeted interventions through predictive analytics and modern data platforms — using satellite imagery, weather forecasts, and market prices.

#### Two. Transformative Inclusive Value Chain.

To achieve sustainable food security, we must improve the food value chains which goes from production through to consumption also which in turn will see farmers get fair price for their produce, reduce waste, and access markets better.

a. Empowering Smallholders: Most in Africa we see that the majority of food producers are smallholders. What we do see is that by accessing quality inputs, extension services, and affordable finance we may see increases in production. Also, that which analysts can do is put in place mobile platforms which in turn will

connect smallholders to buyers, input suppliers, and credit markets.

b. Post-Harvest Infrastructure: Analysts put forward that we see storage, processing, and transport issues. We see that development of cold storage, local processing centers, and rural road networks play a key role in reducing post-harvest losses which in some regions may account for 30-40% of total produce loss from farm to market.

c. Climate-Smart Agriculture: Through the use of climate smart practices which include agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and drought tolerant seed varieties we see growth in productivity and resilience. Also, by looking at pilot programs and cost benefit issues we are able to put forth which practices scale and are appropriate to the context.

Africa's food problems are deep-seated; they come from wars, flaky weather, not enough money put into things, and clunky systems. The best agro-economic analysts are like skilled builders when it comes to making lasting, positive changes.

Analysts can really help Africa grow for the long haul. By pushing for policies based on real data and making sure everyone in the food supply chain benefits, they can build strong food systems. This means fewer people go hungry and folks in rural areas earn more.

•*Davola is a seasoned Investment Banking and Business Analyst with extensive expertise in technological research, strategic analysis, and emerging market trends. Currently serving at Bank of America, he leverages his deep analytical acumen to drive data-driven decision-making, optimise investment strategies, and enhance operational efficiencies.*



DAVE BARO-THOMAS

## Dealing with insecurity beyond campaign rhetoric

incompetence—turning insecurity into the central campaign issue. It worked. The promise was clear: fix insecurity, restore order, reclaim the state. But nearly a decade later, the results tell a more troubling story—we have slid deeper into the abyss.

At the time, many Nigerians believed that General Muhammadu Buhari, a former military ruler and civil war veteran, possessed the discipline and strategic depth to end the crisis swiftly. His supporters reinforced this belief, insisting that the problem persisted only because the incumbent government lacked both will and integrity. The electorate bought into that narrative.

With strong international alignment and a relentless domestic campaign, the message resonated. Power changed hands. But more importantly, a precedent was set: insecurity had become a decisive electoral weapon—a trump card to be deployed from one political dispensation to the next.

Since then, the crisis has not only persisted; it has metastasised. What was once concentrated in parts of the North-East and North-West has spread across the country, assuming new forms and labels. No region is entirely insulated.

For the average Nigerian, this raises a fundamental question: how can a problem so central to national survival remain so resistant to solution, despite massive budgetary allocations and repeated political promises? Increasingly, insecurity has become less of a governance priority and more of a seasonal campaign tool—recycled, repackaged, and redeployed during elections.

Government narratives continue to emphasise progress—terrorists neutralised, territories reclaimed, threats degraded. Yet, on the ground, a different reality unfolds: resurgent attacks, rising kidnappings, and communities routinely displaced. The disconnect is stark.

It is therefore not unreasonable to ask: why does insecurity appear to intensify around electoral cycles? Some analysts point to longstanding allegations that political actors have, at various times, enabled or exploited armed groups for strategic advantage. Whether through tacit tolerance, political patronage, or outright complicity, the consequences have been devastating. When such forces outlive their political usefulness, they mutate into enduring national threats.

For the electorate, the implications are sobering. Campaign promises are no longer

sufficient. What is required is transparency—identifying and exposing networks that finance and sustain violence. Where the state appears reluctant, opposition forces and civil society must step in to demand accountability.

Ultimately, Nigerians are not just weary—they are disillusioned. Kidnapping has evolved into a multi-billion-naira enterprise. Terror operates with alarming regularity. Insurgency shows signs of resurgence rather than retreat. Yet, the political class continues to frame the crisis in convenient soundbites.

This must change.

Any government genuinely committed to ending insecurity must begin with introspection. It must strengthen intelligence architecture, address the complex realities of conflict infiltration, and decisively dismantle the financial and logistical pipelines that sustain violent groups. Equally critical is tightening border controls and curbing the proliferation of small arms.

Until these structural issues are confronted head-on, insecurity will remain what it has increasingly become—a tool of political convenience rather than a problem of urgent resolution. And Nigerians will continue to pay the price.

Whoever controls the insecurity narrative in Nigeria today often controls the political momentum. Ahead of the 2015 presidential election, the All Progressives Congress (APC) built a formidable campaign around this reality and took the Jonathan-led administration to the cleaners. In doing so, it fundamentally altered the complexion of Nigeria's political landscape.

Historically, Nigeria has grappled with violence. The instability that crippled the Western Region in the First Republic was severe. Yet, it pales in comparison to the scale of terrorism, banditry, and kidnapping for ransom that gripped the nation in the lead-up to 2015. The country was, by all practical measures, under siege.

Against this backdrop, the opposition weaponised language—cluelessness and

# Perspective



**KAMEEL 'DEMOLA DADA**

**T**he call for state police has gained renewed traction as Nigeria faces increasingly complex internal security threats, including kidnapping, banditry, insurgency, communal violence, and organised crime.

While the idea of state policing merits serious consideration within a federal system, Nigeria must proceed with caution. At this stage of national development, the institutional capacity required to sustain an effective decentralised policing structure may not yet be fully in place.

A key concern lies in the risk of political control over state-level security institutions. Nigeria's political environment remains highly competitive, and in many states the institutional safeguards required to prevent the misuse of law enforcement powers are still evolving.

Without strong constitutional and administrative protections, state police forces could potentially be influenced by local political actors, thereby undermining their neutrality and the rule of law.

Equally important is the uneven governance capacity across Nigeria's states. Our federation is characterised by wide disparities in fiscal strength, administrative capability, and institutional maturity.

While some states may have the capacity to maintain professional security institutions, others may struggle to fund, train, and properly supervise a police force. Introducing state policing under these conditions risks creating an uneven

## State police: A strategic path forward for Nigeria

and fragmented security architecture.

Nigeria must also confront the reality of significant ungoverned or weakly governed spaces across parts of the country. In several regions, particularly in rural and remote areas, the presence of government authority remains limited.

These environments require coordinated national security responses, intelligence integration, and unified command structures. Fragmenting the policing framework before addressing these territorial security gaps may inadvertently complicate national security coordination.

Perhaps most importantly, Nigeria must focus on strengthening the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), which remains the country's primary institution for internal security. The NPF requires significant modernization to align with contemporary global policing standards.

Recruitment systems must be strengthened to attract capable personnel, training institutions must be modernised, officer welfare and compensation must be improved, and officers must be equipped with modern tools and technology necessary to perform their duties effectively.

A strong, professional, and well-equipped national police force remains the cornerstone of any successful policing architecture. From an operational standpoint, experience within the security advisory sector consistently reinforces the importance of institutional discipline before structural expansion.

Organizations such as Provisio Global Consulting observe that effective security systems depend on strong governance structures, professional standards, and coordinated command

frameworks. These principles should guide Nigeria's approach to policing reform.

This is therefore a moment for strategic patience and national coordination, not institutional fragmentation. Rather than rushing toward the immediate creation of state police, Nigeria's national security stakeholders including the Presidency, the National Assembly, NPF, state governments, and policy institutions should focus on building the enabling conditions that would allow such a system to succeed in the future.

### Key recommendations before considering state police

Transform and modernize the Nigerian Police Force (NPF): The immediate national priority should be the comprehensive reform of the NPF. This includes modern recruitment standards, improved training infrastructure, better officer welfare and compensation, and the provision of modern equipment and technology consistent with global policing standards.

Establish a national policing standards framework: Before decentralisation can be considered, Nigeria must develop a unified national policing doctrine that defines operational standards, training requirements, accountability mechanisms, and command structures for all policing institutions.

In this regard, the 2020 Police Act provides an important legislative foundation and should be revisited and strengthened where necessary to reinforce a comprehensive National Policing Standards Framework capable of guiding future reforms.

Strengthen governance and institutional

oversight: Independent oversight bodies, civilian review systems, and judicial safeguards must be strengthened to ensure that policing authority, whether federal or state, remains accountable to the rule of law and public trust.

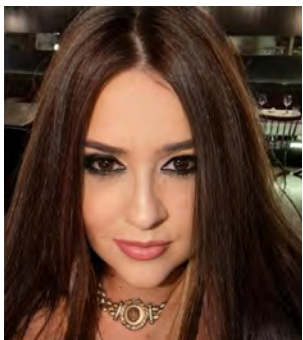
Reassert government presence in ungoverned spaces: Nigeria must prioritize the stabilization of areas where state authority remains weak. Strengthening intelligence coordination, expanding security infrastructure, and improving federal security presence will help restore government control and reduce security vulnerabilities.

The discussion around state police is an important and necessary one for Nigeria's future. However, the long-term success of such a system will depend on strong institutions, disciplined governance, and professional security standards.

For now, the most patriotic and strategic course of action is to strengthen the institutions we already have, build the necessary safeguards, and create the conditions that will allow any future decentralization of policing to succeed.

Nigeria's security challenges demand unity of purpose, institutional discipline, and thoughtful reform. With coordinated leadership and sustained commitment from national stakeholders, the country can build a policing architecture that is both effective and worthy of public trust.

*•Dada is a security and foreign policy professional and the principal and managing director of Provisio Global Consulting, an integrated security solutions firm specializing in security strategy and framework development, technical advisory, and operational security.*



**LEILAH ZAHARADEEN**

**T**True influence is not measured by volume, but by outcomes. It is defined by the ability to translate vision into enduring results. In this regard, H.R.H. Princess Lutzk, Princess of Távora, Duchess of Borbón-Braganza, Countess of Castro, Dr. Celia Cristina stands as a distinctive figure, operating at the intersection of historical legacy and modern executive leadership.

Her profile reflects a rare synthesis of monarchic heritage and corporate acumen. Drawing upon her background in diplomacy, sociology, and business, Dr. Rubini directs her expertise toward actionable humanitarian development. Her leadership is neither symbolic nor ceremonial; it is operational, structured, and outcome-driven.

As President of Andromeda Light Cities and DOSM Foundation Corp, and Chairwoman of Trinity Trading Groups, she has demonstrated a sustained commitment to large-scale initiatives across technology, logistics, and infrastructure. These efforts are not merely economic in orientation, but are designed to integrate growth with human development, an approach that reflects both strategic foresight and social responsibility.

## Substance over spectacle: Understanding the work of Princess Cristina Rubini

On the diplomatic front, Ambassador Rubini's engagements have extended to collaboration with the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where she has been involved in facilitating international cooperation, including the transfer of technology across borders. Her contributions have also intersected with legislative processes, with reported involvement in the drafting and approval of key legal frameworks in Brazil, including reforms relating to immigration, harm reduction, and alternative food systems.

Her global influence is further reflected in her role as World President of the Council of Empowered Ladies International (CELLI), where she oversees a network of approximately 86,000 women across 52 nations. Under her leadership, the organisation has pursued measurable outcomes, including advocacy efforts that have contributed to legal reforms, such as custody law adjustments in Egypt. This reflects a model of philanthropy that is structured with executive precision rather than symbolic engagement.

Her contributions have been recognised internationally, with peace and leadership awards conferred across multiple regions, including the Philippines, Sweden, Japan, and South Korea, further underscoring the breadth of her global engagement.

In an age increasingly defined by immediacy and spectacle, there remain individuals whose influence is neither loud nor transient, but measured, deliberate, and enduring. Princess Celia Cristina Rubini stands among such figures, her work distinguished by intellectual depth, global engagement, and a sustained commitment to purposeful inquiry.

Her career reflects not merely the pursuit of academic distinction, but a broader dedication to applying knowledge in addressing contemporary challenges. In this respect, she occupies a space that bridges scholarship and societal relevance, embodying a model of engagement that is both thoughtful and impactful.

At the core of her work lies a commitment to research that extends beyond theoretical abstraction. Her contributions suggest a deliberate effort to position knowledge as a tool not only for understanding, but for improvement. This approach situates her within a tradition of scholars who view intellectual inquiry as a means of engaging with the complexities of the modern world.

Her academic pursuits demonstrate an ability to traverse interdisciplinary boundaries, engaging issues that cut across social, cultural, and institutional frameworks. Such breadth lends her work a relevance that extends well beyond the confines of any single discipline.

The scope of Princess Rubini's impact is most evident in her international engagements. Her work has resonated across multiple regions, reflecting a pattern of involvement that is both diverse and sustained. Through academic collaboration, institutional participation, and diplomatic exchange, she has contributed to conversations that transcend geographic and cultural divides.

Central to her approach is a grounding in human-centred values. Across her engagements, there is a consistent emphasis on dignity, equity, and social progress. Her work reflects an understanding that research and leadership must re-

main connected to the lived realities of individuals and communities.

In a contemporary landscape where visibility is often mistaken for influence, Princess Rubini offers a contrasting model. Her authority is derived not from prominence alone, but from consistency, intellectual rigour, and corporate integrity. This quiet authority has enabled her to build credibility over time, earning respect across professional and international circles.

As global dynamics continue to evolve, the relevance of Dr. Rubini's work remains undiminished. Her ability to adapt to emerging challenges while maintaining a coherent intellectual and strategic framework speaks to the strength of her vision. She recognises that lasting impact is seldom the result of sudden transformation, but of measured, deliberate, and enduring action.

Her career stands as a testament to the value of disciplined inquiry, structured leadership, and sustained engagement. It reflects a philosophy grounded in continuity rather than immediacy, and in substance rather than spectacle.

To consider the work of Dr. Cristina Rubini is to encounter a model of influence that is both understated and far-reaching. Her contributions, though not always accompanied by spectacle, carry a significance that extends well beyond the present moment.

In a world increasingly drawn to the transient, her example serves as a reminder that true impact is cultivated over time, through knowledge, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to the advancement of humanity.

# Perspective



ROY CHIKWEM

On Nigerian social media, one pattern stands out: Nigerians living in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, and parts of Europe frequently post videos and threads describing how hard life abroad has become. Yet across Australia and New Zealand, Nigerians remain noticeably quieter. The disparity

raises an important question: why does the same Nigerian migration story produce such different levels of public frustration? Experts and everyday migrants point to a mix of economic environment, job markets, immigration pathways, and lifestyle differences.

#### Cost of living reality vs. expectations

For many Nigerians in Europe and North America, life abroad feels tougher than expected. In London, a Nigerian student pays £1,100–£1,400 per month for a single room, often sharing bathrooms and kitchens with several occupants. In Dublin, a Nigerian family of four spends nearly €2,500 in monthly rent, excluding childcare. In Toronto, the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment is now CAD

\$2,300–\$2,600 per month, with grocery costs up almost 20percent since 2021. Nigerian nurses in the US often work two or three 12-hour shifts per week to keep up with rent, car payments, and health insurance.

By contrast, in Australia and New Zealand, a Nigerian professional in Perth typically pays AUD \$450–\$600 per week for a full

## Why Nigerian migrants thrive in Australia but struggle in Europe and North America

apartment, not a single room. In Auckland, families report spending NZD \$650–\$750 per week for 2–3-bedroom homes, but with wages that comfortably match the cost. Minimum wage standards in Australia (currently AUD \$24.95/hour) and New Zealand (currently NZD \$23.15/hour) are among the highest globally.

This wage-to-cost balance means Nigerians in Australia and New Zealand stabilise financially faster and have fewer reasons to take frustrations online.

#### Immigration pathways and stress levels

Immigration systems play a major role in emotional stress. Nigerian students in the UK face strict 20-hour weekly work limits, leaving many unable to pay rising bills. Post-study visas are uncertain, and

some students are forced to leave after two years despite heavy investment. Canada's massive backlog means some Nigerians wait 2–3 years for permanent residency, leading to anxiety and unstable employment.

Meanwhile, in Australia and New Zealand, skilled Nigerian workers often arrive with visas that allow full-time work and clear pathways to permanent residency.

Occupations like nursing, engineering, IT, education, construction and social work are on government priority lists, meaning faster approvals. A Nigerian social worker in Melbourne typically secures PR within 1–2 years, while a similar applicant in Ontario could wait 3–5 years due to volume and backlog. A predictable migration journey leads to fewer public complaints.

#### Job market differences

Nigerians in Europe and North America often struggle to break into their professions due to credential barriers, saturated labour

markets or the need for “local experience.”

A Nigerian engineer in the UK may work as a care assistant for years before obtaining certification. In Canada, even master's degree holders often begin their journey in “survival jobs” like warehouse work, security or Uber driving. In the US, licensing and re-certification delays push many qualified professionals into unrelated roles.

In Australia and New Zealand, the job market actively pulls in skilled migrants because of labour shortages. Nigerian nurses, teachers, social workers and engineers frequently secure jobs within weeks of arrival. Many Nigerian families report transitioning into middle-income lifestyles faster than friends in

the UK or Canada. Australia currently lists over 110 occupations on its Skilled Shortage list, and New Zealand lists over 80, many of which match common Nigerian qualifications. This strong alignment between skills and employer demand reduces frustration and increases satisfaction.

#### Community culture and social media behaviour

Nigerians in the UK, USA and Canada form some of the largest Nigerian diaspora communities worldwide, and their social media presence is louder and more influential. TikTok trends like “UK struggle life” or “Canada no dey easy” regularly go viral.

Nigerian migrants in the US frequently share videos about multiple shift jobs and high healthcare costs. WhatsApp groups in Europe circulate daily

warnings about rising rents and unstable job markets. In contrast, Nigerians in Australia and New Zealand form smaller, tight-knit communities that often prioritise privacy, stability and low-profile living. The culture in

both countries also discourages public complaining. A quieter online community naturally produces fewer viral frustration posts.

#### Quality of life and work-life balance

Australia and New Zealand consistently rank among the top countries for overall quality of life, safety, access to nature, and family-friendly policies. Australian cities like Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide regularly appear in the Top 10 Most Liveable Cities in the world. New Zealand offers guaranteed paid parental leave, strong public schooling, and one of the safest environments globally. Many Nigerians report being able to leave work at 4–5 pm and spend evenings with family, something often impossible for migrants doing night shifts in the UK or Canada. One Nigerian father in Wellington said: “My children walk to school safely. I earn enough. Life is peaceful. Why should I complain on the internet?”

#### The takeaway

The global Nigerian diaspora is far from uniform. The louder frustrations coming from Europe, the UK, Canada and the USA are rooted in real challenges, high cost of living, unstable immigration pathways, and job barriers. The quieter satisfaction from Australia and New Zealand reflects stronger professional outcomes, clearer migration systems, and calmer lifestyles. Same homeland. Different destinations.

Different lived experiences and social media simply amplify the contrast.

•*Dr. Chikwem is an immigration expert practising in both Australia and New Zealand, and Co-Founder of RAC Migration and Education Services, providing strategic advice and comprehensive migration services.*



LINDA OCHUGBUA

## From survival to structure: What growth really demands from business owners

Survival mode prioritises speed and reaction. Owners focus on immediate revenue, urgent problems, and personal effort. Decisions are centralised. Knowledge sits in one person's head. When demand rises, cracks appear. Missed deadlines, delayed payments, and inconsistent service erode trust. The business depends on energy rather than capacity.

This is the stage where many founders feel busy but stuck. Long hours do not translate into progress. Each gain creates new pressure. The business moves only as fast as the owner can push it. Survival keeps the enterprise alive, but it does not prepare it for scale. Without systems and shared responsibility, growth increases risk rather than reducing it.

#### Structure is the turning point

Structure begins when owners step back from constant execution and design how the business operates. This shift requires deliberate choices. Delegation becomes essential. Tasks move to people with defined roles. Processes are written down. Financial data is reviewed regularly. Decisions rely on information rather than instinct.

Financial discipline is central to this transition. Growth demands budgeting, forecasting, and clarity on margins. Owners must understand how money moves through the business and plan beyond the next month. This reduces uncertainty and supports in-

formed investment.

Teams are another requirement. Hiring is not about headcount but capability. Bringing in skills the owner lacks, allows the business to function without constant oversight. Clear accountability replaces informal arrangements. Trust grows through structure, not proximity.

Systems support consistency. Tools for accounting, project management, and customer engagement reduce reliance on memory and improvisation. When processes are repeatable, quality becomes predictable. This is what allows a business to handle higher volumes without losing control.

Structure also changes how owners relate to customers. Instead of chasing transactions, the focus shifts to retention and feedback. Standards replace personal intervention. This builds relationships that last beyond individual interactions.

#### What growth demands from owners

Growth places clear demands on business owners. First, it requires a defined direction. Long-term goals guide priorities and prevent distraction. Strategy replaces constant reaction.

Second, it requires acceptance of discomfort. Letting go of tasks, refusing poor opportunities, and addressing underperformance are necessary. Control gives way to leader-

ship.

Third, it requires attention to risk and compliance. As businesses expand, legal and regulatory obligations increase. Ignoring them exposes the enterprise to avoidable damage. Structure protects both reputation and continuity.

Finally, growth demands leadership development. Owners cannot be the only decision-makers. Investing in training and mentoring builds a layer of leadership that sustains operations and enables further expansion.

The shift from survival to structure is not immediate. It involves cost, learning, and adjustment. Yet the alternative is stagnation or collapse. Businesses that make this transition gain stability, predictable performance, and the ability to plan. Owners regain time and clarity. Teams function with purpose.

•*Ochugbua is a results-driven media and marketing leader with 17+ years of experience, including 12 in the media industry. As Digital Sales Manager at BusinessDay Media, she drives digital revenue growth, leads high-performing teams, and delivers innovative advertising solutions. A certified APCON member and award-winning professional, Linda is passionate about mentorship, storytelling, and building transformative platforms in Africa's media space.*

Business ownership often begins with escape. Many founders leave paid work in search of control over their time, income, and purpose. What follows is usually survival. Cash flow dictates decisions. Owners chase customers, manage operations, and solve problems alone. This phase is necessary, but it cannot sustain growth. Without a shift in how the business is run, survival becomes a ceiling rather than a starting point.

Across markets, the pattern is consistent. In Nigeria, fintech adoption has surged — with over 200 startups and nearly half of Africa's fintech deals concentrated there — yet many founders struggle to convert momentum into stability. In the United Kingdom, official data shows that between 50% and 70% of businesses fail within three years. These outcomes are not driven only by market conditions. They reflect the limits of operating without structure. Growth is not simply expansion. It is the ability to perform consistently as complexity increases.

**Survival builds momentum, not capacity**

# Perspective



CHASTE INEGBEDION &  
EYITAYO OGUNMOLA

## Why fintech founders and regulators still talk past each other and how the Spring Meetings could change that

Plans are nothing; planning is everything.” It is a line often quoted in boardrooms and strategy retreats. But the person who said it almost certainly never tried to launch a fintech product across Nigeria’s regulatory landscape while keeping a pan-African expansion timeline and doing it securely, at scale, with the right operational architecture.

We talk about crypto, web3, and the next generation of payment rails as if they exist in a frictionless digital realm. In reality, the relationship between fintech founders; especially at pre-seed and seed stage and their regulators often feels like two parallel lines: close, but never meeting. The paradox is stark: Nigeria is home to Moniepoint, Flutterwave, and a host of homegrown innovators that have built the infrastructure moving billions of dollars across the continent. Yet the policy conversations that determine whether the next wave of startups scales ‘or stalls’ still happen in silos.

The recent Africa Capital Forum, hosted by the Central Bank of Nigeria and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on the sidelines of President Bola Tinubu’s State Visit to London, offered a glimpse of what structured engagement can look like. CBN Governor Olayemi Cardoso used the platform to announce a new Payments System Vision for Nigeria, aimed at positioning the country as a regional leader in digital and cross-border payments. Minister of Finance Wale Edun, represented by his Special Adviser Sanyade Okoli, underscored that the government alone cannot fund growth: “We need to work with partners who will bring the sticky equity capital.” Deputy Governors Muhammad Sani Abdullahi and Philip Ikeazor drilled into the reopening of capital markets, fintech’s role in remittances, and the resilience required to manage risk.

But even as these high-level conversations take place, a critical piece of the puzzle remains under-represented: the technical talent that actually builds, secures, and scales the solutions. Cybersecurity experts, frac-

tional AI program managers, and senior product leaders are the ones who translate policy ambition into deployable infrastructure. Without them, even the most visionary regulatory frameworks remain theoretical.

The upcoming World Bank Spring Meetings in April 2026 offer a rare chance to break the silo. For one week, Washington, D.C., becomes the global capital of economic policy. Finance ministers, central bank governors, development financiers, and private sector leaders converge. For Nigerian fintech founders from early-stage crypto protocols to scaling payment companies; it is the ideal backdrop for something that has been missing for too long: a structured, high-level dialogue where they can pitch their software solutions directly to the policymakers who define the rules of their industry. But this time, they should not come alone. They should come with their technical leads, their security architects, and the program managers who know how to turn a regulatory guideline into a production-grade system.

Not long ago, we sat with a group of pre-seed and seed founders preparing for an international roadshow. Their pitch decks were pristine. Their unit economics were solid. Their regulatory compliance boxes were checked. But when we asked them when they had last sat with the Minister of Finance or the CBN Governor outside a crisis: not to lobby, not to complain, but to share how their software could solve real-world infrastructure gaps ‘the room went quiet’. The silence was telling.

This gap matters. Today’s fintech founders are building more than payment apps. They are building the digital rails for a modern economy: Moniepoint has become the backbone of agent banking for millions of underbanked Nigerians; Flutterwave has simplified cross-border payments for businesses across Africa; new crypto and web3 startups are experimenting with stablecoin settlements, decentralised identity, and capital market infrastructure that could leapfrog legacy systems. Yet the pace of policy often lags the pace of innovation. And when founders and regulators only meet during moments of tension; a currency redesign, a crypto ban, a fintech freeze, the relationship becomes transactional, not strategic.

Moreover, the complexity of today’s fintech stack demands multi-disciplinary expertise. Cybersecurity specialists are essential to ensure that new payment rails are resilient against fraud and systemic risk. Fractional AI program managers can help government agencies and startups alike harness machine learning for everything from fraud detection to credit scoring, turning regulatory data into actionable oversight. Product leaders who have scaled platforms across borders bring the operational know-how to align fintech solutions with national digital transformation roadmaps. These are the talents that should be in the room when the next Payments System Vision moves from announcement to implementation.

The Spring Meetings offer a different architecture. On the sidelines, there is space for something more deliberate: a closed-door session where early-stage founders, alongside their technical and security leads, can present their software solutions as tools to solve the Ministry of Finance’s and CBN’s own stated challenges. How can crypto rails reduce the cost of diaspora remittances? How can web3 infrastructure improve transparency in government procurement? How can startups help deepen tax collection or streamline subsidy distribution, and how can fractional AI program managers ensure those pilots are designed to scale securely? Instead of asking for permission, founders would be offering to co-build the solutions, with the right expertise already at the table.

What might such a dialogue look like? Imagine a curated roundtable with a dozen founders representing different segments; payments, crypto, web3, lending infrastructure, joined by the Minister, the CBN Governor, and perhaps a few development partners. Alongside them would sit a cybersecurity lead from one of Nigeria’s top fintechs, a fractional AI program manager with experience deploying machine learning models in regulated environments, and a product executive who has successfully launched cross-border infrastructure. The agenda would not be a laundry list of complaints. It would be forward-looking: how to harness crypto rails for cheaper cross-border payments; how to use web3 for verifiable credentials in financial inclusion; how to integrate pre-seed and seed startups into the government’s own digital transformation roadmaps, with security and program governance built in from day one. It would be a conversation about mutual accountability, where software challenges meet policy ambitions and technical expertise ensures execution.

This is not a novel idea. Other markets have used international convenings to reset regulator–industry relationships. India’s fintech founders have used G20 finance tracks to align on everything from UPI expansion to data governance. The UK’s Kalifa Review of fintech was born out of structured engagement between industry and Treasury, with deep input from technical experts. The point is not to copy, but to recognise that when policymakers, founders, and the technical talent who build the infrastructure sit on the same side of the table ‘rather than across it’ the entire ecosystem moves faster.

For Nigerian fintech, the stakes are high. The world is watching our experiment in digital financial services. Development finance institutions are placing billions behind digital infrastructure. Multinational tech companies are looking to partner or acquire. Yet capital follows clarity. And clarity comes from relationships built on trust, shared understanding, and the visible presence of execution talent that can turn policy into product.

A single meeting in Washington will not solve every friction point. But it can signal a new mode of engagement: one where fin-

tech founders; even at pre-seed and seed stage are treated not as supplicants seeking exemptions, but as co-architects of a sector that is central to Nigeria’s economic future. And where cybersecurity experts, fractional AI program managers, and product leaders are recognised as essential partners in building the resilient, scalable infrastructure that the government itself needs to achieve its goals.

More importantly, such engagement can serve as a bridge between two Marylands: the vibrant fintech corridor in Lagos, home to Moniepoint, Flutterwave, and a growing community of crypto and web3 builders and the institutional ecosystem in Maryland, United States, where bank officials, venture capital firms, and accelerators are increasingly looking to back African innovation. By creating structured handshake events on the sidelines of the Spring Meetings that explicitly include technical talent, we can move beyond policy talk and into tangible outcomes: diaspora investors connecting with pre-seed founders, US accelerators scouting their next cohort, and transatlantic partnerships that turn regulatory alignment into capital deployment. This is how we work with Africans in the diaspora not as distant observers, but as active partners in scaling the continent’s most promising fintech talent.

On the sidelines of the Spring Meetings, the Minister and the CBN Governor will be asked to attend dozens of receptions, panels, and bilateral meetings. We hope they will make room for this one “a conversation” with the founders and the technical experts who are building the software that will power the next generation of Nigeria’s economy. Because plans are nothing; planning is everything. And the best planning happens when those who make the rules, those who build the future, and those who secure and scale it finally sit together.

•**Inegbedion** is a fintech ecosystem builder who hosts handshake events on the sidelines of major global gatherings, matching founders, nonprofit professionals, and government and enterprise leaders. He serves as head of Happiness at ConcordeApp and Head of Failure & Social Experiments at Semaform Foundation.

•**Ogunmola** is founder and CEO of Utiva, a global talent infrastructure company that has trained over 100,000 people and helps companies across the US, UK, and Europe hire top talent from more than 39 markets. A recognised technology entrepreneur, he has held senior roles at Creative Associates and Afrissance, and is an alumnus of Chevening, Halcyon, and the Jack Ma Foundation Business Heroes program.

# Fashion Talk

## 5 outfit formulas for days you have “nothing to wear”

ESTHER EMOEKPERE

There is a specific kind of frustration that comes with standing in front of a full wardrobe and still feeling like you have absolutely nothing to wear. It is rarely about not having enough clothes—it is usually about not knowing how to put them together in a way that feels effortless and right for the moment.

That is where outfit formulas come in. Instead of overthinking every piece, you rely on combinations that already work. They take the pressure off decision-making and help you look put-together without trying too hard. On days when your creativity is low but expectations are high, these are the formulas that save you.

**The “clean base + statement piece” formula.**

Start with something simple, think a plain top and jeans, a neutral dress, or even a basic two-piece in black, white, or beige. These pieces act as a blank canvas that does not compete for attention. Then bring in one standout item—a structured blazer, bold handbag, statement heels, or eye-catching jewelry. This single addition shifts the entire outfit from basic to intentional. It works because you are not trying to do too much; you are just giving the eye one place to focus, which makes the whole look feel balanced and put-together.

**The “monochrome look”**

Monochrome dressing is one of the easiest ways to look polished with minimal effort. Choose one color and build your entire outfit around it—this could be all black, all white, or even tones of brown, grey, or nude. To keep it from looking flat, mix textures and slightly different shades within that same color family. For example, pairing a silk top with cotton trousers or denim adds depth. The result is an outfit that feels cohesive and elevated, even if it took you just a few minutes to put together.

**The “denim + anything” rule**

Denim is one of the most dependable pieces in any wardrobe. Whether it is jeans, a denim skirt, or a jacket, it pairs well



with almost anything—structured tops, casual tees, dressy blouses, or even traditional-inspired pieces. On days when you are unsure, starting with denim gives you a solid foundation to build on. From there, you can decide whether you want the outfit to lean casual or slightly dressed up. It is flexible, reliable, and almost always works, which is exactly what you need when you are short on time or ideas.

**The “matching set shortcut”**

Matching sets are the ultimate shortcut for looking put-together without the stress of styling. Since the pieces are designed to go together, you don't have to spend time figuring out combinations. Whether it is a tailored two-piece, a casual co-ord set, or even an Ankara set, the coordination already gives your outfit a polished feel. All that is left is choosing your shoes and accessories, which makes getting dressed faster and a lot less overwhelming.

**The “dress + easy shoes” combo**

A simple dress can do most of the work for you, especially on days when you don't feel like putting together separate pieces. It's a one-step outfit that instantly looks complete. Pair it with easy, comfortable shoes—sneakers, flats, or sandals—depending on your day. You can keep it minimal or elevate it slightly with a bag or light accessories. Either way, it's one of the fastest ways to look effortlessly put-together without overthinking your outfit.

Matching sets are the ultimate shortcut for looking put-together without the stress of styling. Since the pieces are designed to go together, you don't have to spend time figuring out combinations. Whether it is a tailored two-piece, a casual co-ord set, or even an Ankara set, the coordination already gives your outfit a polished feel. All that is left is choosing your shoes and accessories, which makes getting dressed faster and a lot less overwhelming.

**The “dress + easy shoes” combo**



# News Feature

## 2027: Tinubu faces electoral backlash over insecurity, mounting hardship

AKOMBO AONDONA, Abuja

As 2027 presidential election draws nearer, opposition forces in Nigeria and international arena are maneuvering to unseat President Bola Tinubu by capitalising on widespread public discontent over severe economic hardship and worsening insecurity. The opposition strategy, which is still in its formative stages, focuses on creating a "granite alliance" designed to challenge the incumbent APC government.

Insecurity, coupled with economic hardship, is widely identified as the primary challenges facing President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration and the central narrative of the opposition ahead of the 2027 general election.

Critics argue that the persistence of insecurity, particularly in the North, has led to a loss of confidence in the government, with some observers predicting a reduction in the voting margins that secured Tinubu's victory in 2023.

Opposition leaders, including former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, Peter Obi, and Chibuike Amechi, are actively working to build a united front to avoid the fragmentation that occurred in 2023.

Capitalising on insecurity and economy, the opposition figures are leveraging rising banditry, kidnapping, and inflation to paint the administration as incompetent and insensitive to the suffering of Nigerians.

There is a significant focus on mobilising the northern voting bloc, with opposition actors arguing that the region is experiencing increased insecurity and feeling neglected under the current administration.

Opposition figures argue that insecurity—an issue Tinubu used against his predecessors—has become his main vulnerability, overshadowing claims of economic progress.

Continued insecurity is seen as a unifying issue that could fuel a unified opposition movements, a potential ADC coalition.

However, there seems to be challenges and counter-strategies and incumbency advantage of President Tinubu considered as master strategist who is actively expanding his support base, tightening the APC's grip through strategic alliances, and exploiting the benefits of incumbency.

The 2027 race is widely seen as a tough contest, with observers noting that for the opposition to succeed, they must present a unified candidate and a credible alternative vision, rather than relying solely on criticism of the current



President Bola Tinubu

administration.

President Tinubu has indicated that his administration was aware of both domestic and foreign collaborators behind insecurity in Nigeria, vowing that the nation will not bow to terror.

While not publicly releasing a list of names, the president has stated that anyone—even those appointed by him—who undermines national security or fails to follow orders will be dealt with.

He is engaging global partners for support in combating security challenges, particularly in dealing with networks that provide funding or logistical support.

The president has pledged to enhance the welfare of security forces to effectively fight these networks.

His administration has said that tackling the funding and leadership of these groups was a key aspect of solving the ongoing security issues in Nigeria.

The security crisis has been linked directly to the decline to agricultural produce, as farmers fear for their lives.

Opposition figures argue that insecurity—an issue Tinubu used against his predecessors—has become his main vulnerability, overshadowing claims of economic progress.

The government says it is focusing on security reforms, such as the potential implementation of state police and proactive military efforts, to stabilise the nation before the election.

Political analysts believe that while the APC retains a significant structural advantage due to incumbency, the 2027 election

pointees with less than two years remaining in a presidential term.

Here are the key countries and international actors involved in the diplomatic tensions with the Tinubu administration:

### India:

Reportedly to have rejected or signaled difficulty in accepting Nigerian ambassadorial nominees (such as Amb. Muhammad Saidu Dahiru to New Delhi) based on the tenure policy.

### United States

United States alleged backing of opposition. Some political observers, such as Prophet Ayodele, have claimed that a planned coalition of Nigerian opposition parties, including figures like Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi, is seeking support from the US to challenge President Tinubu in 2027.

There is no formal U.S. plan under President Trump to support Bola Tinubu's re-election in Nigeria. Instead, there is a "delicate balancing act" following Trump's threats of military intervention regarding security issues, prompting Nigeria to affirm its sovereignty.

While Washington provides strategic security support, training, and counterterrorism assistance, the relationship has been described as "drifting" and marked by mutual disengagement.

Reports indicate that US lawmakers considered targeting Nigeria for potential sanctions or visa restrictions, with some sources mentioning potential visa restrictions for Nigerian entities. Additionally, concerns were raised regarding consular issues following a diplomatic incident involving Venezuelan deportations.

### United Kingdom

While listed as having granted agreements to some envoys, there have been public commentaries criticising the administration for seeking support from a nation (UK) that recently characterised Nigeria as highly corrupt, suggesting a cynical view of the relationship. Some analysts believe that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's recent UK visit was in this regard as what the eyes were seen.

### ECOWAS Member States (Niger, Mali, Guinea):

Relations have been strained due to the Tinubu administration's firm stance against military coups, leading to the departure of these nations from the bloc and a loss of regional influence.

### Abuja Embassy Landlord Disputes:

Numerous countries were list-

ed by the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) as defaulting on ground rent, leading to a potential diplomatic stand-off. These include Ghana, Thailand, Russia, Turkey, Ireland, Germany, Venezuela, Zambia, Indonesia, Equatorial Guinea, Egypt, Chad, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, China, and South Africa.

Here is how insecurity may impact Tinubu's international image

### Undermining Foreign Investment (FDI):

Multinational companies continue to divest, citing a hostile economic environment and insecurity.

While President Tinubu travels internationally to promote Nigeria as a safe investment destination, high-level diplomatic engagements are undermined by domestic realities of insecurity, such as school attacks and kidnappings. Critics argue that this creates a "tragic denial" of the pain Nigerians face, hindering efforts to attract long-term foreign partnerships.

### Regional Stability Concerns

The inability to secure Nigeria's porous borders has led to the movement of displaced militant groups into the country, causing concern among neighbouring countries in the ECOWAS region, which may portray the government as weak or incapable of managing regional security challenges.

The failure to control internal security, which Tinubu once criticised his predecessors for, erodes his image as an effective economic manager. Continued security spending without adequate safety results contributes to international perceptions that Nigeria's security sector is ineffective, despite receiving larger budgets.

Increased violence in the North-East, North-West, and North-Central regions, along with incidents of communal clashes, invite international watchdogs to scrutinise the administration's human rights record, weakening the image of the country as a stable democracy, according to RSIS International.

To mitigate these risks, the Tinubu administration is actively seeking international support for security equipment and intelligence sharing, particularly with France and the UK, as part of its strategy to show it is tackling the crisis.

However, until concrete results are achieved on the ground, the international narrative may remain that the insecurity is hindering Nigeria's development.

“  
There seems to be challenges and counter-strategies and incumbency advantage of President Tinubu considered as master strategist who is actively expanding his support base, tightening the APC's grip through strategic alliances, and exploiting the benefits of incumbency

may be decided by the effectiveness of the administration's efforts to address the security and economic crises, failure of which may lead to significant electoral backlash.

### International opposition

Rising insecurity in Nigeria threatens to overshadow President Bola Tinubu's "Renewed Hope" agenda and damage his international reputation ahead of the 2027 election by undermining foreign investment, eroding confidence in his economic reforms, and raising concerns about regional stability.

According to Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS International), in the early 2026, several countries have shown reluctance to accept, or have rejected, ambassadorial nominees from the Tinubu administration, primarily due to a diplomatic policy rejecting ap-

# Viewpoint

## Viewpoint

With  
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AFOLABI ABIODUN

There is a particular kind of irony that only oil-producing nations understand. You sit on some of the world's most valuable resources. Global markets move at the mention of your output numbers. And yet, for decades, your citizens queue for fuel imported from Europe, your refineries rust in silence, and your currency bleeds every time the tankers sail out loaded with crude only to return laden with petrol.

**Nigeria has lived that irony longer than anyone should**

But something is shifting — and the conflict now unfolding between Iran, the United States, and Israel may, paradoxically, be the external shock that finally forces Nigeria to confront and capitalise on this contradiction.

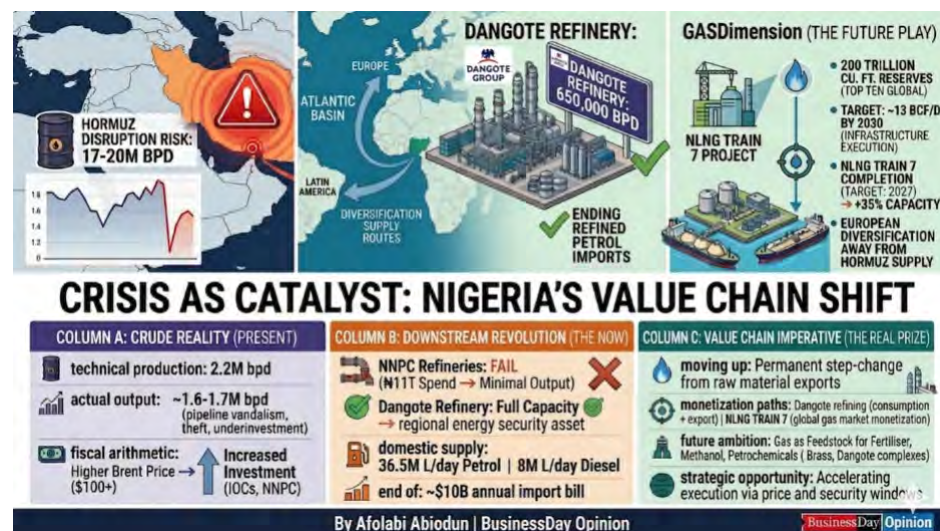
### The numbers behind the paradox

Start with the crude. Nigeria's technical production capacity is approximately 2.2 million barrels per day (bpd). Actual output over the past 18 months has averaged between 1.6 and 1.7 million bpd, dragged down by pipeline vandalism, crude theft — estimated by NNPC at over 400,000 bpd at its worst — and chronic underinvestment in aging upstream infrastructure. Nigeria's OPEC quota currently stands at 1.5 million bpd, a ceiling extended through 2026. The uncomfortable reality is that Nigeria has, for much of the last decade, struggled to even consistently meet its own OPEC allocation, let alone exceed it.

The downstream picture has been equally damning. For years, Nigeria's three state-owned refineries — Port Harcourt (210,000 bpd nameplate), Warri (125,000 bpd), and Kaduna (110,000 bpd), totalling 445,000 bpd on paper — produced almost nothing of commercial use. Port Harcourt restarted at around 60,000 bpd before hitting operational problems again. Warri flickered back briefly before renewed shutdowns. Kaduna has remained largely offline. The total of almost N11 trillion in rehabilitation spending across these facilities over two decades with minimal output to show for it stands as one of the most expensive governance failures in Nigeria's industrial history.

That is the hole Dangote Refinery was always meant to fill. At 650,000 bpd — the single largest single-train refinery on the planet — it represents not just a commercial investment but a structural correction. As of February 2026, Reuters reported the facility had reached full operational capacity. Domestic petrol supply from Dangote alone is now running at approximately 36.5 million litres per day, with diesel at 8 million litres per day. Nigeria's total domestic petrol demand is estimated between 50 and 60 million litres per day, meaning local refining now covers the bulk of the requirement. The era of Nigeria spending over \$10 billion

## Crisis as catalyst: Why Iran-US-Israel war may be Nigeria's most important economic opening in decades



annually importing refined fuel into an oil-producing country is, structurally, ending.

**The gas dimension: Nigeria's bigger, longer play**

If crude is Nigeria's present, gas is its future — and on this front, the opportunity created by the current Middle East crisis may be even more consequential.

Nigeria holds over 200 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves, placing it among the top 10 gas-endowed nations globally and by far the most gas-rich country in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, monetisation has been painfully slow. Domestic gas production averaged 7.59 billion standard cubic feet per day (bscf/d) as of July 2025, against an NNPC Gas Master Plan target of 10 bcf/d by 2027 and 12 bcf/d by 2030. Internal estimates of Nigeria's total demand profile, including suppressed demand from power, industry, and fertiliser, suggest an appetite closer to 13 bcf/d. The problem, in other words, is not lack of market — it is lack of infrastructure and execution.

Nigeria LNG Limited (NLNG) currently operates six trains with a combined liquefaction capacity of 22 million tonnes per annum (mtpa). Train 7, which will add approximately 8 mtpa and lift total capacity to 30 mtpa — a 35 per cent increase — is targeted for completion around 2027. The timing matters enormously. European gas storage anxiety is already running high: the EU has instructed member states to begin filling storage earlier than usual because of disruption to Middle Eastern supply routes. Reuters reported this week that NLNG is already seeing a measurable uptick in interest from buyers seeking to diversify away from Hormuz-linked supply chains.

This is the strategic intersection. A world newly anxious about energy security is looking for large, stable, non-Middle Eastern suppliers. Nigeria has the reserves, the existing LNG infrastructure, and an expansion project already underway. The question is whether Nigeria can execute quickly and credibly enough to lock in long-term supply agreements before the moment passes.

### What the war has changed

The Iran-US-Israel conflict has, in a single stroke, done several things simultaneously to global energy markets. It has raised the spectre of Hormuz disruption — the strait through which approximately 17 to 20 million bpd of crude and 20 percent of global LNG currently transits. Barclays Research estimated last week that a prolonged Hormuz closure could remove 13 to 14 million bpd

of oil supply from global markets. Even a partial, extended disruption would be a supply shock of historic proportions.

The immediate price effect has been visible: Brent crude has traded above \$100 per barrel at key points since the conflict escalated. For Nigeria, each \$10 rise in the price of Brent adds roughly \$3.5 billion to \$4 billion in annual export revenues at current production levels. Higher prices also improve the fiscal arithmetic around upstream investment, making it more attractive for IOCs and NNPC to accelerate production towards the 2.2 million bpd capacity ceiling.

But the more durable opportunity is structural, not cyclical. The war has reminded buyers — European utilities, Asian state energy companies, sovereign buyers — that geographic concentration in energy supply is a strategic liability. Nigerian crude, Nigerian LNG, and Nigerian refined products are now being evaluated not just on price but on their geopolitical location: Atlantic Basin, politically non-aligned on the Middle Eastern conflict, with the infrastructure improvements that make larger volumes credible.

Reuters reported as recently as last week that Dangote Refinery is already capitalising on precisely this dynamic: as cheap Middle Eastern refined products face routing disruptions, Dangote has leveraged its position to supply West African markets and, increasingly, European and Latin American buyers for diesel and petrol cargoes. A refinery that was, a year ago, still proving it could run at capacity is now being positioned as a regional energy security asset.

### The window is narrow, the risks are real

None of this happens automatically. Nigeria has squandered commodity booms before — in 1979, in the early 2000s, and again during the 2010-2014 super-cycle. The pattern is familiar: revenues rise, fiscal discipline weakens, spending becomes recurrent rather than capital, corruption embeds itself in procurement and revenue flows, and when prices fall, the country is no better positioned than it was before.

The specific risks this time are no less serious. Pipeline and export terminal security remains fragile; crude theft remains an ongoing challenge even with improved monitoring. The state refineries represent a continuing fiscal drain if they are kept on life support without genuine commercial reform. Gas infrastructure — particularly domestic pipelines, gas-to-power

connections, and industrial offtake capacity — remains woefully underdeveloped relative to reserves and stated ambition. And NLNG Train 7, critical to capturing the LNG upside, must maintain its construction and commissioning timeline.

The governance question is not secondary — it is central. If windfall revenues from higher crude prices flow through the same channels with the same oversight weaknesses, the outcome is predictable. What is needed is an explicit commitment to ring-fencing a meaningful portion of the surplus: through contributions to the Nigerian Sovereign Investment Authority (NSIA), through transparent publication of monthly revenue flows, and through capital expenditure that builds productive capacity rather than recurrent spending that evaporates. The Petroleum Industry Act provides the governance architecture — what is required is the political will to enforce it and the institutional capacity to administer it.

### The value chain imperative

The strategic prize is not simply more crude exports at higher prices. That is the minimum, the baseline. The real prize is moving permanently up the value chain.

Consider the arithmetic. A barrel of crude sold at \$100 earns roughly \$100. That same barrel refined into petrol, diesel, and petrochemical feedstocks and sold as finished products is worth \$120 to \$140. Processed further into fertilisers, plastics, or methanol and those derivatives can generate multiples of the crude's raw value. Every step up the chain captures more jobs, more domestic industrial activity, more tax revenues, and more economic complexity.

Nigeria is, for the first time, positioned to take multiple steps simultaneously: Dangote refining crude into products for domestic consumption and export; NLNG and future LNG trains monetising gas for global markets; and the longer ambition of using gas as feedstock for fertiliser, methanol, and petrochemical industries domestically. The Brass Fertiliser project, the ongoing Dangote Fertiliser complex, and proposed methanol plants all represent components of this value chain — but execution remains uneven and undercapitalised.

The war in the Middle East has created a price window and a supply-security window. Nigeria's job is to use both to accelerate infrastructure and investment decisions that would otherwise take another decade of political negotiation to unlock.

### A simple test

When this crisis eventually de-escalates — as all crises do — the question Nigeria will face is the one it has faced after every boom: what was built?

If the answer is refineries running, gas pipelines laid, LNG contracts signed, upstream production at or above 2 million bpd, and sovereign savings that insulate the budget from the next price cycle, then this will have been a watershed moment.

If the answer is money spent, leakages unaddressed, infrastructure still incomplete, and the country back to importing refined fuel the moment prices soften — then the irony will have deepened into tragedy.

The opportunity is real. The risks are known. The window will not stay open indefinitely.

Nigeria must decide, quickly and with discipline, which story it intends to tell.

# ViewsPoint

## 2027: Prioritise Nigerians' interest above your interest, Chinwokwu urges Politicians

EMMANUEL SALAWU

**E**mmanuel Nlenanya Chinwokwu, a professor emeritus, has urged political office holders and those aspiring to contest one office or the other in the 2027 general election, to prioritise the interest of the people above their own personal interests.

Chinwokwu, who gave the advice recently during the occasion of his 80th birthday celebration, said that Nigeria would be much better if office holders and those who aspire to public office cultivate the habit of putting others first.

"We are facing another round of general election in 2027; Nigeria is blessed with everything you can think of; Nigeria is blessed with best brains, but our major problem is that people tend to put themselves above those they lead. Elected political office holders, ordinarily, should be representatives and servant leaders, but that is not what we see in the country. I am appealing to politicians to prioritise the people above themselves," the Octogenarian said.

He also urged office holders to endeavour to leave the society and the people better than they met them.

"Political office holders today must ask themselves; do we leave the people and society better than we met them or we destroyed what we met on ground? If the latter was the answer, it means they have laboured in vain," he said.

Chinwokwu said it was glaring that the people in Nigeria were not happy with the current situation of things in the country both at the state and federal levels.

"Those manning positions of trust in the country should ensure they take good care of the people so that when they leave office, the people will be happier and the society will be better than they met it," he said.

The professor emeritus, who also advised the Nigerian voters to ensure they vote with their conscience, said that people must be responsible with their votes.

"Over the years, we have seen politicians come and gone and their lives far better than before they got into the office. We have seen elections come and go; the question

is, how positively impacted have been the lives and future of ordinary Nigerians? The answer is crystal clear," the professor said.

Chinwokwu, who also spoke about the early stage of his life, said he was born on the 22nd day of April 1948 in Amankwo Uturu in Arochuku LGA of Abia State.

He attended Hope Waddell Training Institute Calabar in Cross River State where he sat for his West African Senior Secondary School Certificate and made Grade 1.

He obtained his Bachelor's degree from the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) with first-class honours in Religious Studies. And was awarded best final year student of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Nigeria Nsukka.

In 1981, he attended Princeton theological Seminary New Jersey USA for his Master's degree programme. He started his PhD programme in Nsukka and later transferred to the department of Theology Durham University England, where he obtained his PhD in 1983. In 1988, he became a professor and was a visiting Professor to University of Zimbabwe.



He became a professor emeritus during the 51st Convocation ceremony of the University of Nigeria Nsukka, on November 25, 2023, and this is one of the greatest achievements that gladdened his heart. With the award of Professor Emeritus, he has attained the highest award of educational career in life.

Prof Emeritus Chinwokwu has contributed immensely to educational development in the world, with over 74 publications in different areas of study to his credit and is the president of National Association of Biblical Studies and Head of Department

(HoD) of Religion University of Nigeria Nsukka.

Speaking on development of education in Nigeria, Prof Chinwokwu advised Nigerian government to be committed and be creative. Government, he said, should find new ways of doing things mostly through researches.

"For quality education, the authorities should go into more research and endeavour to give bursary and scholarships to students," he said.

Listing honesty and hard work as some of the virtues he loved most in life, he however, noted that he abhorred indolence and lies.

Expressing gratitude to God for all he has been able to achieve in life, he said: "I am grateful to the Almighty God for being so kind and gracious to me; keeping me alive to see my 80th birthday. God has done everything for me; so, I remain eternally grateful to him."

Chinwokwu is married to Ezinne Alu Chinwokwu and they have children who like their father are academicians and professionals in various fields of endeavour.



EBUKA UKOH

## Here's what global happiness metrics omit about Nigeria

Nigeria disrupts those assumptions. The report measures how people feel about their lives. It does not measure how hard it is to stay alive.

Across the Sahel, which now accounts for over half of global terrorism-related deaths, insecurity is not incidental. It is structural. In 2023 alone, the Sahel accounted for roughly 55 per cent of all global terrorism deaths, with countries in the region recording thousands of fatalities in a single year. Communities adapt to persistent threats. Families reorganise around uncertainty. Entire regions operate under conditions that conventional well-being indices were never designed to capture. To interpret Nigeria's ranking as a simple indicator of unhappiness is to miss the deeper issue.

### Living beyond metrics

Nigerians are not simply reporting low life satisfaction. They are navigating high-intensity survival while sustaining meaning in ways that rarely enter global measurement frameworks.

Despite violence, economic strain, and institutional fragility, social life persists. Communal networks remain active. Religious participation continues to anchor daily existence. Informal systems of care step in where formal institutions fall short. These are not peripheral features of Nigerian life; they are central to how people endure.

In many households, economic pressure has intensified expectations around provision, particularly for men navigating unstable labour conditions. Families stretch limited resources. Social obligations remain intact even when institutional support weakens. Yet life continues. Not because conditions are easy, but because social systems adapt. This is not happiness in the conventional sense. It is

endurance shaped by community, faith, and obligation.

Think about it as a regional crisis, not merely a national anomaly. The Nigerian case cannot be understood in isolation. Six of the 10 most terror-affected countries in the world are located in sub-Saharan Africa, with the Sahel emerging as the global epicentre of contemporary terrorism. These dynamics are driven by a combination of governance gaps, climate stress, and the expansion of transnational armed groups.

Violence does not respect national borders. Yet global indices continue to evaluate countries as if they exist in isolation. What appears as a national ranking often reflects regional instability that exceeds the scope of country-level analysis. This creates a mismatch between measurement and reality.

### Why Finland fails as a benchmark

The contrast between Nigeria and Finland highlights the limits of current frameworks. Finland consistently ranks at the top of global happiness indices. It benefits from high institutional trust, predictable welfare systems, and a stable security environment. Citizens operate within structures that reduce uncertainty and support long-term planning.

Nigeria operates under different conditions. Security is uneven. Institutions are stretched. Citizens rely heavily on informal systems to navigate daily living. Happiness rankings reward order. They struggle to account for resilience under disorder.

### What really should count

If global well-being metrics are to remain meaningful, they must evolve. Exposure to structural violence should matter. Informal

care systems should matter. Religious and spiritual coping should matter. Community-based resilience should matter. These are not secondary variables. In many parts of Africa, they are central to how people live and survive.

African philosophical traditions have long emphasised relational existence. The idea that a person is constituted through community is not abstract. It is a lived reality. In contexts of instability, this relational fabric becomes even more critical.

A measurement system that excludes these dimensions risks misunderstanding entire societies.

### Rethinking what we measure

Nigeria's ranking should not be read only as a reflection of how Nigerians feel. It should be read as an indication of how global systems struggle to measure life under pressure. What is being lived cannot always be captured by what is being counted.

Nigeria's position on the happiness index is not simply a story of dissatisfaction. It is a story of people living within constraints, adapting to instability, and sustaining meaning through systems that operate beyond formal measurements.

Until global frameworks learn to account for those realities, they will continue to describe Nigeria without fully understanding it. And a world that cannot measure what it takes to survive will continue to misunderstand the lives that endure it.

• Ukoh, writing from New York in the United States, is a coauthor of *Built By The Ancestors*, an alumnus of the American University of Nigeria, Yola, and a PhD student at Columbia University.

### Limits of metrics

The World Happiness Report evaluates well-being using indicators such as life evaluation, income, social support, and perceived freedom. These measures are useful in relatively stable societies. They assume that the basic conditions of life remain intact.

# Interview

## 'The vision to build accessible e-learning platform for every learner changed our story'

Osayi Izedonmwun is not just building companies he is engineering solutions to Nigeria's toughest challenges. A visionary entrepreneur and industrialist, his work sits at the powerful intersection of technology, education, and economic transformation. From his early days as an Operations Manager at ExxonMobil to founding Teesas Inc., a fast-growing education technology company expanding across Africa, Izedonmwun has consistently redefined what innovation looks like in emerging markets. As Chairman of Imose Technologies West Africa's largest indigenous manufacturer of tablets and smartphones he is now positioning the company for a bold entry into Nigeria's fiercely competitive GSM market, following its recent Mobile Virtual Network Operator (MVNO) licence, he is also the chairman of Izedon Carbonates, Nigeria's first fully-integrated calcium carbonates manufacturing company. In this conversation with KENNETH ATHEKAME, he unpacked how education technology can unlock inclusive growth, why Nigeria's learning system needs urgent reinvention, and how Teesas is evolving from a simple app into a full-scale education ecosystem. Excerpts:

**Y**ou transitioned from engineering and energy into education technology.

**What problem were you trying to solve when you founded Teesas?**

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital learning, forcing schools and parents to rethink education delivery. We saw an opportunity to build an accessible e-learning platform for every learner whether in urban centres, underserved communities, or the diaspora. That vision shaped the Teesas Education app, which launched with core subjects like Mathematics, English, and Science, alongside local languages including Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Bini, and even French.

**How did your experience building Imose Technologies shape your approach to designing education products?**

Imose was built on strong research and development capabilities, and we carried that same DNA into Teesas. What started as a single product and educational app has evolved into a fully integrated ecosystem that combines R&D, software, content creation, tutoring, and hardware. That end-to-end approach is what sets us apart.

**What early signals convinced you that Teesas could scale beyond a consumer learning app?**

We pay close attention to consumer insights. As the world emerged from COVID-19, it became clear that neither education nor work would remain fully remote. That forced us to



Izedonmwun

pivot toward hybrid learning. At the same time, the growing emphasis on social-emotional learning led us to partner exclusively with Franklin Covey Education to deliver the Leader in Me programme in schools. That marked a turning point in our scale journey.

**Nigeria's education sector faces structural gaps. Where can technology make the fastest impact?**

Infrastructure deficits will take years to fix, so the quickest wins lie in administration and data management. Technology can digitise enrolment, standardise teaching, reduce absenteeism, and improve learning outcomes. For example, our Education Management System (EMS) tracks teacher attendance, enables real-time student monitoring, and ensures consistent les-

son delivery across schools.

**How do you balance affordability with high-quality content?**

We made early investments in studios and pedagogy labs, which now allow us to produce high-quality content at scale without recurring production costs. Combined with AI-driven efficiencies, this enables us to maintain quality while keeping pricing accessible.

**What differentiates Teesas from other edtech platforms in Africa?**

From day one, we focused on whole-child development. Beyond academics, we integrate native language learning and social-emotional development through programmes like Leader in Me. More importantly, we've evolved into an education-focused company delivering end-

to-end learning solutions across apps, schools, learning centres, and digital infrastructure.

**Teesas has grown into a full ecosystem. What drove that shift?**

Market reality. Parents wanted children back in classrooms, but with the benefits of technology. We realised hybrid learning was the future. Schools were also juggling multiple vendors, so we stepped in as a one-stop solution covering teacher training, administration systems, leadership programmes, and exam preparation.

**How does Teesas measure real learning outcomes?**

We track progress through continuous assessment. Students are evaluated at entry, monitored weekly, and their improvements are mapped against final exam results. In one case, a student

improved from scoring 140 in an initial test to 349 in the UTME clear evidence of impact.

**Nigeria continues to struggle with exam outcomes. How is Teesas addressing this?**

We combine structured exam preparation with our Watch-Teach-Assess (WTA) model. Students first engage with video content, then receive in-depth teaching, followed by immediate assessment. This reinforces understanding and builds discipline. The results speak for themselves over 97percent pass rates and a growing number of high scorers annually.

**What policy changes would accelerate digital learning in Nigeria?**

Improved internet penetration and lower data costs are critical. With better connectivity, tools like tablets and digital platforms can truly bridge the education gap, especially in underserved communities.

**Teesas sits at the intersection of purpose and profit. How do you balance both?**

We are intentional about solving real problems, but we are also a for-profit business. Our freemium model allows broad access while sustaining revenue, with tiered pricing that accommodates different income levels.

**If you could redesign Nigeria's education system, what would you change first?**

I would rethink what children learn, how they are taught, and how schools are managed, introducing a modern curriculum, continuous teacher upskilling, and data-driven governance systems fit for the 21st century.

# Food & Beverages

## Food & Beverages With Ayo Oyoze Bajé



In the food value chain machines play significant roles especially in processing and preservation by transforming raw agricultural materials into safe, nutritious, and consumable products. According to experts in the field their primary functions include increasing production speed, reducing post-harvest losses, and ensuring high hygiene standards. They also assist to extend shelf life through techniques like pasteurisation, freezing, and vacuum cleaning.

These encompass dealing with different food items such as fruits, vegetables, meats, nuts, or beverages. Indeed, various types of processing equipment can significantly improve production efficiency, ensure food safety, and help businesses achieve standardised, large-scale production anytime of the year.

## Roles of food processing machines

According to seasoned professionals in food processing the different types of food processing equipment are categorised into mechanical processing tools, preparation tools and thermal processing equipment. Others include preservation, and packaging equipment. The types of machines in these categories are grinders, mixers, slicers, sterilisers, dryers, and vacuum sealers.

In terms of deployment, the main uses of food preparation equipment are cleaning, cutting, mixing and blending. Also, of importance are those for freezing, cooling and maintaining the high quality of processed food. These machines also keep uniformity and reduce manual labor. Doing so makes these machines suitable for large-scale food production faster.

Narrowing it down to different categories the mechanical food processing machines like slicers, grinders, mixers and extruders are used to change the shape, size and texture of different food items. Specifically, it is used in dough preparation, meat processing and daily production to achieve the product quality and enhance efficiency.

Next comes the thermal food processing machinery, such as steamers, ovens, pasteurizers, and sterilizers, are used to heat the food, destroy bacteria and extend shelf life. It also ensures food safety and retains the nutritional value, texture and colour of food items.

On their part, the food packing equipment, such as vacuum sealers, filling machines, and labeling systems,



is used to seal, label and wrap the food products and maintain the freshness. These machines also enhance shelf life and adhere to food safety standards.

Food Processing Equipment consists of the machines and tools used to convert raw ingredients into finished food products. From mixing to grinding and cooking, the different types of food processing equipment handle the foods safely, consistently and quickly.

Whether you want to make sauces, snacks or frozen meals, these machines play a vital role in keeping your food quality high. With the right types of equipment in your industry, you can boost efficiency, reduce waste and meet the safety standards. Let us read this guide and learn the different types of Food Processing Equipment with their uses.

Types and Uses of Food Processing Equipment.

### Cleaning and washing equipment

Hygiene is a main focus in food processing, which makes cleaning and washing equipment crucial. This machinery cleans dirt, debris, and contaminants from raw ingredients. The machines like

### Vegetable washers: Used for leafy greens, carrots, and potatoes.

Fruit Washer Machine: Equipped with brushes and spray nozzles to clean fruits like apples, citrus, and berries.

Ultrasonic Cleaners: Used for delicate products, providing a gentle yet thorough cleaning process.

### Mixing equipment

Mixers are essential in both small and large food operations. They combine ingredients evenly, whether you're working with dough, meat blends, sauces, or seasonings. Modern food mixing machines feature programmable mixing cycles and hygienic designs, allowing control over product texture and consistency.

### Grinding and cutting machines

Grinders and cutters are vital for preparing meats, vegetables, and other ingredients to specific sizes. For example, an industrial meat grinder streamlines bulk meat preparation, ensuring uniform sizes for sausages, burgers, or deli items. Many facilities also use bowl cutters, food emulsifiers, and flaker equipment to achieve the desired ingredient size and structure.

### Conveyors and handling systems

Conveyor machines and handling systems are used to move products through the processing line. Automated conveyors reduce manual handling, lower contamination risks, and improve line efficiency. Loader and transfer equipment, like loader machines, connect processing steps, optimizing flow and reducing labor needs.

### Tumbling, injecting, and marinating

To spread seasonings or brines and improve product texture, processors

use machines like vacuum tumblers and brine injectors. These devices infuse flavors or solutions evenly and can greatly shorten marination times, all while ensuring food safety by minimising manual handling.

### Cooling and freezing equipment

After food is processed or cooked, it often needs cooling or freezing to keep its quality and extend shelf life. Foods can spoil quickly if not stored correctly. The types of food processing equipment, like chillers, freezers, and blast chillers, are crucial in this phase. They rapidly lower temperatures, helping to prevent microbial growth and ensure food safety.

### Cooking, smoking, and baking systems

Cooking, smoking and baking systems are specialised equipment in the food processing industry that preserve the food quality efficiently. In the bakery sector, ovens and proofers are vital for mass-producing bread, pastries, and other baked goods.

### Packaging equipment

Automated packaging systems ensure that products are sealed, labeled, and ready for distribution. These types of food processing systems may include vacuum packaging, sealing, labeling, and coding, all important for compliance and customer satisfaction.

### Pasteurizers

This type of Food Processing Machinery heats liquids like milk, juices, and sauces to a specific temperature to kill harmful bacteria while maintaining product quality. Pasteurization is necessary for food safety and extending shelf life.

• Additional information from *Envitro Technomech Pvt. Ltd.*

## Gourmet Guide with Lydia Eke



Nigeria's culinary heritage is a living archive and one that speaks not only through grand festive dishes like Jollof rice or Egusi soup, but also through everyday meals that quietly sustain culture, identity, and memory.

Among these, ewa and dodo – Jollof Beans and Fried Plantains stand out as humble yet powerful symbols of Nigerian food heritage, worthy of recognition on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) list.

Ewa and dodo are a cultural language understood across class, ethnicity, and geography in Nigeria. From the bustling streets of Lagos to quiet homes in Ibadan and Abeokuta, from Oshogbo to Ore and other parts of the nation, the pairing of soft, stewed beans and golden fried plantains represents comfort, nourishment, and shared experience. It is a meal that transcends economic divides, equally cherished by students,

## Dodo & Ewa: A heritage & cultural food Nigeria must take to UNESCO

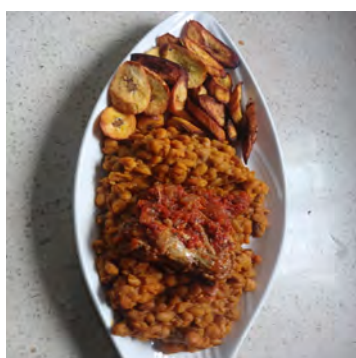
artisans, professionals, and elites, making it one of the most democratic expressions of Nigerian cuisine.

At its core, ewa, particularly in its "Jollof" form, is a reflection of indigenous knowledge systems. The slow cooking of beans, often enriched with palm oil, peppers, onions, and local spices, showcases a deep understanding of flavour layering and nutrition. Beans are a vital source of plant-based protein, making ewa not only culturally significant but also nutritionally strategic in a country where affordable protein sources are essential. This aligns with UNESCO's emphasis on practices that contribute to community well-being and sustainable living.

Dodo, on the other hand, embodies the art of transformation. Made from ripe plantains sliced and fried to caramelized perfection, it demonstrates the ingenuity of Nigerian culinary techniques, turning a simple food into a versatile delicacy. Whether served alongside rice, beans, or eaten on its own, dodo carries a sensory identity: its aroma, texture, and taste are instantly recognizable and deeply nostalgic for Nigerians at home and in the diaspora.

What strengthens the case for UNESCO recognition is not just the dishes themselves, but the cultural practices surrounding them. The preparation of ewa and dodo is often communal, passed down through generations, from mothers to children, from street vendors to apprentices.

In many Nigerian cities, "mama put" food vendors have become cus-



todians of this tradition, preserving authentic recipes and techniques in informal yet impactful ways. These vendors are not merely food sellers; they are cultural bearers, sustaining a culinary heritage that might otherwise be lost in the face of globalization and fast food culture.

Moreover, ewa and dodo have achieved a remarkable level of social and cultural symbolism. They are staples at roadside bukas, university cafeterias, religious gatherings, and even upscale restaurants reimagining Nigerian cuisine for global audiences. Their adaptability speaks to their resilience, an important criterion for UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list, which values traditions that continue to evolve while retaining their core identity.

In the Nigerian diaspora, ewa and dodo serve as edible links to home. For many abroad, the taste of beans and fried plantain is a powerful reminder of identity and belonging. This global presence further reinforces their cultural significance,

positioning them not just as national treasures, but as part of the world's shared culinary heritage.

Recognizing ewa and dodo on the UNESCO ICH list would validate the everyday experiences of millions of Nigerians. It would elevate the narrative that heritage is not only found in palaces, festivals, or rare traditions, but also in the ordinary meals that shape daily life. It would also support efforts to document, preserve, and promote Nigerian culinary practices in the face of rapid modernization.

In a world increasingly drawn to authenticity and cultural storytelling, Nigeria has an opportunity to present ewa and dodo as more than food, as heritage. Their simplicity is their strength; their ubiquity is their power. And in their story lies a compelling case for global recognition.

It is also important to note that children loves this food a great deal! Ask any Nigerian mother! Lets visit the kitchen

### Recipe for 5 servings

- 4 cups beans [brown or white]
- 1 onion [sliced or diced]
- 2 cooking spoons palm oil
- 5 big plantains [ripened]
- A pinch of potash [optional]
- Seasoning and salt to taste
- 3 red peppers [crushed or blended]

### Method

- Make sure the beans are stone – free, wash them and bring to boil for 10 minutes.
- Drain off the water, return to the pot and add fresh water that will cook the food.
- A pinch of potash can be added

to the boiling pot! Why? [it's a general belief that potash helps to soften beans, although this is optional].

- One or two slices of onions is a very good and healthy idea! This is because the onions will add a special flavour to the cooking beans!
- While the beans are cooking, add the sliced or diced onions, once this is done, the aroma of the food will change immediately.
- Continue to cook until the beans are very tender.
- Once you know they are tender, add the salt and seasonings to taste including one or two cooking spoon of palm oil.
- Allow to simmer for six minutes before adding other ingredients.
- Cover and simmer until the beans are ready.
- Remove from heat and serve while you quickly fry the plantains.
- Set a frying pan on fire, wash and peel the plantains, cut into sizeable – chunks and fry with the remaining cooking oil.
- Make sure a pinch of salt is added [although it is optional].
- Fry until the plantains are golden brown.
- Remove from heat and serve with the delicious protein enriched beans.

• Meanwhile, log on to the *You-Tube Channel, Gourmet Guide234 Kitchen and the food blog gourmet-guide234.com to read more about food, nutrition, and all you need to know about food journalism. Feel free to send a mail to gourmet-guide234@gmail.com*

# Creativity

## Nigeria has talent, not systems- that's the missing link in the creative economy - Soiprala

Soiprala Prince, is a multidisciplinary creative strategist whose work spans film, photography, and brand systems. With roots in architecture, music, and corporate environments, he operates on a singular belief: every idea has a soul but its value is only realised when it is clearly communicated. He builds narrative systems that bridge the gap between creators and consumers, transforming creativity into scalable, monetisable ecosystems. At his core, he is an artist who learned business combining emotion, structure, and scale to create work that is not only seen, but felt and remembered. In this interview with KENNETH ATHEKAME, he discussed how African storytelling can evolve into a globally competitive export, and explored ways to monetise storytelling more effectively in Nigeria. Excerpts:

**Y**our work cuts across film, photography, and brand strategy. How did your journey into the creative industry begin?

My work has always come from empathy, a need to express, and an instinct to observe. I don't just see output, I see intention. I see something deeper, almost like a soul, and my role is to translate that in a way people can feel and immediately understand. I didn't formally start in the creative industry, but I was always around studios, construction sites, film sets. I kept finding myself in spaces where things were being built visually, emotionally, and culturally. Over time, people began to recognise not just what I do, but how I think. I don't see myself as a businessman. First, I'm an artist. But I had to learn business, because creativity without structure doesn't scale. That balance shaped my journey.

**What drew you to the intersection of storytelling and business?**

I believe everything has a soul, every idea, every product, every thought. The problem is, most of them are never experienced the way they're meant to be because they're not communicated clearly.

There's a gap between creators and consumers not because the work isn't good, but because the value isn't translated well. And within that gap, there's opportunity.

Creativity without monetisation is dependency. Business without storytelling is invisible. The real leverage is in owning both building ideas people can feel and systems that make them profitable. My role is simple: I bridge that gap.

**How have architecture, music, and corporate experience shaped your perspective?**

Architecture taught me structure. It showed me that creativity without functionality has consequences. Music taught me emotion. It sharpened my understanding of feeling, timing, and depth in how to interpret what's beneath the surface. Corporate taught me scale. It showed me how ideas evolve into systems that generate consistency and revenue.

Now, I combine all three: structure from architecture, emotion from music, and scale from corporate. That intersection defines how I approach every project.

**You emphasise "narrative systems." What does that mean in practical terms?**

Narrative isn't decoration, it's



Soiprala

infrastructure. A narrative system ensures a brand communicates clearly, consistently, and over time. It defines what a brand stands for, how it expresses that across content, and how it reinforces its value. It's not about what you say once it's about what people keep understanding about you. In Nigeria, many brands focus on the product, but the real work is in communicating meaning. Visibility without clarity doesn't build recall. If your storytelling isn't structured, it becomes forgettable.

**How can African storytelling evolve into a globally competitive export?**

It has to sit at the intersection of authenticity and audacity. Authenticity keeps the story real. Audacity pushes it onto the global stage without hesitation. We don't need to make our stories more digestible; we need to make them undeniable. But beyond expression, there's a structural issue: ownership. We can't just export talent; we have to export intellec-

tual property. If we don't own what we create, we're not building an industry, we're feeding one. The next phase is not just visibility. It's control, scale, and ownership.

**What are Nigerian brands getting wrong about storytelling today?**

They focus too much on information and not enough on emotion. Storytelling is about world-building. If people don't feel anything, they won't remember you. There's also an obsession with virality. Virality gives you attention for a moment. Memory gives you relevance over time.

Many brands are chasing numbers instead of meaning. But if people don't remember you, you don't exist in their decision-making.

**Can you share an example of narrative driving impact?**

My work with the Adekunle Gold Foundation on sickle cell advocacy is a strong example. The challenge with advocacy is that it often leans on information, not emotion. We shifted

the approach from presenting facts to telling a story people could feel. Once the narrative became clear, everything aligned visually, tone, delivery. The campaign reached over 780,000 views and drove real engagement and donations.

That's what narrative does: it turns attention into meaning, and meaning into action.

**How can storytelling be monetised more effectively in Nigeria?**

The issue isn't talent, its systems. We lack structure, distribution ownership, and strong monetisation models. We need to shift from content thinking to asset thinking. Content is consumed. Assets compound. Ownership of intellectual property is key. If we build worlds around African stories like mythology we're not just creating content, we're building ecosystems. And whoever owns those ecosystems controls the value.

**What role should the government and the private sector play?**  
The government should fo-

cus on policy, infrastructure, and funding systems. The private sector should drive execution and scale. Right now, both are reactive. We need long-term, coordinated thinking to build sustainably.

**Are Nigerian creatives globally competitive?**

Creatively, yes. Structurally, no. We're exporting stars, but not systems. Until we fix funding, distribution, and IP protection, we'll have recognition without long-term industry growth.

**How transferable is storytelling across industries?**

Completely transferable. The format changes, but the principle stays the same: whoever controls the narrative controls the value.

**What can traditional industries learn from creatives?**

They need to get closer to the audience. Creatives understand attention, behavior, and trends in real time. That agility is what keeps brands relevant.

**How important is collaboration between creatives and corporations?**

It's essential. Creatives bring culture. Corporates bring capital. Together, they scale.

**What advice would you give creatives struggling with the business side?**

Stop selling services. Start building identity. Have a clear narrative, a recognisable style, and a defined audience. If people can't describe you, they can't remember you.

**What separates a creative from a creative entrepreneur?**

A creative producer. A creative entrepreneur builds systems. One earns per project. The other builds assets and recurring revenue. The difference is leverage.

**What does global competitiveness mean in practical terms?**

It means your work meets global standards, travels across markets, and generates revenue beyond your location, not just good for Nigeria, but viable anywhere.

**What are the biggest structural challenges in Nigeria's creative economy?**

Funding gaps, weak IP protection, poor distribution, and inconsistent standards. These are infrastructure problems, not creative ones.

**What does success look like for you and for Nigeria's creative economy?**

For me, success is building narrative systems that scale globally. For Nigeria, success is ownership of IP, distribution, and value. Right now, we're visible. The next phase is ownership.

# Power Management

## Electrical safety, enhanced service delivery on front burner as NEMSA gets new leadership

FRANCIS NWACHUKWU

The recent leadership change at the Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency (NEMSA), a parastatal under the Federal Ministry of Power, is one designed to usher in an era of electrical safety, enhance service delivery, quality assurance and regulatory compliance across the power sector value chain.

This is the consensus of key power sector operators who reacted to the recent change of leadership at the Agency.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu had on 10th February, 2026 appointed a seasoned technocrat, Adesayo Olusegun Michael, as the Managing Director/CEO of Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency (NEMSA) and the Chief Electrical Inspector of the Federation (CEIF). He replaced Engr. Aliyu Tukur Tahir.

A member of the Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), the new NEMSA Chief Executive comes with distinguished career record spanning several years of technical experience and expertise in Metering Systems with observers describing his appointment as fit and proper for the agency and the industry.

He was a pioneer Staff of the Electricity Management Services (EMS) in the Pre-Privatization era of the power sector that transformed into NEMSA. He was also the Head of NEMSA Oshodi Lagos Meter Test Station (MTS Oshodi)

Until, his appointment, Michael was a Management Staff of Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IEDC), among other key leadership positions he had occupied in the country.

Other Board members of NEMSA appointed by the President include: Aliyu Abdulazeez (Executive Director, Technical); Ikechi Clara Nwosu (Chairman, South East); Zubair Abdur'rauf Idris (Member); Mrs. Igba Elizabeth (Member-North Central); Sani Alhaji Shehu (Member-North East); Adeyemi Adetunji (Member-South West); Emmanuel Eneji Nkpe (Member-South South) and Charles Ogbonna Asogwa (South East).

The new appointees complement the duo of Utsu P. Ashibel, the current executive director, (Corporate Services) and Hajia Meimunat Audu, the Executive Director (Commercial Services), NEMSA who are already working in the Agency.

Reacting to Michael's appointment, Kunle Olubiyo, National President of the Nigeria Consumer Protection Network, said the new MD/CEO of NEMSA is a fit and proper person for the job. "He is fit for the purpose," Olubiyo said. He expressed confidence in the new NEMSA helmsman citing Engr. Michael's rich industry experience and valuable contributions to the power sector in Nigeria as valid credentials.

In the same vein, Alhaji Abubakar Olajide, a former senior management staff of the defunct, PHCN, thanked President Tinubu for appointing



Adesayo Olusegun Michael, MD/CEO, NEMSA & CEIF.

Engr. Michael as NEMSA MD/CEO stating that he was highly qualified for the job. "I am highly delighted on his well-deserved appointment as MD/CEO of NEMSA and have no doubt that under his leadership the agency will be very pro-active in the discharge of its responsibilities not only to the industry but to the nation as a whole.

He urged the new NEMSA leadership to ensure the elimination of fake and substandard electrical materials in the country "May Almighty Allah grant him wisdom and sound health to pilot the affairs of the commission beyond imagination", Abubakar added.

Another stakeholder and Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Power Generation Companies (APGC), Dr. (Mrs.) Joy Ogaji commended NEMSA for its critical regulatory role within the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI), particularly in the enforcement of technical standards, inspection of electrical installations, and certification of electricity meters and instruments. She noted that these functions remain fundamental to ensuring the safety, reliability, and sustainability of Nigeria's power infrastructure.

She however charged the new leadership on the need to increase public awareness of NEMSA's activities, especially in meter testing, certification, and compliance monitoring, stressing that greater visibility of

the Agency's work would encourage compliance with established standards and ultimately promote the efficient use of electricity across the country.

She further suggested the establishment of regular collaborative engagements between NEMSA and other stakeholders such as APGC as a platform for knowledge sharing, improved coordination, and sustained progress within the power generation sector.

Shortly after assumption of office in February this year, the new NEMSA leadership led by Adesayo Michael swung into action by embarking on reform programmes aimed at repositioning the agency to effectively discharge its mandate. These include, Staff capacity development, enhanced collaboration and partnership with sister agencies and international partners, as well as redirection of the agency towards the attainment of its Mandate.

Furthermore, the new NEMSA Chief Executive has reaffirmed the commitment of the agency under his able leadership to promoting electrical safety, quality assurance, and regulatory compliance in the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI)

He also reiterated the Agency's readiness to work closely with all the stakeholders within the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry to ensure strict compliance with electrical standards, improved operational safety, and enhanced service delivery

across the power value chain.

According to him, sustained collaboration among power sector players remains vital in advancing the shared goal of strengthening Nigeria's electricity infrastructure while safeguarding lives and property through effective inspection, testing, and certification of electrical installations and equipment.

He spoke separately when he received in his office, delegation of the GIZ/European Union and those of the Association of Power Generation Companies of Nigeria (APCON) who recently paid him courtesy visits.

According to the NEMSA CEO, "strategic partnerships among key institutions within the power sector is crucial in driving reforms, improving operational efficiency, and ensuring a safe and sustainable electricity supply for Nigerians."

It will be recalled that what is today known as the Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency (NEMSA) started in 2013 as the Electricity Management Services Limited (EMSL), one of the successor companies established by the Federal Government in line with the provisions of part 1 Section 8 of the Electric Power Sector Reform (EPSR) 2005, the Supplementary Regulations.

In 2015, the Agency was established by the NEMSA Act 2015 (now the Electricity Act 2023) to carry out the functions of Enforce-

ment of Technical Standards and Regulations, Technical Inspection, Testing and Certification of All Categories of Electrical Installations, Electricity Meters and Instruments to ensure the Efficient Production and Delivery of Safe, Reliable and Sustainable Electricity Power Supply and Guarantee safety of Lives and Property in the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry; and for Related Matters.

The establishment was in response to several decades of substandard electrical equipment/materials being used in the NESI, combined with vandalism, substandard construction practices, and poor maintenance of power installations across the value chain of generation, transmission and distribution, including utilization, have plagued the development of the power sector in Nigeria.

This was largely due to lack of effective enforcement of technical standards, testing and certification of electrical installations in the NESI, this necessitated the Federal Government establishing an independent, professional and technical agency NEMSA to deal with these technical lapses in the industry.

Critical Elements of NEMSA's Mandate include:

1. Ensuring that: -
  - One. electrical materials/equipment/instruments used in NESI, workplaces and other premises are of the right type, quality, standard and specifications;
  - ii. the power systems and networks put in place have been properly planned, designed and executed before use to ensure that such systems and networks are capable of delivering safe, reliable and regular electricity supply to the consumers nationwide;
  - iii. electrical installations in homes, offices, commercial and industrial premises have been properly installed and/or executed to ensure reliability and safety of use, lives and property.
  - iv. safety of lives and property within the grid and off-grid networks is assured;
  - v. electricity energy meters and instruments used in Nigeria are of the right type, quality, class and accuracy for proper accountability of energy produced, delivered, supplied / utilized by the consumers.

2. Certification of all Electrical Installations Contractors, Practitioners and all other technical personnel engaged in the practice of electrical installations works along the Power value chain and utilisation and other premises.

3. Take over the functions of statutory electrical inspection, testing and certification of all electrical installation hitherto carried out by the Director of Electrical Inspectorate Services and the Electrical Inspectorate Services Division of the Federal Ministry of Power.

By this Act, NEMSA becomes the sole agency authorised by Law to carry out the enforcement of Technical Standard & Regulation, Inspection, Testing and Certification of all Electrical Installations in Nigeria.

# City File

## Palestine crises: Group calls for peaceful resolution, unity among global Islamic nations

SIKIRAT SHEHU, Ilorin

**A**l-Harakatul Islamiyyah, an Islamic organisation has criticised what it described as the silence and disunity within the global Muslim community over the worsening crisis in Palestine, urging Nigerian Federal Government to adopt a firmer diplomatic stance against Israel.

AbdulRazaq AbdulWahab Al-Amin Aladodo, the group's leader stated this on Friday at programme organised to commemorate the 2026 Quds Day, held in Ilorin Kwara State.

Aladodo, who delivered speech on the theme: "Complacency of the Muslim Ummah and Compromise of Islamic Teachings: The Reason for the Worsening Plight of Palestinians" warned that continued inaction by Muslim nations has contributed to the prolonged suffering in Gaza and other Palestinian territories.

He noted that Quds Day remains a significant moment for Muslims worldwide to reflect on the importance of Masjid Al-Aqsa, which he described as Islam's third holiest site and a symbol of both spiritual and political relevance.

According to him, the Palestinian crisis dates back to 1948 with the creation of Israel, which led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and the takeover of key holy sites in Jerusalem.

He said: "The persistent agony of



the Palestinians and the desecration of Masjid Al-Aqsa are clear indications of injustice in the global order" adding that recent developments in the Middle East have further deepened tensions.

Aladodo identified the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks as a major turning point, noting that the aftermath has intensified hostilities across the region, including rising tensions involving Iran.

"There is a clear connection between ongoing military confrontations in the Middle East and the longstanding Palestinian struggle, which must not be sidelined," he noted.

The cleric commended Iran's involvement in the region, contrasting

it with what he described as the failures of past Arab coalitions, particularly during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

On Nigeria's response, he urged the government to move beyond calls for a ceasefire and take a more decisive position.

"It amounts to tokenism to merely call for a cessation of hostilities when the aggressors are well known," he said.

Aladodo further called on Nigeria to cut diplomatic ties with Israel over alleged human rights violations in Gaza and restrictions on worship at the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

He also appealed to Muslim countries to set aside internal divisions and prioritise humanitarian

assistance for Palestinians affected by the ongoing crisis, adding that, "the current crisis in the Middle East must not remove the Palestinian question from global focus."

The group equally urged Gulf nations to review the presence of foreign military forces in the region and called for renewed efforts to resolve disputes within the Muslim world, warning that disunity continues to weaken collective influence.

It also criticised diplomatic engagements between some Arab countries and Israel, describing such agreements as detrimental to the Palestinian cause.

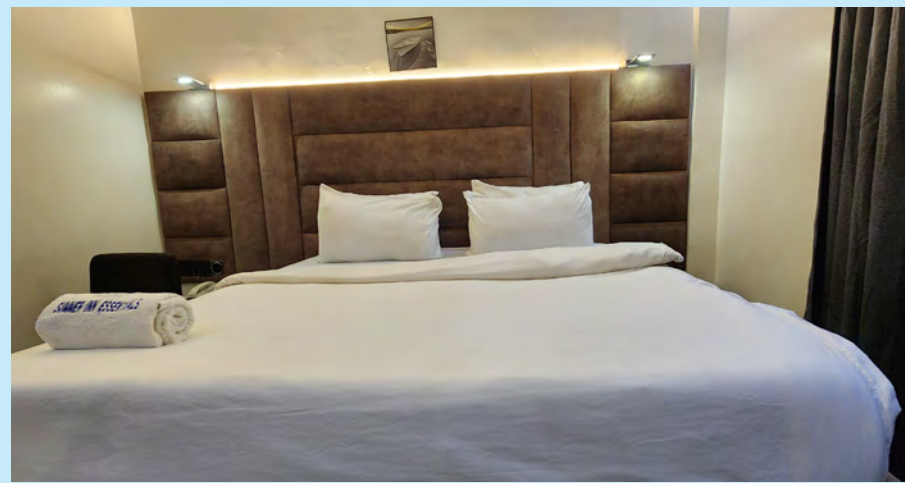
He encouraged people to be more prayerful for unity and lasting peace across the Muslim world.

In his submission, Abubakar Sadeeq, Mudeer Daarua Jaoharat Institute of Arabic Studies Jagun Okelele enjoined Muslim to be submissive to their creator.

He said that whatever happens to individuals, whether good or bad is predestined, noting that God is all-knowing. He therefore called for a renewed commitment to religious values, stressing that there is a reward for every action.

"We must return fully to divine guidance, which remains the only path to peace and success," he said.

He added that everyone will face one trial or another, urging that when efforts to attain something do not yield results, individuals should continue to rely on God and remain steadfast.



## Summer Inn Essentials opens for business in Owerri

SABY ELEMBA, Owerri

**H**otel and Hospitality sector of the Imo State economy has continued to expand as Summer Inn Essentials, a five-star hotel, has opened its doors to the public for business.

Francis Ifeanyi Agomuo, a seasoned hotel and hospitality administrator and the general manager (GM) of Summer Inn Essentials who spoke exclusively to BusinessDaySUNDAY, said that the hotel, has unique luxury accommodations, peaceful surrounding with natural scenery and is located in Pocket Layout, Jacob Zuma Way, New Owerri, an area noted for 24-hour security.

According to him, with modern comfortable, clean leisure facilities, coupled with peaceful surroundings, Summer Inn Essentials is a "home away from home" where you can spend a refreshing weekend with your family and loved ones.

He said that from the moment you arrive, you will receive a warm and genuine smile from the staff, that will make a difference from other hotels and leisure places you have visited or lodged in before visiting Summer Inn Essentials, Owerri.

The general manager described the rooms as being spotless, flawlessly clean, "cozy and thoughtfully arranged. Comfort beds are good and, reliable air conditioner, hot water, fresh beddings, working with Wi-Fi that can actually stay connected throughout your stay."

He disclosed that every facility in Summer Inn Essentials is modern.

And at Summer Inn Essentials' Premium Restaurant, he continued, the breakfast is delicious and well prepared, local dishes alongside some continental options are served, added.

According to the general manager, those who eat at the Summer Inn Essentials' Premium Restaurant will never forget the perfected blend of exotic cuisine.

## Abia holds state burial for Uma Ukpai

...As Otti challenges all to live Godly life

UDOKA AGWU, Umuahia

**A**bia State Government (ABSG) has held a state burial service in honour of the late Uma Ukpai, Abia-born global evangelist and God's general, who died at the age of 80 years.

Governor Otti, while speaking during the event held at the International Conference Centre Umuahia on Thursday, March 26, 2026, challenged people to live a Godly life so that when they are no more, they would be remembered for good.

Otti noted that Ukpai did not die but only transitioned.

"How can he die? You can see the children that came out, the great work that he did here.

"So, the challenge is for all of us. What would people say on a day like this, when it is our turn? You can see testimonies everywhere. I'm sure that you have been blessed," Otti stated.

He thanked God for the gift of Rev. Uma Ukpai to Abia State, Nigeria and the world and disclosed that he decided to honour him because honour should be given to whom it is due.

"We thank God for the gift of Papa Uma Ukpai, to our generation, to our dear state, to our Akwa



Ibom State, to Nigeria, to Africa, and to the world.

"Our decision to honour him is in our character of giving honour to whom honour is due.

"So Daddy, we thank you for the contribution you made to our state.

"We thank you for what you represented and we wish you well. Good night," Otti concluded.

The governance, who further appreciated the wife of the deceased, Philomena Uma Ukpai for granting approval for the state to honour the husband, urged the bereaved family, not to weep like those without hope.

"I want to thank you Mummy (Ukpai) for allowing us, give honour to whom honour is due. And to the family of the bereaved. You can weep, but not like the unbelievers, because he knows where he is headed," Otti admonished.

He also said: "If you weep so much, maybe you are weeping for yourself. But for him, it is clear where he is headed. On that resurrection morning, I have no doubts that our daddy and all those who died in the Lord will wake up. They will resurrect, and we will meet with them again. That is the promise that God gave us," said Otti.

Umo Eno, governor of Akwa Ibom, who was represented by Akon Eyakanyi, his deputy, in his

speech, described Uma Ukpai as a visionary.

Governor Eno, who noted that the deceased fought a good fight of faith, and finished well, encouraged Abians, Akwa Ibomites and all Nigerians to take heart, as he lived a godly life worthy of emulation.

In his tribute, Mosy Madugba, national secretary of PFN Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, who spoke behalf of PFN, noted that it is good to die the death of a righteous man, described Ukpai as a global voice and unifier of ministers of the gospel.

He noted that this is the first time the PFN is placing her flag on the coffin of anybody in Nigeria, and emphasised that his legacy transcends generations, adding that he lived a good life and yielded himself to God, who used him to affect lives positively.

Wale Oke, bishop and the president of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, in his sermon stressed the need for all to come to Jesus, insisting that it is only giving one's life to Christ that would make one to die a righteous death.

Oke, who took his text from Numbers 23:10 and spoke on the topic, "Let me die the death of the righteous," said that, while alive, Uma Ukpai taught people how to die a death of the righteous,

through preaching the gospel of grace as against religiosity.

He noted that Uma Ukpai did not serve money nor corrupt the gospel but lived a life of holiness, hence, God made his death glorious. He added that Uma Ukpai followed God in deed and in preaching.

Chidi Uma Ukpai, first son of Rev. Uma Ukpai, in his vote of thanks behalf of the family, thanked Governor Alex Otti and all individuals who attended the state burial for identifying with them in their time of challenges.

He assured that the family was standing on the rock, which their father established for them, adding that they would follow it.

The state burial service, attracted many dignitaries including Douye Diri of Bayelsa State and his wife; Peter Obi, the 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party; deputy governors, wife of the former governor of Edo State, Bassey Obaseke; members of the National Assembly, members of Abia and other State Houses of Assembly, members of the State Executive Council, John Azuta, president general of Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide, many servants of God, traditional rulers led by Eze Linus Nto Mbah, and people from all walks of life.

## Man flogged to death for alleged rape in Bayelsa

SAMUEL ESE, Port Harcourt

**A** 47-year-old man identified as Emi Sigah has died while being flogged for alleged rape of a 10-year-old girl at Ekeowe, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

In Ekeowe, according to their custom, perpetrators of rape receive 10 strokes from each of the 12 quarters that make up the community.

Sigah fainted after receiving 40 out of the 120 strokes on Wednesday, according to sources in the coastal community.

It was gathered that following the incident, the community youth leader and three others have been arrested while the police have commenced investigation into the matter.

The victim had accompanied her aunt to a nearby farm to harvest okra and as they were returning home the deceased ambushed her.

The unsuspecting aunt was walking ahead thinking the young girl was behind her while the de-

ceased was allegedly sexually molesting her niece.

A passerby who caught the culprit in the act raised the alarm and the community condemned the taboo, which in Ekeowe tradition is punishable by 120 strokes of the cane.

However, in this case, some community folk offered to pay as much as N50,000 and N15,000 as alternative to the flogging, which the community rejected.

The community insisted on the flogging to serve as deterrent to others and after 40 strokes, Sigah fainted and was later confirmed dead thereby resulting in panic in coastal community.

Ayebaitari Easterday, chief press secretary to Target Segibo, chairman of Southern Ijaw Government Area, said normalcy has returned to the community with the timely intervention of local officials in collaboration with security operatives.

Easterday said police in Oporoma, headquarters of the local government area, in company of some council officials have evacuated the

body of the suspect and deposited it at the Federal Medical Centre, Yenagoa.

He said that the council condemned the action of the community youths, describing it as alien to Modern laid-down processes of handling criminal cases and urged the people to report criminal cases to the appropriate authorities instead of taking the laws into their hands.

Easterday, however frowned at the sexual molestation of a minor, describing it as repugnant.

He stated: "As much as council does not align with the repugnant attempted rape of the minor, the action of the youths is alien.

"It would have only been commendable if they had reported the matter to security agencies for the law to take its course."

When reached for comment, Musa Mohammed, Police Public Relations Officer, Bayelsa State Police Command confirmed the incident, saying: "Yes. Four persons have been arrested. Investigation is ongoing."

## BVN key to faster reimbursement of failed bank depositors – NDIC

REGIS ANUKWUOJI, Enugu

**T**he Nigeria Deposit Insurance Corporation (NDIC) has underscored the critical role of the Bank Verification Number (BVN) in facilitating the prompt reimbursement of customers affected by bank failures, describing it as a primary tool for "automatic" payouts.

Thompson Oludare Sunday, managing director and chief executive officer of NDIC, made this known during the corporation's Special Day at the 37th Enugu International Trade Fair, themed 'Empowering MSMEs for Global Competitiveness.'

Sunday, represented by Gambo Hawal, director of communication, reaffirmed the corporation's commitment to maintaining financial system stability and protecting depositors.

He disclosed that NDIC's insurance coverage currently protects about 99 percent of depositors in Nigeria's banking sector.

He added that the corporation has strengthened its coverage limits in response to prevailing economic conditions.

Under the revised structure, de-



positors in Deposit Money Banks (DMBs), Mobile Money Operators, and Non-Interest Banks are insured up to N5 million, while those in Microfinance Banks and Primary Mortgage Banks are covered up to N2 million.

Explaining the reimbursement process, Sunday noted that NDIC does not depend on government funding to compensate depositors. Instead, it draws from the Deposit Insurance Fund (DIF), which is financed through premiums paid by licensed banks.

He emphasized that the integration of BVN into the system has significantly improved efficiency, enabling the corporation to trace depositors' alternative accounts and credit them within days of a bank's closure, thereby eliminating delays previously associated with manual processes.

Addressing concerns of depositors with balances exceeding insured limits, Sun-

day assured that such funds are not entirely lost. He explained that additional payments, known as liquidation dividends, are made from proceeds recovered through debt repayments and the sale of assets of failed banks.

"These payments are made in tranches as more funds are recovered. We have successfully implemented this in cases such as Union Homes, Aso Savings and Loans, and more recently Heritage Bank, where multiple dividend payments have already been made," he said.

The NDIC boss also cautioned Nigerians against patronising fraudulent financial schemes and so-called "wonder banks," urging the public to remain vigilant.

Earlier, Nnanyelugo Onyemelukwe, president of the Enugu Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (ECCIMA), represented by the first Deputy Eric Chime

## Plateau APC members involved in road accident while travelling for national convention

NATHANIEL GBAORON, Jos

**A** contingent from Plateau State travelling to Abuja for the All Progressives Congress (APC) national convention were involved in a road accident along the Jos-Abuja highway on Friday.

Details of the crash remained sketchy, but BusinessDay gathered

that there were multiple injuries and several of the passengers were rushed to nearby hospitals for medical attention.

At the time of this report, it was unclear whether those affected were official delegates for the convention or party supporters travelling independently.

The exact cause of the crash has yet to be established.

Wumana Bako, Plateau State spokesperson of the APC who confirmed the incident in a telephone chat with BusinessDay, said he had not received detailed reports about the number of casualties or the identities of those involved.

"Yes, I am aware of the accident, but I have not gotten details yet, and I am not sure whether anyone died," he said.

# Women's World

## IWD: 300 Nigerian women get impact digital skills certified by ILO, ILC

■ As IEOM collaborates with Heart Foundation

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

The 2026 International Women's Day (IWD) celebration has brought succor to 300 women around Nigeria through training in ICT with certification from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) through the International Labour Centre (ILC).

The training lasted for three days with physical headquarter in Port Harcourt, Rivers State capital. The grand finale took place at Menage Centre on Nkpogu Road in Trans-Amadi Industrial Area on Thursday, March 26, 2026.

Explaining details to newsmen, Mercy Odibe, coordinator of the scheme, who is also head of women in export at the Institute of Export Operations and Management (IEOM) said they were able to organize the three-day programme. She said it was mainly for empowering women.

"The first two days were for training them on digital skills. And they were certified after the training from the International Labor Organization (ILO) and International Training Centre (ILC).

Odibe stated: "Because we are an Institute, we are trainers who can train other people. So we decided to use this medium to train 300 women entrepreneurs for this International Women's Day.

"So today is the final, as we call it. We awarded certificates and also we honored women who were outstanding in their fields. So, ultimately, everything we did today and what we've been doing is just to empower women, to ensure that their businesses move from point 'A' to point 'B', until they get to where they ought to be and where they expect to be."

So far, she said, it has been a successful programme. "We know there are many women out there that do not know what is happening now.

"That's one of the reasons we've been looking for people to partner with, both national and international partners. I believe with collaboration, we'll be able to reach out to more people.

"Again, one of the persons we honored today, he is a man and from the programme, we could hear that he is the first man we are honoring in this International Women's Day programme. We started this programme for like three years now. This is the third year since 2024.

"And for all the women we've honored, we've not had any man. Now, the reason we honored this man today is because he has been engaged in community services, empowering women in different communities. So, we are acknowledging him and we're going to be working with his company as a way of reaching more people, even in the communities.

Then, we're going to make use of the social media. Yes, we're in the digital age. We keep reaching out to people."



At the moment, she went on; "As I'm speaking to you, we have one of our sponsors again, who came in all the way from Lagos. We are training people in Lagos though we are in Port Harcourt here. But because it's a digital age, we can stay anywhere and

train and reach out to more people. So it's not going to end here. We'll continue to make noise. We want as many women as possible, as many persons as possible, to be aware of this initiative, of this programme, and we'll try as much as possible to



reach out to more people.

"I want to send a message out there to young women, especially to young females. I wish to tell every woman out there listening to us, you are a woman, you have the power. You can strive for more."

She admonished women entrepreneurs not to limit themselves. "Don't think, oh, let me just stay where I am. No, there is an opportunity for you to grow.

"There's an opportunity for you to move out there and be who you want to be. And you can't be that person if you stay, if you isolate yourself. Collaboration is the key.

"Come out there, partner with people. And there is an ongoing cooperative. It's called Port Harcourt Empower Hearth Cooperative Society.

"It's a cooperative that is big enough to accommodate everyone. Moving people from local to international markets. So you are free to come and join the cooperative."

Supporting the women, Ofon Udofia, executive secretary of the export institute, said how they have supported the International Women's Day (IWD) with the theme, 'Give-to-Gain'. "So we have been doing this for the past three years. As a result of that we decided to put up a sustainable programme for women, which is the 'Empower Hearth Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society', and not only that, we also brought in women from the hearing impaired group, the people with disability, so that trade can be inclusive.

"So this year's theme is 'Give-to-Gain'. We are giving to women. Some women are also being given recognition and awards for the role they played in development, both in academics and the other sectors."

He said they were also collaborating with other NGOs and institutions as well such as Aaron and Hall, a foundation. "We collaborate with Osusu, which they just showed, and we collaborate with GT Bank, and the rest. We have a lot of other collaborators that we are working with.



**"As business owners, we're able to share our context and also get to buy and trade today. A woman is the builder of the future. We should put more time and all our resources in building the women as we build our future."**

"The essence of this programme is not just to do a celebration, it's a foundation, it is a calling, it is ongoing that women should be able to

support themselves. Just like Madeleine Albright, the former American Secretary of State, believed that a special place should be created by God in Hellfire for women who don't support their fellow women. So we don't want that to be.

"We want to make sure that women support their fellow women."

He appealed to women out there to come and join the Cooperative because it is easier and better and stronger to work as a team than as an individual.

Some of the awardees and participants who spoke with newsmen showed huge appreciation to the collaboration. A wife, Supreme Pillar, a marketing strategist, a businesswoman, and a digital content creator, said she has been privileged to be among the participants of this great conference.

"We learned about our legal protection in the economic and digital space. We also learned that as women and business owners, we should be able to have insurance, health insurance. That it's really important for us to have health insurance because if we don't, if we are not protected and insured, we may end up spending everything that we've built in taking care of our health.

"Aside that, we also learned about the different e-commerce platforms that we can use to trade and also build connections. One important aspect of today's event was the exhibition. We got to the exhibition stand, we saw different products from different companies and small business owners.

"As business owners, we're able to share our context and also get to buy and trade today. A woman is the builder of the future. We should put more time and all our resources in building the women as we build our future."

On her own, Emanuella Edut, the regional manager for Sonja School Africa, and director for Puri Reel who also manages the Adaptive Impact Foundation, showed appreciation for her award. "I feel really humbled, appreciated, and just grateful.

"My background spans across social impact, business, social development.

"In the last decade, I have developed programmes for children in under-served communities, giving them access to education, skills, and other resources that would help them.

"So, beyond that, I have just been launching a business and trying to push it forward. It's very rewarding that we get to be appreciated and we can give back."

She said Puri Reel as a company also sponsored five-minute for this programme. "So that's us giving back and giving impact to our community and encouraging other women to just, you know, do good.

"I think young women should just focus on the journey and the destination will be ahead of them. They can just do anything, push for excellence and they will achieve it."

# The Sunday Stew

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## The Insecurity Triad (II): Banditry – the rural siege and the weaponisation of the harvest

There is a different kind of silence in the countryside. It is not the anxious quiet of a ringing phone, but the heavy stillness of abandoned farmlands. Crops rot where they were planted. Footpaths disappear into overgrowth. Entire communities live with one eye open—not listening for a call, but for the distant echo of motorcycles approaching.

Brigadier-General Lawal Bature Mohammed (rtd), former Commander of the Zamfara Community Protection Guards (CPG), was meant to be part of the solution. Instead, he became part of the story. Popularly known as Dan Gusau, he was shot by bandits in a brutal attack last year, sustaining severe bullet wounds that required evacuation to Egypt for advanced medical treatment. He would later succumb to those injuries.

His funeral prayer was held on Thursday evening, March 26, 2026, in Sabon Gari, Gusau, the Zamfara State capital, where he was laid to rest in accordance with Islamic rites.

In a functioning system, men like him secure the land. In this one, they are claimed by it.

Last week in The Sunday Stew as we examined kidnapping in the first part of The Insecurity Triad, I promised that today we would turn to the next front in Nigeria's deepening security crisis—banditry. If kidnapping is the marketplace where human lives are traded, then banditry is the siege that makes that market possible. It is the slow, grinding occupation of Nigeria's rural heartland.

While kidnapping targets the individual, banditry targets the land itself. This is no longer just a "Nigerian problem." In a world of fragile supply chains, the rural siege of Northern and Middle-Belt Nigeria has become a critical bottleneck for global food security.

### From raids to occupation

Banditry in Nigeria has evolved beyond sporadic violence into something more structured and enduring. What began as cattle rustling and opportunistic raids has matured into a system of territorial control.

Across vast stretches of the North-West and North-Central, armed groups now operate within what are effectively "ungoverned spaces"—zones where the authority of the state is weak or absent. In these areas, bandits do not simply attack; they administer, regulate, and extract.

In the vast "ungoverned spaces" of the Northwest, banditry has evolved into a medieval form of territorial sovereignty. It is no longer enough for criminal gangs to raid a village; they now "tax" the very act of survival.

The Harvest Toll: Farmers in states like Katsina, Zamfara, and Niger are



forced to pay "protection fees" just to plant their seeds, and a second "exit fee" to harvest their crops.

The Price of Defiance: Refusal to comply often invites violent reprisals—raids, kidnappings, or the destruction of entire communities.

This is not taxation in the civic sense. It is coercion, enforced through fear and sustained by violence.

### The abandoned acre

According to recent agricultural surveys, over 2.5 million hectares of arable land remain uncultivated due to the threat of violence. Entire farming seasons have been lost, not to drought or flood, but to insecurity.

For the Nigerian farmer, the land is no longer just a source of livelihood—it is a contested space. Stay and risk death. Pay and perpetuate the system. Or flee and lose everything.

This has triggered widespread displacement, with thousands of rural families relocating to urban fringes or internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, where livelihoods are uncertain and futures diminished.

Perhaps nowhere is this convergence more evident than in Zamfara State, where banditry and illegal mining have become dangerously intertwined. In these territories, the bandit is no longer just a raider of farms, but a gatekeeper of gold. Control of land now means control of both harvest and mineral wealth. This dual economy—agricultural extortion above ground and illicit extraction below it—has created a powerful incentive structure that makes the crisis far more difficult to dismantle.

But this model is no longer confined to Zamfara. It has expanded into the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and its neighbouring states—Niger, Nasarawa, and Kaduna—evolving into what can only be described as a sophisticated conflict

economy.

Recent security assessments from agencies such as the EFCC and the Ministry of Solid Minerals indicate that these armed groups no longer rely solely on kidnapping or rural taxation. They are now actively managing, taxing, and securing mineral extraction as a parallel revenue stream to fund their operations.

### The 'mining-insecurity' nexus

The Federal Government has identified illegal mining as a primary enabler of banditry. The Minister of Solid Minerals, Dele Alake, has noted that many bandit attacks are not random acts of violence, but are often linked to efforts to clear communities from mineral-rich lands.

Attacks in parts of the FCT—such as Kwali, Kuje, and Bwari—have forced residents to flee. Once these areas become effectively "ungoverned," illegal mining syndicates move in to extract gold, lithium, and lead without resistance.

Security data from late 2025 suggests that over 60% of bandit camps in the North-Central region are located within 10 kilometres of illegal mining sites, highlighting the strategic overlap between violence and resource extraction.

This is not incidental. It is deliberate—violence as a precursor to extraction.

Revenue streams and the financing of violence

Illegal mining now funds banditry through multiple, structured channels:

- Direct Extraction: Armed groups occupy mining sites and compel artisanal miners, who are often displaced work under coercion. The extracted minerals are sold to middlemen and trafficked through porous borders.

- Protection Fees: Mining

syndicates pay "rent" or protection money to bandit leaders to guarantee uninterrupted operations and shield themselves from rival groups or security interventions.

- Barter Systems (Minerals for Arms): In some cross-border corridors, gold and lithium are exchanged directly for small arms and light weapons, bypassing formal financial systems and making these transactions extremely difficult to trace.

What emerges is a closed-loop system where natural resources finance insecurity, and insecurity protects resource exploitation.

Geographic hotspots: The new resource frontiers

The mineral-rich belt surrounding Abuja has become a focal point of this evolving crisis:

Niger State (Shiroro & Munya): Rich in gold deposits, these areas have seen bandits transition from cattle rustling to controlling mining pits, using proceeds to acquire more advanced weapons and logistics.

Nasarawa State: The recent lithium rush has triggered a surge in illegal mining. Security agencies have uncovered multiple sites where so-called "conflict minerals" are extracted to fund local armed groups.

FCT Forest Corridors: Remote zones along the Bwari-Tafa axis serve as strategic transit hubs, where minerals are aggregated before being transported to urban centres or smuggled across borders.

These zones form a resource corridor of insecurity, linking rural violence to national and transnational economic networks.

Economic loss and the limits of state response

The financial implications are staggering. Nigeria is estimated to lose approximately \$9 billion annually to the illegal export of gold

and other solid minerals.

In response, the Federal Government established a specialised Mining Marshal Corps in 2025 to secure mining sites and disrupt illegal operations. However, reports indicate that these forces are severely stretched. Many illegal mining locations are situated in deep forest territories, where bandit groups have established fortified positions and high-intensity operational bases.

The result is a familiar pattern: a state struggling to project authority into spaces where criminal economies have already taken root.

### A self-inflicted famine

As I argued in the second edition of The Sunday Stew, "A Country Without Earthquakes," nations across the Sahel often endure poor harvests and famine as a consequence of natural forces—chief among them desertification. History offers even starker examples, such as the devastating famine in Ethiopia during the 1980s, where environmental stress combined with structural weaknesses to produce humanitarian catastrophe.

Nigeria's case, however, is more troubling. Our crisis is not primarily driven by nature, but by human agency. Banditry—this self-inflicted disaster—is now producing conditions of severe hunger. Farmers are heavily taxed, fields are abandoned, and entire communities have been emptied of productive life.

What drought and desertification achieve through nature, banditry is now replicating through violence. The result is the same: scarcity, displacement, and hunger—but with one critical difference. This is a crisis we have created, and therefore one we can resolve.

From farm to table: The inflation spiral

For the international observer, this is a clear case of what can only be described as "Agricultural Terrorism." When the acclaimed "Breadbasket of Africa" is under siege, the consequences extend far beyond national borders.

Nigeria's food inflation, currently hovering at record highs, is a direct result of this disruption:

Reduced agricultural output leads to scarcity;

Scarcity drives price increases;

Rising prices erode household purchasing power. The result is a vicious cycle of economic strain, hunger, and vulnerability.

The 'bandit tax' and the price of a meal

The correlation between banditry and food costs in 2026 has moved beyond temporary disruption. It has hardened into what can only be described as a structural tax on the Nigerian dinner table.

# Word Matters

## Discursive quadrangle of Nigeria's insecurity ecosystem

CHRIS AGBEDO

Every crisis has a climate, a patterned environment in which it germinates, mutates, and endures. Nigeria's insecurity is not a scatter of isolated incidents but an ecosystem, a dense web of actors, motives, terrains, silences, and signals, all feeding into one another. In such an ecosystem, violence is not merely executed; it is enabled, narrated, justified, deferred, and sometimes disguised. Guns crack in the forests; yes, but meanings are forged in the corridors of power, in the calibrated utterances through which the state explains, excuses, or escalates its response. Within this ecosystem operates what may be termed a discursive quadrangle, i.e., a four-cornered architecture of elite expressions through which insecurity is named, framed, and managed. The metaphor is not accidental. In geometry, a quadrangle is a figure bounded by four sides, held together by four vertices, its stability dependent on the tension and alignment among its angles. Remove one side, distort one angle, and the figure warps; its symmetry collapses; its internal balance gives way. Some quadrangles are regular and harmonious; others are skewed, stretched, or asymmetrical; yet, all are defined by the interplay of their four defining points.

Transposed into the realm of discourse, the quadrangle becomes a conceptual tool: four dominant linguistic positions, each a vertex, each exerting pressure, each shaping the contour of meaning. The "sides" are the connections between these positions, the transitions and tensions that bind them into a single communicative structure. But unlike a well-proportioned geometric quadrilateral, Nigeria's discursive quadrangle is irregular; its angles misaligned, its sides unequal, its centre unstable. The result is not equilibrium but oscillation; it is a rhetorical figure that cannot quite hold its shape, even as it continues to frame national response. Thus conceived, the discursive quadrangle is not a formal doctrine but a patterned repertoire: the familial, the demonising, the technocratic, and the evasive. Each corner offers a distinct moral grammar, a different linguistic lens, a separate pathway to policy. However, knitted together, they produce not coherence but contradiction, a chorus without harmony, a structure without symmetry.

In this quadrangle, language does not merely describe insecurity; it distributes empathy, assigns blame, calibrates urgency, and ultimately shapes action. Words become instruments, soft in tone, hard in consequence. They do not only tell us what is happening; they tell us how to feel about what is happening, and by extension, what ought to be done. It is against this conceptual backdrop that the sociolinguistics of power becomes indispensable. For in the act of naming lies the seed of response, and in the framing of violence lies the fate of justice.

In the sociolinguistics of power, naming is hardly neutral. To name is to frame; to frame is to steer thought, to tilt judgment, to script response. Words are not mere labels pinned to reality; they are levers that lift or lower moral weight. Beneath this aphorism



lies a harder truth: language does not merely accompany power; it constitutes it. This insight finds its theoretical authority in the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly in the works of Norman Fairclough and Teun A. van Dijk, who insist that discourse is both socially conditioned and socially constitutive. It is the unseen architecture within which perception is housed, judgment is calibrated, and action is authorised. Naming, in this sense, is an act of indexicality; it points beyond the object named to a web of meanings, affiliations, and moral alignments. To call an armed actor a "bandit," a "terrorist," a "criminal," or a "brother" is not a lexical choice alone; it is a political positioning. Each term carries a moral grammar: criminality invites punishment; terrorism demands exceptional force; brotherhood solicits empathy and restraint. Thus, language compresses ideology into everyday speech, turning words into quiet carriers of policy.

Framing deepens this process. It selects, highlights, and organises reality, making certain interpretations appear natural while others recede into silence. When perpetrators are described as "misguided" or "aggrieved," the narrative tilts toward causation and context; blame thins; explanation thickens. But when they are cast as "monsters," context collapses into condemnation; nuance is banished, and force is sanctified. Between these frames lies the moral geometry of state response. Words do not simply report the world; they help produce it. Repeated labels sediment into regimes of truth, shared assumptions about who is guilty, who is redeemable, and what actions are legitimate. Over time, these assumptions harden into institutional reflexes. A nation begins to act in accordance with how it speaks. Language, then, is not merely reflective; it is generative; it births the realities it names.

Overlay this with the politics of proximity: those perceived as "ours" are softened by speech, while those cast as "others" are hardened by it. Kinship tempers condemnation; distance sharpens it. Thus emerges a gradient of moral inclusion, where empathy is unevenly distributed and where the boundaries of belonging are drawn not only on maps but in metaphors. It

is within this dense linguistic ecology that Nigeria's insecurity ecosystem unfolds, an arena where bullets and words co-produce reality, where violence is both physical and discursive, and where the struggle for security is inseparable from the struggle over meaning.

The first vertex of the quadrangle is the familial discourse. It speaks in the language of kinship and cultural continuity: "Not all bandits are criminals." "If your brother is a terrorist, he is still your brother... we will not use force." Here, violence is not denied but domesticated. The perpetrator is drawn into the moral household, his brutality narrated as grievance, his deviance reframed as estrangement. The gun remains real, but the rhetoric runs soft. In this frame, empathy dilutes urgency, and accountability bends under the weight of belonging.

The second vertex is the demonising discourse. It erupts with moral absolutism, stripping the perpetrator of humanity itself. The Vice-President, Kashim Shettima, captures this register starkly: "Demented monsters... not part of the human race." Here, there is no brotherhood, no context, no compromise, only a sharp moral severance. If the familial discourse baptises and sanitises, this discursive vertex vapourises and banishes. If one softens, the other scorches. In this frame, force is not only justified; it is sanctified.

The third vertex is the technocratic discourse of constraint. A former Defence Minister, offered a language of operational limitations: bandits are known, their locations mapped, yet they inhabit forests bombs cannot penetrate, terrains where strikes risk civilian lives. It is a rhetoric of caution, of calculated restraint. Yet, beneath its strategic veneer lies a subtle deferral. The forest becomes more than geography; it becomes metaphor, a canopy under which decisiveness hesitates. Constraint, here, risks sliding into quiet justification.

The fourth vertex is the evasive discourse of knowing without naming. Again, a former Chief of Army Staff introduced this unsettling note: the financiers of terrorism are known in official circles, yet remain unnamed publicly for reasons unknown to him. Discursively, this fourth mode is perhaps the most consequential. By asserting knowledge, the state signals

competence; by withholding names, it signals constraint inspired by lack of political will. The gap between knowing and naming becomes a fault line where trust erodes. For in the grammar of governance, to know and not act is not neutrality; it is participation by omission. Silence, in this register, is not empty; it is loaded.

Together, these four vertices - familial, demonising, technocratic, and evasive - form the discursive quadrangle that frames Nigeria's insecurity ecosystem. But unlike a balanced geometric figure, this quadrangle tilts. Its angles strain against one another; its sides fail to align. The result is not structural integrity but rhetorical instability. Language becomes strategy; rhetoric becomes refuge. To call a bandit "brother" is to soften the ground for negotiation, to substitute kinetic fury with soothing balm of non-kinetic lullaby, to justify restraint, to normalise amnesty. On the flip side, to name him "monster" is to clear the moral path for force, to foreclose dialogue. To describe him as "logistically unreachable" is to defer urgency, to cloak hesitation in realism. To admit that his financiers are "known but unnamed" is to suspend accountability in a haze of discretion. Each label carries a policy in its pocket, an ideology in its bloodstream. Words are not innocent; they are armed.

Yet, beneath this plurality lies a troubling continuity: the elasticity of elite morality. When violence is proximate, it is explained; when it is distant, it is condemned. When perpetrators are socially entangled, they are linguistically softened; when they are politically inconvenient, they are discursively hardened. Thus, the same act - kidnapping, killing, terrorising - receives different moral grammars depending on who speaks and whom it serves. This is not merely inconsistency; it is discursive complicity. It is a house bounded by four voices, yet unified in evasion. It is a nation where the geometry of language distorts the ethics of action, where meaning is malleable, and where accountability dissolves in a haze of half-justifications.

For what happens when a state cannot harmonise its voice? Confusion seeps into command, hesitation into strategy, ambivalence into action. Soldiers step out with uncertain swagger

and advance with uncertain mandates. Citizens retreat into uncertain trust. The battlefield expands, not only in space but in meaning. And the people - the ordinary citizens, the vulnerable victims, the expendables - are left stranded on the semantic crossroads to navigate this amoebic figure of speech. They hear that perpetrators are "brothers," and they wonder why justice hesitates. They hear that they are "monsters," and they ask why annihilation delays. They hear that they are "known but unreachable," and they question the reach of the state. They hear that financiers are "known but unnamed," and they begin to suspect that power itself may be part of the problem. Between empathy and enmity, between knowledge and silence, a crisis of credibility festers.

In the end, the victims do not speak in frames or metaphors. Their silence is stark, their loss unvarnished. They are neither brothers nor monsters - only bodies, only names, only absences. While the elite debate nomenclature, the ground keeps count. Each drop of human blood etches a soul-searing stain on the canvas of our collective humanity. Each mass grave is a colon in a sentence, which the state seems too shy, or timid, or scared, or indifferent to complete. Nigeria stands, therefore, at a linguistic crossroads. It must decide not only how to fight insecurity, but how to speak it. For speech precedes strategy, and clarity precedes coherence. A fragmented discourse breeds a fragmented response; a distorted quadrangle yields a distorted will.

The task is not to erase difference, but to align it with responsibility, to straighten the angles, to stabilise the frame, to ensure that language serves justice rather than obscures it. For in the final reckoning, words will be weighed not by their elegance but by their consequences. This is the animating spirit of Word Matters: that language is law in latency, policy in preview, power in quiet motion. Words do not merely decorate thought—they direct it; they do not simply describe reality—they decide its trajectory.

And so, the closing cadence is not poetry alone but prognosis:

When terror is called brother, justice hesitates.

When terror is called monster, mercy evaporates.

When terror is called unreachable, responsibility recedes.

When terror is called officially known but publicly unnamed, accountability is abandoned.

And when a nation cannot harmonise its voice, it risks becoming an echo chamber of its own undoing, where contradictions cancel clarity, and noise drowns resolve. Policy stumbles, trust thins, and citizens grope in semantic fog. A divided tongue breeds a divided will; and a divided will cannot defend a wounded state. Such is the peril inscribed in the discursive quadrangle of Nigeria's insecurity ecosystem, a figure misshapen by discordant voices, where fractured language fractures resolve, and a nation falters within the very geometry of its own speech.

•Agbedo, a professor of Linguistics, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Fellow of Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, is a public affairs analyst.

# Tribute

## BB Fakae, Africa's foremost professor of veterinary parasitology and entomology, becomes 'Priest of Three Temples'

IGNATIUS CHUKWU

**B**ariname Beke Fakae, onetime vice chancellor of the Rivers State University of Science and Technology (now Rivers State University), clocked 70 years on Thursday, March 26, 2026, and was crowned the 'Prince of Three Temples.'

The crowning is in form of a book by his last son, Niabari, which upgraded the previous book, 'Prince of Two Temples', written years back by Ignatius Chukwu, a Port Harcourt-based journalist. The book was unveiled in Port Harcourt Friday evening, March 27, 2026, at the Senate Chambers of the RSU by an oil magnet, Dumo Lulu-Briggs.

The unveiling took place at a colloquium hosted in his honour by the Rivers State University by the authority of the present Vice Chancellor, Isaac Zeb-Obipi, who described Fakae as the father of modern RSU and origin of digital system at which the Rivers State University has excelled.

Describing Fakae further as an Iroko, the VC said the genius now known as the priest of three temples was not only a transformer of the University but one who laid the foundation of the e-University that the RSU has become. "He encouraged



BB Fakae, celebrates 70 years

gown-to-town concept and brought in industry gurus to build facilities in the RSU that have remained a legacy to this day."

According to Zeb-Obipi, the former VC has a rich profile as father of modern RSU, man that brought huge infrastructure to the University, man who ended violence and frequent shooting in the University, the VC that boosted academic standing of the University, the man who established ICT unit of 1000 desktops and introduced e-exams, man who restored the credibility of the University, a visionary leader, and a highly responsible man.

In his brief remarks, Fakae said time and responsibilities

of office were finite resources that must be used effectively for humanity. He said he is always guided by a remark by a young person at an event who he said had said: "If you find yourself in any position and you cannot make a difference, then you have no business there."

He said early in life, he called on God to take total control of his life and do with it whatever pleased Him as Lord.

Explaining why he chose a colloquium instead of a bash, Fakae said it was to bring focus to bear on enduring values, to think together, etc. He said life offers something to be examined and interrogated, not for display.

He recalled that he has always been called to service at moments of crisis. Apparently responding to widely held notion that he never favoured one over another, he said leadership must be exercised without favouritism.

He repeated his famous quote: "No parasite survives by killing its host; because the parasite too, will die."

Lulu-Briggs, the high chief who unveiled the book, who is the founder of Platform Oil Limited, and who once managed Moni Pulo Development Company Ltd, the oil company belonging

to his late father, called for a triumvirate system to develop the economy by the coming together of a university, businesses within the area, and the government of the state.

"We are here to inherit the knowledge that service to community is key. We will always pick the best of us for the rest of us. It is good that the professor's ideas are serving generations in the University. Prof Fakae is one of the richest in character in our country," he declared.

He responded to the request by the Vice Chancellor for the building of a centre in the RSU where companies would establish their research units for a closer gown-to-town relationship to glow, promising that his company would undertake the project to completion in the next 24 months.

Reviewing the 'Priest of Three Temples', Friday Barikpe Sigalo, a professor of Applied Physics at the RSU, showed how the book grew from the precursor, the 'Priest of Two Temples', to what it is now, and showed key segments that treated academia, the church, and now community service.

He said the author, Niabari Fakae, displayed high degree of craftsmanship and literary prowess in postulating the various philosophical

foundations that carried the three temples under review.

The author, in his remarks, said he was steadily in the witness box of his father's evolution for 40 unbroken years, and that in writing the book in a hurry, he tasked his father the same way his father tasked him in doing things. He said the book was written in a hurry, saying his father always wanted him to write a book about his life.

He said the book avoided the full trappings of a biography but tried to interpret stages and events instead of just recording them. He gave huge credit to the author of the 'Priest of Two Temples' from which the 'Priest of Three Temples' took off.

A panel discussion by persons who have known BB Fakae and family over the years included Ikechi Nwogu, Ibifuro Asawo of CINFORES, Ignatius Chukwu of BusinessDay, and Adi Wali of the Association of Nigerian Authors, anchored by Ndume Green, a journalist.

The panel admitted that Fakae has been a man on a mission with clear methods of how to do whatever he sets his mind on to do. They showed how Fakae is consummate in any relationship and cares deeply about the next person, yet he maintained decorum and discipline.



L-R: BB Fakae, Isaac Zeb-Obipi (VC of RSU), and Dumo Lulu-Briggs, founder of Platform Oil.



Huge attendance to celebrate the professor of Veterinary Parasitology.

# Book Review

## The Unfinished Project: The Lion of the Niger Delta Vol 1.

KABOWEI AKAMANDE

From 4th August 1967 to the Present

Unlike most agents of change, the Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro of History left a detailed account of himself in his autobiographical "The Twelve-Day Revolution." From these memoirs we know he was born on 10th September 1938; executed his violent revolution and was condemned to death in 1966; released from the death row to life imprisonment in May 1967; and from life imprisonment to freedom on 4th August 1967.

There is no second guessing about his life between 10th September 1938 and 4th August 1967. What we cannot say for sure were his activities between 4th August 1967 and 18th May 1968 when he was assassinated. Professor Mondy S. Gold chronicles the unusual life of a highly evolved revolutionary he describes as "a man of absolutes." The narrative rests on documented sources and human memory in filling the gap from 4th August 1967 to the present. He does a beautiful job admitting reliable sources like Esther Boro, David Boro, Omoeye Sowore, Chief (Dr) Bob Nabena, Professor Ambily Etekepe, etc.

With the publication of Gold's "Isaac Adaka Boro: The Unfinished Project: The Lion of the Niger Delta: Vol 1," expectations peaked that the whole truth about the assassination of this native son would finally be known. Unfortunately, such hope remains deferred as Gold, like other writers before him, appears to see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil. But Ijaws believe their son was assassinated to pave way for a post-war agenda that would see Ijaw territories that control 95% of Nigerian crude oil and

90% of the Atlantic coast balkanised and weakened to make their exploitation possible (p. 123). Any literature on Boro that fails to investigate his assassination, or indulges in a one-sided exercise by hearing only from former Nigerian officers without a balancing input from former Biafran officers, has told us nothing new.

What excites me about Gold's book was seeing Forward 1 written by the wartime Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, General (Dr) Yakubu Gowon. Forward 3 is written by another war veteran, Brigadier General Godwin Alabi-Isama. As the Head of State, Gowon simultaneously superintended over the two British proxy wars against the Igbo-born Lt Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu who led the separatist Biafran Republic and Ijaw-born Boro. The objective was to wrestle the Ijaw vast oil and gas fields from both Boro and Ojukwu.

Isama claims to be the last person Boro spoke to before being killed 30 minutes later. He admits to Edmund Obilo that Boro's GOC, Col. Benjamin Adekunle, was on Away Without Leave, AWOL, the day Boro was killed but that the two of them, Isama and Adekunle, were communicating on a two-way 301 radio. The question begging for answer is how Adekunle could sneak off for medical treatment in an unknown hospital, whose location was unknown, without clearance from Lagos. Importantly, could Adekunle go AWOL on the very day the decisive battle for the liberation of Port Harcourt was to start? No GOC does that (see "The Fall of Biafra in the Atlantic Theatre: Isaac Boro, Battle for Oguta & Adekunle's Deadly Orders." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pHOCsAdNYs>).

Retrieved 19th March 2026).

Isama's claims do not add up leaving one to configure what happened. In preparation for his revolution, Boro with Samuel Owonaru and a few others approached foreign embassies for support. Profilers at the MI6 (the UK's foreign intelligence agency) could have warned that Boro was a greater evil than Ojukwu against the British interests in the Niger Delta: Before Ojukwu and Biafra, Boro and his Niger Delta Republic were. The latter's ability to train 3000 Ijaw youths in his amphibious Sea School during the war could only mean he was surreptitiously preparing for an empire within an empire. Solution? Use Boro to defeat Ojukwu; then knock him off and the Ijaw resources are yours. Leave the details for Gowon and Adekunle. The burden is on Gowon to clear his name because Boro's assassination was a war crime.

**Ungrateful Ijaws**

Gold must be credited as the first writer to draw attention to the

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**Any literature on Boro that fails to investigate his assassination, or indulges in a one-sided exercise by hearing only from former Nigerian officers without a balancing input from former Biafran officers, has told us nothing new**

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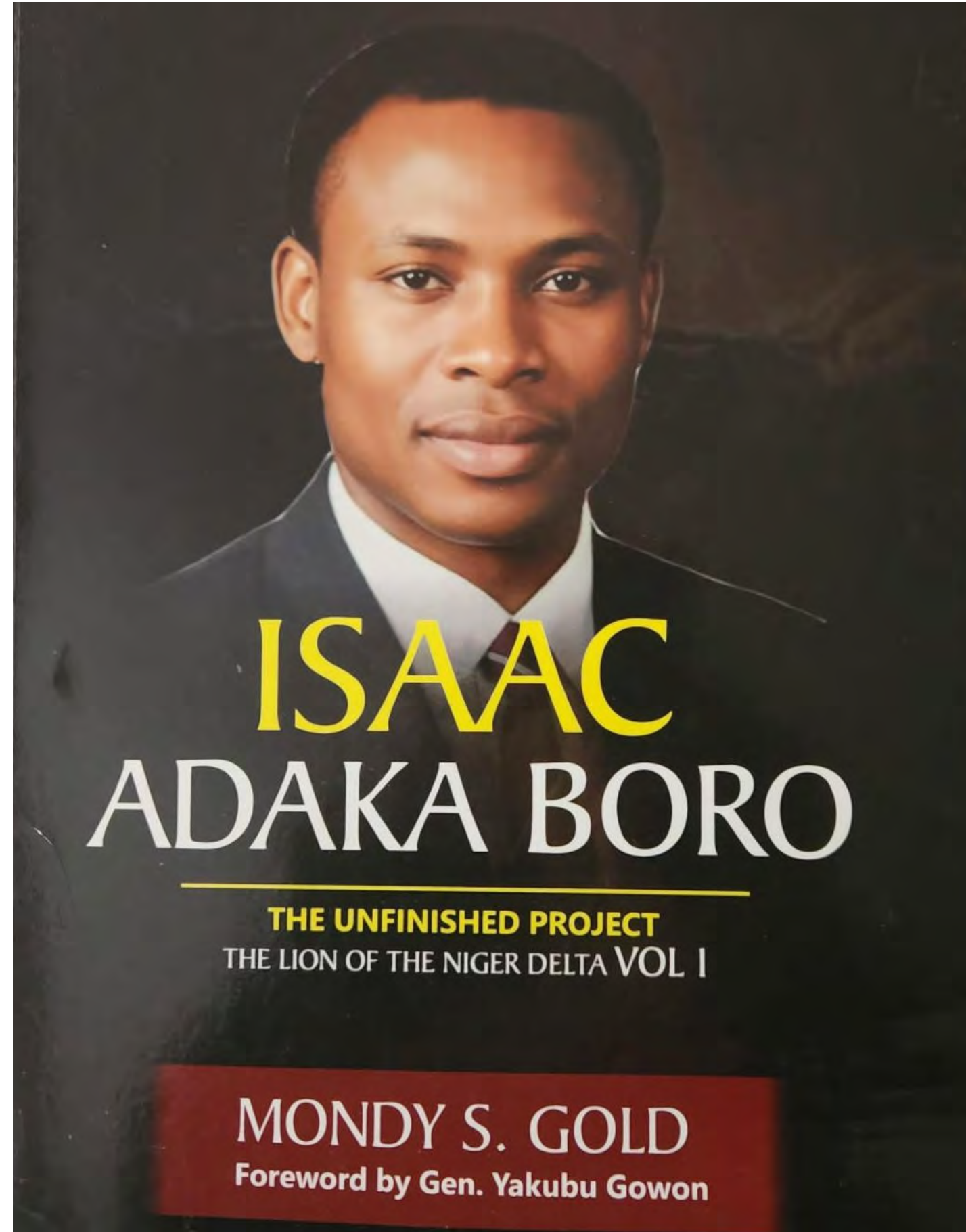
unspeakable suffering of those the folk hero left behind. Economic frustration, for instance, drove Esther, Boro's first daughter, into early marriage. As for Felix, Olubunmi and Deborah, Boro's other kids, there is no record about their economic conditions in a 21st Century Ijawland saturated with tens of billions of naira every month from pipeline surveillance contracts. I am related to the Boros by marriage. I agree Boro's children were neglected.

David, Boro's junior brother and Head of the Boro Family, reveals that Boro's widow and fatherless children were very much left to fend for themselves by Ijaw leaders. The exception was President Goodluck Jonathan whose fraternal creed of "No Boro should suffer" was faithfully implemented by Governors Seriake Dickson and Douye Diri. To David's regrets that Boro died in vain, Gold sums:

One of the most emotionally resonant elements of David's reflection is his acknowledgement of the "unwritten resolve of the people he died for not to fully rehabilitate the family." This indictment of the Niger Delta people, for whom Isaac Boro gave his life, reveals the moral paradox inherent in nationalistic struggles. David articulates the painful reality that while the Niger Delta people have benefitted from Isaac's sacrifices, his families continue to languish in neglect. (p.302).

**The Great Ijaw Paradox**

There is another paradox. In English there is a figure of speech called ellipsis, where you say something by not saying it. Elliptically, Gold confirms a latent conspiracy aimed at writing some canonical Ijaw nationalists out of relevance. Not once in his 374-page work did he



mention Felix Tuodolo, Oronto Douglas and Joseph Evah. For instance, the Kaiama Declaration was written by Douglas and Isaac Osuaka but signed by Tuodolo and TK Ogoriba.

Evah tendered four petitions before the Oputa Commission on Human Rights Violation

demanding/or claiming that (a) Gowon, Adekunle and Shell assassinated Boro (b) President Olusegun Obasanjo be tried for genocide against Odi people (c) Compensation for families of 25 Ijaw soldiers killed in the Okar's coup, and (d) Oil firms to pay Ijaws Eight Hundred Trillion Dollars for environmental damage. Oputa said the petition on Boro's death

was too dangerous and threw it out (see Banner News, April 9-18, 2001, front page). The indomitable Evah fought back in the High Court.

There is erasure in Gold's rendition of the resistance historiography (pp.21-22); omitting Henry Emomotimi Okah, the "General Master" of the "warriors." It is selective morality celebrating Boro

while disclaiming Okah. I call that the Great Ijaw Paradox.

**An Inverted Struggle**

The author sounds the alarm that post-Amnesty Niger Delta struggle is seriously degraded by the establishment. By promoting a few warlords who serve as safety valve

against wide-spread anger, Nigeria has succeeded in reducing the Boro legacy to an inverted struggle, akin to the mythical ouroboros, that devours itself while leaving intact the status quo:

In recent years, the Nigerian government, perhaps uncomfortable with dealing with decentralized, highly formidable, and amorphous militant groups, has pivoted towards a new approach: the promotion of identifiable warlords.... By elevating select militant leaders to positions of influence and granting them state-sanctioned security contracts, such as oil and gas pipeline surveillance, the government has effectively transformed erstwhile agitators into custodians of the very infrastructure they once sought to dismantle.... In this calculated gambit, the federal government has weakened the collective leverage of Niger Delta agitators, diffusing their revolutionary fervour while maintaining the uninterrupted flow of crude oil, the lifeblood of Nigeria's economy (p.24).

**Botched Proofreading**

That Gold quoted Sowore's statement of June 30, 2024 (p.166), while his work was published the following 2025, is an indication he rushed the publication of his manuscript. It shouldn't be so because his prodigious work is defective as it suffers "familiarity blindness" in editing. It is a cognitive phenomenon where a writer - even professional proofreaders are susceptible to this trick of the mind - fails to detect errors in a text because they are too familiar with its content.

For Gold's work to become the envisaged "comprehensive and globally available book about Major Boro" (p.270), which it credibly and amply qualifies for, these disadvantages must be corrected before the publication of the second edition:

One, the writer cited over twenty sources without footnotes, endnotes and bibliography. This leaves Gold on thin ice if researchers cannot verify sources of his materials. His Index is not properly catalogued alphabetically,

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**Four, the following words could have been used once with their synonyms substituting: Intersection, pivotal, nuanced, poignantly, resonates, testament, tapestry and resonance**

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manuscript and rushing to the publisher or the printing press to print it out. There is a kind of programme that any work must pass through for it to come out well.... Overseas they have literary agents and editors before the publisher comes in.... But when you just produce a manuscript this year, and you are in too much of a hurry, three months you go and print it, no matter how talented you are, that book will suffer some disadvantages (Chuks Oluigbo's "Keeping Hope Alive for Younger Nigerian Writers," *Businessday*, November 23, 2014).

For Gold's work to become the envisaged "comprehensive and globally available book about Major Boro" (p.270), which it credibly and amply qualifies for, these disadvantages must be corrected before the publication of the second edition:

One, the writer cited over twenty sources without footnotes, endnotes and bibliography. This leaves Gold on thin ice if researchers cannot verify sources of his materials. His Index is not properly catalogued alphabetically,

also.

Two, the Table of Contents is problematic. Consisting of sixteen chapters, the work is yoked with an over-bloated 217 subheadings: some no more than paragraphs of six lines. It is recommended that the 16 chapters be retained without subheadings.

Three, story lines in (a) The 3rd paragraph of page 43 is repeated on the 1st paragraph of page 176. (b) The 4th and 5th paragraphs of page 62 are repeated on 4th and 5th paragraphs of page 84. (c) Paragraphs 2-6 of page 64 are repeated verbatim in paragraphs 4-6 of page 85 and paragraphs 1-2 of page 86 while paragraphs 1-4 of page 65 are repeated verbatim in paragraphs 3-5 of page 86. (d) "Port Harcourt High Court: A Defining Moment of Courage and Values," on pages 73 and 74 is repeated on pages 74 and 75. (e) Similar repetitions abound elsewhere.

Four, the following words could have been used once with their synonyms substituting: Intersection, pivotal, nuanced, poignantly, resonates, testament, tapestry and resonance.

Five: Esther and David Boro's interviews are abridged and episodic. This makes it difficult for the reader to get the big picture. It is recommended the author publishes these interviews in full in the second edition as they portray the authentic Boro and his family circumstances not recorded elsewhere.

**Conclusion**

"Isaac Adaka Boro: Vol. 1" is relevant in understanding what to avoid in deescalating militancy in Ijawland and the larger Niger Delta. Written in flawless English, students, researchers, the diplomatic corps, Nigerian authoritative agencies and the global audience will gain immense insight into

the volatile Niger Delta oil politics. For instance, it makes sense recalling Boro's rebellion was not against the Nigeria state but the oppressive Igbo-dominated government of the old Eastern Region. Today, Ijaws and Igbos are reconciled as demonstrated by the massive support Igbos gave the Ijaw-born President Jonathan in 2011 and 2015.

But all the conditions that provoked Boro into taking up arms are here in 2026; this time being perpetuated by the Yoruba/Hausa/Fulani-dominated Federal Government. Developmental infrastructures are built and modernized all over Nigeria except in Ijaw territories (p. 345). The Ruling Trinity has also refused to create Toru Ebe and Oil Rivers States for Ijaws, not minding our overwhelming contribution to the national economy. The morale of Gold's work is that Ijaw exclusion is a catalyst for another round of armed struggle, Boro 3.0. Henry Okah being Boro 2.0.



Akamande is Leader of Thought of Izon Ebe. Title: Isaac Adaka Boro: The Unfinished Project: The Lion of the Niger Delta Vol 1. Author: Professor Mondy S. Gold. Year of Publication: 2025. Pages: 374. Publishers: NA. Reviewer: Kabowei Akamande (Phone: 0703 846 3111; Email: oweiak@yahoo.com).

# Health and Living

## Group urges govt to provide clean water in communities to curb waterborne diseases

...Marks International World Water Day in Bodo Community, Rivers State

PIUS DUKOR

**K**ebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre, a non-governmental organisation, has called on the Federal and Rivers State governments to provide constant water supply in Bodo City, Gokana Local Government Area, to stop water-related diseases in the community.

Emem Okon, executive director of Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre, made the call Wednesday at an event to mark the 2026 International World Water Day.

She noted that all other local sources of water supply in the past in the area are no longer in existence.

Speaking to an audience at Tegu Waterfront in Bodo City, Gokana Local Government Area, Okon drew the attention of the political class and community leaders to the importance of clean water.

Represented at the



event by Idogesit Smart, the programme officer of Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre, Okon maintained that the theme of this year's event 'Water and Gender' emphasised that water isn't just a human-rights issue, but

an equality issue.

According to her, when one billion women still lack clean and safe drinking water and girls spend about 250 million hours a day collecting it, the crisis is felt hardest by them.

Emem explained that

in the Niger Delta, where water bodies are polluted by hydrocarbon; community schools, health centres do not have water supplies and women lack clean water to use for their families and to service their petty enterprises; have increased

the call for access to clean drinking water.

"Today remains significant, because water access is important to life, health, education, livelihood, and opportunity right in our neighbourhoods," she said.

She stated that when and where water is unavailable, women and girls lose time and safety and called on communities, government and even individuals to

involve women in water committees, because they are in a better position to know the importance of water.

She tasked policy makers to listen to women in water projects and also support women water projects in various communities, while pushing for adequate policies that fund and empower women. "Men, women, girls, boys, babies, persons with disability need water to live," she said.

Stella Amayie, a civil society activist, said that over 2 billion people all over the world lack access

to water supply. She called on government at all levels to make adequate budget to provide clean water for citizens.

Amayie expressed concerns over the lack of portable water in local communities and how expensive it is to buy, since the responsibility of providing water rests on women.

Constance Meju, one of the board members of Kebetkache Development and Resource Centre and a publisher of a newspaper, Bodo City Community, to report the case of lack of water to government and its agencies such as the state government, local government and the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Programme (HYPREP) to look into the epileptic supply of water in the community.

As earlier stated, the theme of this year's event was 'Water and Gender' with the slogan, "Where water flows, equality grows."

## Kaduna rolls out free health insurance for 32,000 vulnerable persons

BENJAMIN AGESAN

**T**he Kaduna State Government has enrolled over 32,000 vulnerable residents across its 23 local government areas into the Kaduna State Contributory Health Scheme (KADCHS), providing them with one year of free healthcare services.

As of December 2025, the state had enrolled about 114,000 vulnerable persons, bringing the total to 146,000.

Abubakar Hassan, director general of the Kaduna State Contributory Health Management Authority (KADCHMA), disclosed this during an enrolment planning meeting of the Health Financing Technical Working Group held at the Authority's conference hall. He commended the support of development partners working in the state for expanding access to affordable and quality healthcare, noting that the intervention was expected to significantly reduce maternal and child mortality in the state.

Hassan reaffirmed that KADCHMA remained open to partnerships with organisations, groups, and individuals willing to support



improved healthcare delivery.

According to the plan, beneficiaries were distributed across the 23 local government areas based on population size and poverty index, using 2026 data from the Kaduna State Bureau of Statistics.

Of the total enrollees, 60 percent were expected to be pregnant women, while 40 percent were expected to be children under the age of five.

KADCHMA was established by law in 2016 as a part of efforts to achieve Universal Health Coverage in the state.

The agency is responsible for regulating, managing, and implementing the contributory

health insurance scheme, which pools funds from government, employers, and individuals to provide accessible and affordable healthcare services.

Since its inception, KADCHMA has expanded coverage through various equity programmes targeting vulnerable groups, including pregnant women, children, the elderly, and persons living in poverty.

The scheme aligns with Nigeria's broader health financing reforms aimed at reducing out-of-pocket spending and improving health outcomes, particularly in maternal and child health.

## Stakeholders task states to commit more resources to health security amid recurring outbreaks

GODSGIFT ONYEDINEFU

**S**takeholders have urged Nigerian states to commit more resources to health security, warning that weak sub-national systems continue to undermine efforts to contain recurring disease outbreaks and prepare for future pandemics.

The call was made on Thursday in Abuja during the unveiling of the Public Health Emergency Management (PHEM) Strategy (2026–2028) by eHealth Africa.

Participants at the event said Nigeria continues to grapple with an evolving range of public health threats from infectious disease outbreaks to climate-related emergencies, even as gaps persist in surveillance, coordination and response systems.

They noted that while states are seeing increased revenues, this has not translated into stronger investment in disease surveillance, emergency preparedness and response systems. Meanwhile, outbreaks typically originate at the sub-national level, where investment, coordination and technical capacity remain weak.

Mohammed Salem, a representative from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said state governments must elevate health

security to a top political priority, stressing that leadership gaps continue to weaken outbreak response.

"State leadership must put health security on the front burner," he said, citing recent Lassa fever outbreaks where some states struggled to activate incident management systems due to lack of high-level support.

"No matter what efforts we make, if the leadership is not there, the system will not work," he said.

Salem also pointed to persistent infrastructure gaps, particularly in laboratory capacity, describing as unacceptable the continued practice of transporting samples over long distances for basic diagnosis.

"You can imagine a disease like cholera, which should be a national embarrassment, and samples are still being moved from Sokoto to Abuja for PCR testing. We need systems that can serve as resilient cushions when pandemics occur," he urged.

Oluyemi Oluyinka, representative from the Africa CDC, said Nigeria's health security efforts would remain limited unless resources and capacity are strengthened at the state level, where outbreaks originate.

"A chain is only as strong as its weakest point. Outbreaks

happen in the states, and that is where investment should go," she said.

She questioned whether increased allocations to sub-national governments are being effectively directed to health, raising concerns about funding priorities, disbursement delays and utilisation.

"What are those funds being used for? Is there an increase in allocation to health, and if so, when are those funds released?" she queried.

Oluyinka also stressed that beyond technical capacity, states need stronger leadership and coordination to manage emergency responses, as well as real-time data systems linking communities, local governments and national authorities for faster detection and containment.

Speaking on the PHEM strategy, Kazeem Balogun, Senior manager, programmes, eHealth Africa said it is built on four pillars: strengthening coordination through Public Health Emergency Operations Centres, adopting a "One Health" approach, enhancing community-based surveillance, and improving early detection systems. He said the framework is designed to shift Nigeria's approach from reactive responses to proactive preparedness, particularly at the grassroots level.

# Health and Living

## NNPC/Seplat JV executes 'Eye Can See' CSI programme in Imo

...Offers 23,447 free eye screenings, 797 surgeries, 13,525 eye glasses to date

SABY ELEMBA

**N**NNPC/Seplat Joint Venture (JV) has screened a total of 23,447 optical cases, conducted 797 surgeries and given out over 13,525 eye glasses to date, to the beneficiaries, under its 'Eye Can See', Corporate Social Investment (CSI) programme.

Chioma Afe, director, External Affairs and Social Performance, Seplat Energy Plc, disclosed this on Wednesday during the opening ceremony of the 'Eye Can See' CSI programme 2026 edition in Owerri, Imo State capital.

Represented by Esther Icha, the general manager, Corporate Social Investment & Social Performance, Seplat Energy Plc, explained that the initiative was designed to impact the health and wellbeing of host communities by providing free access to essential eye care services, including screenings, reading glasses and cataract surgeries.

This is as the beneficiaries were also



Beneficiaries of NNPC/Seplat Energy JV "Eye Can See," Owerri

screened for other health challenges like high blood pressure and diabetes, amongst others, and provided with professional counselling, drugs and referrals for patients as needed.

The three-day outreach, held from March 24 to March 26, 2026 in Owerri, attracted a large turnout of men, women, and children from across the state and neighbouring communities

with an average of 700 people being screened per day.

She stated that cost of eye care, which is currently out of reach for many, makes it very imperative for the NNPC/Seplat JV to sustain the programme and drive penetration; thus, impacting a wide array of persons in the communities from the inception of the intervention health programme in 2017.

Afe further said that the initiative aligns with the "United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 on Good Health and Well-Being," and underscores the Joint Venture's broader commitment to delivering sustainable, high-impact social investments. "For us as a company, we are very happy to do this because of the positive impacts on the stakeholders at the

community level," she said.

In his remarks, Olarewaju Iganda, acting chief upstream investment officer, NNPC Upstream Investment Management Services (NUIMS), lauded Seplat Energy for driving the initiative which has seen the JV partners restored not just vision but hope to many members of host communities.

Igandan, represented by Bunmi Lawson, deputy manager, External Relations, NUIMS, said that the: "NNPC Limited is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of people who host our businesses and operations. These efforts have changed many lives, giving people the opportunity to see clearly and enjoy life again.

"We recognise that there are still many challenges and there is more work to be done. The goal is not just eye care but to support welfare and more prosperous communities."

Meanwhile, some of the beneficiaries who spoke had expressed delight at the opportunity and thanked the JV partners for bailing

them out of critical health challenges.

Fred Nnamdi, Igolo Njemanze, and Ernest Onyeneke, three of whom benefited from eye surgeries, amongst others, commended the Joint Venture for giving them a pleasant experience with a wonderful life-changing initiative free.

They commended the team of medical personnel for excellent service delivery, which has restored their sight and given them a good chance of better life in the days ahead.

"It was a wonderful experience. I never expected this. It went beyond my imagination, highly successful. I trust God that my sight will be wonderful. God will bless them," Nnamdi said.

Also, Igolo Njemanze expressed gratitude to the JV partners, saying, "for the past two years I have not been using my right eye to see, but yesterday, I underwent surgery and everything went fine. I thank the JV partners and I pray that God will continue to bless them."

On his part, Onyeneke, a community leader, recounted his experience as very pleasant, commending the medical team, saying, "the doctors were wonderful. I am so happy with the medical team, to the organisers, they have tried, they are watching out for the poor masses, the young and the old."

## Oyo flags off integrated health outreaches across 33 LGAs, commemorates World Tuberculosis Day 2026

...Releases counterpart funding to further strengthen TB treatment

REMI FEYISIPO

**T**he Oyo State Government has flagged off Integrated Health Outreaches across all 33 Local Government Areas, offering free screening, testing, and counseling services for Tuberculosis, HIV, and Malaria.

This is as the state joined the global community to mark World Tuberculosis Day 2026 at Molete Primary Health Centre, Ibadan South West Local Government Area.

Oluwaserimi Ajetunmobi, medical doctor and the Commissioner for Health reaffirmed the state government's commitment to ending Tuberculosis

public health concern with significant social and economic impact.

She noted that the disease is both preventable and curable with appropriate interventions.

As part of the commemoration, Ajetunmobi highlighted the State's commitment to evidence-based strategies, including early detection, effective treatment, and strengthened community engagement, supported by ongoing investments in primary healthcare and overall health system strengthening.

Referencing the 2026 theme, "Yes! We Can End TB!", the Commissioner stressed the need for sustained collaboration and increased investments



to bridge existing gaps, noting that many TB cases still remain undiagnosed.

Key interventions in the State include decentralizing TB services to Primary Health Care

facilities, active case finding through outreach teams, and the deployment of advanced diagnostic tools to improve early detection and treatment outcomes.

She called on stakeholders and the public to support efforts aimed at reducing stigma and promoting early health-seeking behaviour, especially for individuals

with persistent cough, lasting more than two weeks. Earlier in his remarks, Kehinde Ayinde, medical doctor and the Permanent Secretary, Oyo State Ministry of Health, disclosed that the State Government has released counterpart funding to further strengthen TB treatment efforts.

He urged all stakeholders to play their roles in eradicating TB, in line with the national drive of "Led by Government, Powered by the People."

Implementing partners present at the event, included the World Health Organization, Damien Foundation Belgium, Christianah Olawumi Foundation, Apin Public Health Initiative, and Institute of Human Virology Nigeria, commended the State Government for the progress made in TB control and pledged continued support towards the complete eradication of the disease.

# Towards 2027

## PDP crisis: New PDP leaders emerge Sunday, as Wike's faction holds convention

### ...Turaki faction heads to Supreme Court

TONY AILEMEN, Abuja

A new National Working Committee (NWC) of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), is expected to emerge on Sunday in Abuja, as the faction loyal to Nyesom Wike holds its national convention at the Velodrome of the National Stadium, Abuja.

The faction has nominated Abdulrahman Mohammed, to emerge as national chairman, Samuel Anyanwu as the party's national secretary, amongst others.

The group loyal to Wike, minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), has continued to tighten its grip on the party's structure, ahead of the faction's National Convention planned for Sunday, March 29.

BusinessDaySunday checks show that the National Stadium Velodrome, Abuja venue of the factional PDP convention has been set as at Friday, with minor touches to beautiful the environment, going on as at the time of this report.



Wike-led faction of PDP

The convention is coming just few hours after that of the ruling All Progressive Congress APC, which held at the Eagle Square Friday and Saturday.

Amongst the several plans, the group has openly declared that it would be backing the re-election of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for President in the 2027 general election.

Abdulrahman Mohammed, the group's national chairman, while speaking on the preparations for the convention, foreclosed the chances of incorporating the Turaki-led group into the Caretaker Committee consti-

tuted by them, which was recognised by the Court of Appeal, as the only authentic body to manage the party's affairs.

They also described the Sunday's convention as non-negotiable, among the several "no-go-areas" as preconditions for reconciling with the Turaki group.

The National Executive Committee (NWC) of the Tanimu Turaki-led PDP, on Friday revealed that it has filed an appeal at the Supreme Court against the recent judgement by the Abuja Court of Appeal, annulling the party's

November 15 and 16, 2025 convention in Ibadan.

The decision to appeal the judgement was ratified on Friday at the faction's NWC meeting in Abuja, indicating that the current crisis in the party is far from abating.

Recall that the Abuja Division of the Court of Appeal had while delivering its judgement, in the appeal filed by the Turaki faction, upheld a lower court's ruling that annulled the November 2025 Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) National Convention held in Ibadan, Oyo State.

The court validated the restriction on INEC from recognising the convention's outcomes, citing non-compliance with the party's constitution, the 1999 Constitution, and the Electoral Act 2022.

The judgement also invalidated the elections of the Turaki-led National Working Committee (NWC), imposing a fine of N2 million on the group for disobeying the lower court order which had restrained the party from going ahead with the Ibadan convention.

Turaki, speaking at the party's 103rd

National Executive Committee meeting on Friday, said the NEC ratified decisions of the various organs of the party, including the filing of an appeal against the judgement at the Supreme Court.

He disclosed that the group had postponed its meeting to enable in-depth consultations to look at some of the developments microscopically, so that by the time we now sit as we are sitting today, we'll be in a better position to inform you of all the developments both within the Court and outside, the Court.

He expressed confidence that the party would be able to present candidates for elective positions, adding that "for us in PDP, all hope is not lost. It's also important for me to inform us that every conceivable effort is being made by the leadership to ensure that PDP is on the ballot in all the elections in 2027.

"It's also my pleasure to inform us also that the leadership is assiduously working around the clock to ensure that PDP remains a veritable platform for all our members wishing to contest for elections, both in the 2027 and beyond."

## No need to fight against Anioma State creation - NNABSCO

MERCY ENOCH, Asaba

Senator Godswill Akpabio's statement that the capital of the proposed Anioma State would be Asaba, should encourage those against the Anioma State creation to embrace the bill and join forces to ensure the realisation of the proposed new state.

Akpabio said he supports the bill but for the new state to be actualised, it depends on the unity of the people.

But Kingsley Kainebe, a citizen of the North Delta (Anioma) and president Ndi Na Asu Bia Socio-Cultural Organization (NNABSCO), believes that there is unity among the people.

He said: "Our people are united. Those against the creation of Anioma State are those feeling insecure being that the person who is spear-heading the course for this state creation is Senator Ned Nwoko.

"Everyone knows that we the citizens of Delta North are due for this state creation, and that there is nothing in between us and our brothers in the South-East.

"It is the enemies of Senator Ned Nwoko that are feeling politically insecure but we know that in Delta North we are united in this course already. The little division I saw was when a statement was made that the Capital of the Proposed Anioma State will move from Asaba in Delta to Orlu in Imo State. The news came as a way of creating division of interest among us. We have been able to let people know that the news came to destabilise or cause disagreement among us.

"But now that it is clear that there is no intention of moving the state capital from Asaba, I think the ones that have



been crying should stop because there shouldn't be any need again for them to be crying.

"They should rather come and join forces with us towards the realisation of the proposed new state."

**The role of NNABSCO in the proposed Anioma State**

Kainebe disclosed the NNABSCO is known for Igbo Unity. "We are working at uniting the indigenous Igbo people spread across the 13 states of the federation. In doing so, when we heard about the constitutional amendment, we thought it will be good if we move fast to realise this Anioma State so that it will put an end the identity issue we are having on this side.

"We submitted memoranda to the National Assembly; we met Senator Ned Nwoko as the senator representing Delta North Senatorial District (the Anioma geo-political area) and he told us that the idea is good and that he had a similar idea. That was how he took it up and sponsored the bill in the Senate. Since then, he has been working with us and doing everything he can to ensure that the bill succeed. We have

passed the second reading, we have passed the public hearing and I believe that soon, justice would be served and Anioma State will be created", he stated.

**Protests against Anioma State creation meaningless - Atagana-Ofochi**

Benjamin Atagana-Ofochi, secretary of NNABSCO, also told BusinessDay that those protesting against the success of the proposed Anioma State Creation, should see their fight as inconsequential because the bill has passed the level of protest. It is only the referendum that can say No and it will stand, he said. Atagana-Ofochi, a lawyer and legal adviser to the group, revealed this in an interview with BusinessDay, declaring that it is only God, President Bola Tinubu and the National Assembly that would stop the bill.

"What the Senate President said is what we have been working towards. His statement is just to add to what we have been agitating that it comes through. It's good news for us basically.

Explaining further, he said, "Senator Akpabio's statement is just conditional. What he said is if the state assemblies will pass the bill... For me, being a law-

yer, it is the right statement for him to make because there is a rigid procedure for the creation of states. It is not something that somebody will wake up with a fiat. We are not under military; we are in a constitutional democracy.

Making it more clearly, Atagana-Ofochi explained, "The process is that the bill gets to the state assemblies, which is just simple majority and as at now, APC controls outright majority - 31 states. Once the president, being an APC president, gives an order that they should vote, of course, it is a national consensus. The whole federation is in agreement that Anioma State should be created. So, there is a consensus already and once it gets to that stage, it will scale through. Then, it will now come to the stage where Ndigbo will vote and the South-East will only vote and the majority will win. So, what the Senate President said is more or less a constitutional statement."

Months ago, the lawmakers in the Delta State House of Assembly, the Local Government Chairmen and councilors had kicked against the Anioma State Creation, demanding for Anioma State would remain in the South-South with Asaba as state capital. However, youths and women and other representatives from the nine LGAs that made up Anioma area in the present Delta State, rejected the position of the political leaders and traditional rulers. They passed a Vote of confidence on Anioma State that would be zoned to the South-East with Asaba as the Capital. This is an opportunity for us to join our kits and kins in the South-East, they said. They were joined in the peaceful protest by the Ika Igbo Speaking People in Edo State.

Atagana-Ofochi maintained that, "Their protest is meaningless because

Anioma State proposal has gone pass that level which any protest can succeed. It is only the referendum that will say NO and it will stand. So, the protest against Anioma State creation is inconsequential.

The bill is now at the committee level. Committee referred it to the caucus but the advantage Anioma has is that - if you listen to what Benjamin Kalu, the deputy speaker of the Federal House of Representatives said, that the powers that be do not want to create a state in the South-East for the region to remain what it is; that they want to create a state that will increase the territory of the South-East.

"So, Anioma State will not increase the territory of the South-East because Anim is only fragmenting the South-East. The only proposal that will increase the territory of South-East is Anioma. We have it on good authority that the president has assured us that he will support the creation of Anioma to increase the territory of South-East.

The deputy speaker is from the South-East. The Anim State supporters went to meet him to lobby him and he told them to have open mind to the position of the powers that be.

**"Except God and President Tinubu fail us!"**

The president has given Senator Ned Nwoko and Anioma people his word that the new state will be created to expand the territory of the South-East. They are not creating state just for the fun of it. They are creating state to expand the territory of the south east.

There were seven bills that were proposed for the South-East. The deputy speaker was initially supporting Anim but had to change in support Anioma because that is the position of the powers that be - National Assembly and presidency.

# Towards 2027

## Five politicians to watch as 2027 nears

ZEBULON AGOMUO

**B**ola Ahmed Tinubu, president of Nigeria, is without a doubt the most-talk-about politician in the country today. Without him saying it, many people have been mouthing his re-election ambition and have been campaigning for him. Although the APC presidential primary has not held, the party has already declared a no-contest opportunity for any other member of the party. Tinubu has been given a free ticket as a sole contender for the APC ticket. His foot soldiers are all over the place working for his re-election. Ahead of the election, he has been able to woo about seven governors from the opposition parties to join his party. For many state governors, the fear of Tinubu is the beginning of wisdom. For now, there is nobody in the broom party that can rock the boat for him. In the 2023 presidential election, Tinubu and his party did not do well in some geopolitical zones of the country, major reason he went on the aggres-



sive drive to get governors from such zones to bolster his chances in 2027. Although there is so much pain in the land arising from some of the policies of his administration, which ordinarily should work against his re-election, observers say that the discontent may not be tick enough to dislodge him at the polls, particularly given the fact that

there seems to be no structured opposition to galvanise the people and divert the votes.

From the look of things, President Tinubu will continue to wax stronger ahead of the election as the opposition continue to grope amid disagreement over who becomes what amongst them.

**Atiku Abubakar**

**T**he former Vice President of Nigeria is an astute politician, a man whose steps are being watched as the country inches close to 2027. What Atiku Abubakar does or fails to do in relation to the coming election will positively impact of otherwise the outcome of the process. Many Nigerians are watching with keen interest if the Adamawa-born politician will pick the ticket of the African Democratic Congress (ADC). Should Atiku pick the ADC ticket, that might lead to a disintegration of the party as many believe that such a development could jeopardise the chances of the party, since the thinking is that power should remain in the South till 2031. If Atiku decides to yield ground for a southerner to pick the ticket, that would attract to him a welter of respect from across the country. In the run up to the 2023 general election, Atiku's insistence to pick the presidential ticket of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) changed the story of the umbrella association. Since that election, the party has os-



cillated from one crisis to another, leading to the exodus of many chieftains of the party. That decision to pick the ticket against the run of events led to the mass defection of many state governors formerly on its platform to

the All Progressives Congress (APC). Atiku has continued his consultation drive across the country, which has left no one in doubt that he is in ADC to contest. He is, indeed, a great figure to watch.

**Peter Obi**

**T**he former governor of Anambra State and presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in 2023, is one politician that cannot be ignored for now. Obi came into the consciousness of Nigerian voters ahead of the last general election. The voters, particularly among the youth, wanted a change and decided to queue behind him. In a country where money determined everything in politics, Obi's "We no dey give Shishi" mantra could not discourage his followers. Since after the election, his influence has continued to the point that wherever he goes across the country, he enjoys rousing welcome. His determination to preside over the country is not in doubt. It is this burning desire that makes him to run from one party to another. When it became obvious that he would not be able to pick the ticket in 2022 on the PDP platform, he moved into the LP, where he made a good showing. When the LP became factionalised and fractured, he defected to the ADC, a move



that has created a negative impression of him in the eyes of his die-hard critics, who now brand him a "rolling stone." Some are saying that his decision to rejoin the likes of Atiku was a negative one, but his supporters are saying that in politics, there is no permanent foe. They cite instances with many aides of

President Tinubu, who had smeared the man with all manner of dirt, but today are licking those things they threw at him with their tongues, even with relish! Whether Obi picks the ticket of the ADC or not, he will continue to be a man to watch as the country inches towards the 2027 election.

**Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso**

**R**abiu Kwankwaso appears to be a bride being courted by all political parties and those interested in contesting presidential election in 2027. Many politicians consider him very strategic given his electoral value as a result of his cult followership in his native Kano State. He is so valued now that whenever he meets with any big politicians, tongues will start to wag, and the media will become animated. That was the case when recently he met with Peter Obi. When sometime last year, Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, suddenly resigned as the national chairman of the APC in what seemed controversial circumstance, many speculated that the president was trying to woo and head-hunt Kwankwaso to step into that position, having his eyes on 2027. Grapevine had it that the Kwankwaso's godfather proved tough and gave what could pass off as impossible conditions. When the carrots dangled before him failed, Abuja decided to go for his trusted allies to whittle down his power. In what could

also pass off as a betrayal of the century, Abba Kabir Yusuf, who was installed as governor of Kano by the help of Kwankwaso, gave his godfather a Judas-kind of kiss, and jilted him. Even with the state political machinery seemingly in Yusuf's palms, neither the APC nor other opposition party wants to leave Kwankwaso alone. They know what he stands for in Kano politics. He has a huge electoral capital for any party that gets his support. Whatever Kwankwaso decides to do ahead of 2027, he will continue to be a political figure to watch.

You know why, the state has 44 local government areas, with estimated population of 16,253,549 (Sixteen million, two hundred and fifty-three thousand, five hundred and forty-nine) people.

Its huge number of LGAs makes some states such as Bayelsa (eight), Gombe (11), Ebonyi (13), Nasarawa (13), Niger (15), Abia (17) and others green with envy.

But truth is, to be more relevant in the 2027 election, he has to go into an alliance as his New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) will not give him that visibility.



**Nyesom Wike**

**T**he current minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike is a man that needs no introduction in Nigeria. Not many people will remember him for all that he did in Rivers when he presided over the state for straight eight years. His activities in the PDP since 2023 have been known to everyone. The politician, who believes so much in the use of might to bulldoze his way into power, has drawn to himself too many enemies. But his achievements at the FCT are drawing plaudits. The Rivers-born politician is suffering a hangover of the 2023 presidential election. At best, he has not moved on since after the acrimonious presidential primary of the PDP in 2022. Wike has sworn to hold the party down and he is not relenting. He has succeeded in chasing away the heavyweights in the party into other parties. He has also openly said that he would work for the re-election of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and he is moving towards that. There are indications that the PDP faction he controls will anoint Tinubu as its adopted presidential candidate. Fillers have it that

his game plan is not to allow the PDP die; that he would ensure the party wins up to three to four states in the general election, to continue to use the party as a bargaining chip. Those who have followed Wike's brand of politics say that the man is capable of many things in the coming 2027 election. While he will determine who becomes what in Rivers, his faction of the PDP will go into activities that may live many Nigerians tongue-tied.

Wike has taken his bitterness to an intolerable level. He has destroyed opposition politics in Nigeria, at least, for now.

His politics of "If you Tarka me, I will Daboh you" with Atiku Abubakar has ruined, not only PDP, but the entire country.

For context, the phrase stemmed from a public feud between then Minister Joseph Tarka and political rival Godwin Daboh. That was in 1974.

It became a popular idiom meaning a mutual threat to expose damaging secrets or retaliate fiercely if attacked, signifying a tit-for-tat battle of blackmail and exposure. The question is, where is Tarka; where is Daboh today?



# Towards 2027

## Lagos needs fresh leadership, not selective projects – Adeoye

Laja Adeoye is president and chief executive officer of Fendini Group, a leading real estate developer and gubernatorial aspirant in Lagos State ahead of the 2027 elections. In this interview with INIOBONG IWOK, he spoke on his plans for the state and why he is in the gubernatorial race. He said his approach would be issue-based, while addressing issues such as housing shortages, traffic, and unemployment with practical solutions. Excerpt:

**C**an you tell Lagosians who you are beyond politics?

I am Prince Laja Adeoye (PLA), a real Estate Entrepreneur, and business man. I am the founder and CEO of Fendini Ltd, a property development and management company, where we deliver smart, secure, and sustainable housing solutions across Nigeria, including landmark projects like Rayfield Gardens City Estate. I hold a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics from the University of Lagos and a Master's in Property Development and Management from Leadcity University Ibadan, Oyo State.

I come from a heritage rooted in leadership and service. Beyond business, I am a thought leader, media strategist, and passionate advocate for youth empowerment, innovation, and nation-building, driven by the values of integrity, vision, action, and impact.

**Why are you seeking to govern Lagos at this time?**

Lagos is at a critical crossroads. Our state, Nigeria's commercial heartbeat, faces persistent challenges, traffic gridlock, flooding, inconsistent policies, civil service inefficiencies, consistent power supply outage for residents and businesses, rising living costs, a severe housing deficit, and insufficient job opportunities for our teeming youth and working population. After careful assessment of the current state of affairs, I believe the time is now for fresh, transformative leadership that moves beyond selective flagship projects to deliver inclusive prosperity for every Lagosian, regardless of class or location. With my proven track record as a successful real estate developer and entrepreneur who has delivered tangible results in urban planning and development, I am ready to bring private-sector efficiency, innovation, and people-centered governance to turn Lagos into a truly prosperous megacity by 2027.

**What specific gaps in governance motivated your ambition?**

The gaps are clear and urgent: persistent flooding across Lagos, inconsistent policies that puts the people at disadvantage, power supply shortages, whereas Lagos can have independent power projects (IPP) at various business clusters, and residential zones across the IBILE divisions. Inadequate affordable housing that has left many in slums, chronic traffic congestion crippling daily life and productivity, rising cost of living that squeezes families and businesses that further drives and remove the indigenous people away from Lagos to outskirts. Insufficient job creation for youths and women, inadequate healthcare for the aged, women and children, security problems, and over-reliance on federal allocations instead of diversified local



Adeoye

economic growth. Current efforts have been incremental and selective, not holistic or inclusive. As someone who understands Lagos's economic dynamics intimately and knows how to tackle these challenges without being an appendage to any godfather, I am motivated to close these gaps with practical, innovative solutions that put residents first.

**The PDP has struggled in Lagos for years—what will you do differently to make the party competitive?**

The PDP must evolve from past setbacks into a party of credible, results-driven governance. What I will do differently and demonstrate is to leverage my private-sector experience to introduce innovative, people-centered policies, promote economic diversification, and grassroots mobilisation that reconnects the party with ordinary Lagosians.

I will focus on unity within the PDP and broader opposition forces, transparent accountability, and delivering visible impacts in housing, create friendly and enabling business environment, protect people's businesses and enterprises, create jobs, and build massive infrastructure that will support more businesses and economic expansion that will attract real FDIs. This is not business as usual; it is about returning Lagos to its people with fresh leadership that

challenges the status quo effectively.

**How do you plan to challenge the long-standing dominance of the APC in Lagos politics?**

By offering a credible, formidable alternative rooted in proven delivery and vision. I represent fresh, innovative, and people-centered leadership that the ruling APC has not provided. Through strategic alliances, like the strong backing from the Lagos For Prosperity Group and galvanising oppositions like IPAC and other committed agents of Better Lagos for ALL, we are building momentum across youths, entrepreneurs, community leaders, and disillusioned residents. My approach will be issue-based: addressing real pains like housing shortages, traffic, and unemployment with practical solutions drawn from my real estate expertise and entrepreneurial success. We will rally all democratic forces, run a robust grassroots campaign, and demonstrate that Lagos deserves better, transformative prosperity, not selective projects at high cost without accountability.

**What lessons has PDP learned from previous electoral losses in the state?**

In 2023 for instance, I ran for the House of Representatives, but the previous losses have taught us the importance of strong grassroots structures, unified party machinery, and connecting directly with the aspira-

tions of everyday Lagosians rather than relying on national momentum alone.

We have learned that voters reward tangible results, accountability, and inclusive development over rhetoric.

The PDP is now reborn with strategic leadership and a renewed focus on people centered governance. In Lagos, we are intensifying efforts to reclaim power by presenting candidates with proven track records, like myself, who can deliver real development and better Lagos for all and make the party competitive once again.

**What is your three-point agenda for Lagos if elected in 2027?**

I have more than 3 agenda such as education, healthcare, security, and others, however, based on your questions, my three-point agenda is simple, focused, and actionable: Affordable Housing Revolution, deliver massive low- and middle-income housing through public-private partnerships (PPP), innovative financing models, and sustainable urban planning to end the housing deficit and reduce slums. The reoccurring flooding in Lagos will be worked on to protect residential and businesses. In addition, I will promote civil service reform with a better reward system, that will employ, train and make our administration very efficient. Economic diversification and job creation – boost entrepreneurship, tech hubs, SMEs, tourism, ocean economy, agriculture, and industrial clusters to generate millions of jobs, reduce reliance on federal allocations, and empower youths, women, and underserved communities. In addition, I will work with all critical stakeholders such as the business community, the youths, women and traditional institutions to make life better for all Lagosians fostering unity amongst all. Infrastructure and Sustainable Development – Modernise transportation (expanded rail and BRT), build more roads across the Lagos IBILE divisions, improve education and healthcare access, enhance security, promote local government autonomy, and implement sustainable waste management and environmental protection.

**How will your administration address the rising cost of living in Lagos?**

We will tackle it head-on by creating sustainable jobs through economic diversification, making housing affordable to free up family incomes, and supporting SMEs and the informal sector with access to finance, training, and markets.

Policies will focus on reducing dependency on imports via local production in agriculture and industry, while ensuring efficient public services that lower daily expenses on transport and utilities. Prosperity must reach every Lagosians not

just a few. My administration will also work on stopping multiple and duplicity of tax which is a source of burden to businesses.

**What specific reforms will you introduce in transportation, housing, and waste management?**

Transportation, we will expand rail networks, build and rehabilitate more roads across the IBILE divisions, build underground drainages and expand, and deepened surface drainages to contain flooding which impact mostly on transportation, modernise BRT operations, and implement smart traffic solutions to ease gridlock and improve mobility for all. Housing, we will launch a revolution in affordable, sustainable schemes using PPPs, adherence to building codes, and innovative financing to provide decent homes for low, and middle, income earners and protect the removal of indigenous people of Lagos due to housing problems. For waste management, we will prioritise sustainable environment practices, modern waste systems, and recycling to keep Lagos clean, green, and livable for future generations.

**Lagos is Nigeria's commercial hub—how will you expand economic opportunities for youths?**

By turning Lagos into a hub of opportunity through massive investment in tech hubs, skills development, entrepreneurship programs, and sectors like tourism, agriculture, and industrial clusters. My administration will create millions of sustainable jobs, prioritise youth and women inclusion, and reduce over-dependence on oil or federal revenue by fostering local innovation and private-sector growth. Young people will not just survive; they will thrive and lead the prosperity agenda.

**What is your plan for supporting SMEs and informal sector workers? How would you attract foreign investment?**

For SMEs and informal sector workers, we will provide easier access to affordable credit, business training, market linkages, and regulatory reforms that protect and empower them as the backbone of our economy. Tax incentives and one stop support centres will help them scale and formalise where beneficial. To attract foreign investment, my administration will create a secure, predictable, and business-friendly environment with improved infrastructure, policy stability, and incentives tailored to key sectors like tech, real estate, tourism, and manufacturing.

Leveraging my international networks and private-sector credibility, we will market Lagos as Africa's premier investment destination, transparent, innovative, and ready for partnership. Prosperity must be inclusive, and the gain of the FDI will be channeled to create jobs and build capacity for all Lagosians.

# MSME Digest

## Nigeria's Startup Act struggles to take root as states lag behind

KENNETH ATHEKAME

Four years after Nigeria passed its landmark Startup Act, the country's innovation ecosystem is at risk of fragmentation. With fewer than a quarter of states fully adopting the law, startups face uncertainty, investors are cautious, and the promise of a nationwide, innovation-friendly environment remains uneven at best.

Enacted in 2022, the Startup Act was designed to streamline regulations, introduce tax incentives, and provide a predictable framework for innovation-driven businesses. The legislation followed a continental shift that began in 2018 when Tunisia became one of Africa's first countries to pass a dedicated startup framework, signalling the importance of policies tailored to digital economies.

However, in Nigeria's federal system, passing the law at the national level is only the first step. Subnational adoption is crucial because startups operate daily under state-level regulations, tax authorities, land agencies, and other local institu-



tions. Without coordinated implementation across states, the Act risks remaining largely symbolic.

"State-level engagement is critical to ensuring the Startup Act delivers meaningful impact beyond policy intent," said Tracy Okoro Isaac, partner at DigitA, which has been working with the ONE Campaign and government stakeholders.

"The law provides a strong foundation, but unless states actively implement its provisions, the benefits for startups will remain

limited."

So far, only Kaduna, Osun and Abia have formally adopted the Act. Others, including Kano, Ondo, and Anambra are still considering legislation, while several states remain in consultation phases. Lagos, Nigeria's commercial hub, is pursuing a broader approach through its proposed Innovation Bill, which not only aligns with the Startup Act but also plans to allocate up to 2 percent of annual capital expenditure to innovation.

"Passing the law was only the beginning. The real work lies in building systems, coordination frameworks, and institutional capacity required to make it function effectively at the state level," said Oswald Osaretin Guobadia, a leading ecosystem advisor and former senior special assistant on digital transformation.

"Without active state adoption, the Act risks remaining a strong national framework on paper with uneven impact on the ground," Guobadia added.

Efforts to close the adoption gap have intensified. In 2023, engagements across Kwara, Ondo, Osun, Kano, Plateau, and Oyo brought together founders, investors, and policymakers to define practical pathways for implementation, with Kaduna becoming the first state to formalise adoption.

In 2025, GIZ/DTC commissioned DigitA to support state-level adoption through the Participatory Policy Implementation Framework (PIPF), developed with the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA). A study tour to Tunisia later that year

exposed Nigerian policymakers to structured approaches to startup governance, financing, and institutional coordination.

Nigeria's innovation economy is inherently uneven. Lagos dominates fintech, while states such as Kano and Kaduna are emerging as hubs for agricultural technology and logistics solutions. Flexible, state-driven implementation allows each region to leverage its comparative advantage rather than attempting to replicate Lagos' model.

While the Startup Act's federal incentives, including the Startup Label, provide funding and regulatory support, broader state adoption could unlock local grants, targeted investment programmes, and innovation incentives, expanding opportunities for founders outside major hubs.

As Nigeria races to establish itself as a continental innovation leader, stakeholders say the Act's success will depend not on its existence, but on its execution. Without wider adoption across states, the law risks leaving much of the country's innovation potential untapped.

## Innovation commercialisation: Turning your research and ideas into market relevant products and services (3)

KOLA OWOLABI

Building a start-up around your innovation

In Part Two of this series, we examined the strategy of licensing an innovation to an existing organisation with the capability to bring it to market. While licensing is a practical and less risky route for many researchers, there are situations where the innovator may decide to take a more direct path by building a start-up around the innovation.

Creating a start-up is often the most rewarding, but also the most demanding commercialisation path. It involves transforming an idea or research output into a fully functioning business that produces and sells products or services to real customers. This approach gives the innovator greater control over the direction of the innovation and a larger share of the potential financial rewards.

However, it also requires a shift in mindset. The researcher or inventor must move from the laboratory or theoretical environment into the uncertain and competitive world of business. This transition demands skills in marketing, finance, operations, and leadership; areas that may be outside the traditional training of many researchers.

Before choosing the start-up route, the innovator should ask a

few critical questions:

1. Is there a clearly defined market need for this innovation?
2. Can the innovation be developed into a product or service within a reasonable time and cost?
3. Do I have, or can I attract, the right team to build this business?
4. Is the potential return worth the risks involved?

If the answers to these questions, which are best explored in the feasibility study/business plan tool, are positive, building a start-up may be the right path.

A notable example of innovation-driven start-ups is Tesla, Inc. Although electric cars had existed for years, the company successfully built a business around advanced battery technology, performance, and a strong brand identity. By focusing on both innovation and the business model, the company transformed an existing concept into a global automotive and energy enterprise.

Another example is Microsoft, co-founded by Bill Gates. The company was built around the idea of providing software for the emerging personal computer market. Rather than licensing their early innovations alone, the founders built a company that went on to dominate the global software industry.

These examples highlight an important lesson: innovation alone does not create a successful start-up. What makes the differ-



ence is the combination of innovation with a strong business model, market understanding, and effective execution.

To build a start-up around an innovation, the following steps are essential:

1. Validate the market need  
Engage potential customers early. Confirm that the innovation solves a real and urgent problem.
2. Protect the intellectual property  
Secure patents, trademarks, or other forms of protection to safeguard the innovation.
3. Build the right team  
A balanced team should include technical, marketing, and

financial expertise.

4. Develop a simple business model

Use tools like the Business Model Canvas to define value proposition, target customers, revenue streams, and cost structure.

5. Start small and iterate

Launch a minimum viable product (MVP), test it in the market, gather feedback, and improve continuously.

6. Seek appropriate funding

Funding can come from personal savings, grants, angel investors, venture capital, or strategic partners.

The step-by-step implementation model capturing the above points is best represented in a robust business plan. The business plan looks ahead for about five years how the implementation journey will be undertaken amidst the shocks and uncertainties that bedevil every business environment.

The start-up route is best suited for innovations that:

- Address a large or growing market.
- Require close control over product development.
- Have the potential to create entirely new industries or disrupt existing ones.

While the journey may be challenging, building a start-up offers innovators the opportunity to shape their ideas into thriving enterprises that create jobs, generate wealth, and contribute meaningfully to economic development.

In the end, whether through licensing, partnerships, or start-ups, the ultimate goal of innovation commercialisation remains the same: to transform ideas into solutions that improve lives and create value for society.

Owolabi is a Fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Management Consultants (FIMC.CMC) and Chief Executive Officer of David Solomon Consulting Limited. The company can be reached via phone or WhatsApp at 08023203198

# Analysis



## Cost-reflective tariffs, energy investment, and Nigeria's \$1trillion goal

OLAKUNLE ELATUYI

Nigeria's ambition to build a \$1 trillion economy by 2030 rests on one critical pillar: reliable electricity. Without a stable and financially viable power sector, industrial growth, manufacturing, digital innovation, and investment will remain a mirage. Yet without deep reforms including resolving persistent tariff and liquidity challenges, the power sector will continue to struggle, undermining Nigeria's economic goals.

This goal is central to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's economic agenda but achieving it requires bold and realistic reforms in the electricity sector, with cost-reflective tariffs at the core.

### Why Cost-Reflective Tariffs Matter

Across the world, sustainable electricity systems rely on tariffs that reflect the true cost of generating, transmitting, and distributing power. When tariffs fall below cost, utilities cannot recover expenses, leading to debt, poor maintenance, limited expansion, and unreliable supply. Nigeria's electricity challenges reflect this reality.

Countries like the United Kingdom and Canada incorporate the total wholesale energy costs, grid charges, and supplier margins into tariffs, keeping utilities financially viable. Emerging nations such as Chile and Kenya have adopted cost-reflective tariffs while providing protections for vulnerable

households, stabilising their electricity sectors and attracting investment.

Nigeria has begun this process through phased tariff adjustments and service-based pricing, but deeper reforms are needed. Currently, Nigeria generates only 4,000–5,000 MW for over 220 million people, compared to South Africa's 40,000 MW for 60 million a stark illustration of the power deficit. Closing this gap will require \$100–150 billion over the next two decades to expand generation, modernize transmission, and strengthen distribution networks.

### The Reality of Electricity Costs

In my view, many Nigerians expect electricity to remain cheap, but globally power is costly due to massive investment in power infrastructure, fuel, environmental compliance, and grid reliability investments. Households in Canada pay 12–15 US cents per kilowatt-hour, while UK prices exceed 25 US cents. Nigeria's average tariff of roughly 3.7 US cents is far below the true cost.

The hidden costs of this gap are significant. Due to unreliable grid electricity, businesses and households depend heavily on diesel and petrol generators. Nigerian businesses spend an estimated \$14 billion annually on generator fuel, while the broader economy loses about \$29 billion each year due to power outages and lost productivity. Reliable grid electricity would dramatically reduce these costs while improving competitiveness for Nigerian industries.

Meanwhile, electricity

subsidies estimated to have exceeded N6 trillion over the past decade provide short-term relief but weaken the financial sustainability of the sector and discourage private investment.

### State Regulation Under the Electricity Act 2023

The Electricity Act 2023 decentralizes governance, allowing states to participate more actively in electricity markets. This enables localized solutions, renewable energy projects, and private investment.

However, strong coordination between federal and state regulators is essential to maintain market stability and investor confidence.

### Protecting Low-Income Consumers

Cost-reflective tariffs must be paired with targeted social protection. Programs such as energy rebates, lifeline tariffs, and direct bill support ensure vulnerable households are not overburdened.



**However, strong coordination between federal and state regulators is essential to maintain market stability and investor confidence**



Expanding initiatives like the Nigeria Electrification Programme, paired with nationwide metering and targeted subsidies, including support provided under the Electricity Act 2023 through the Power Consumer Assistance Fund for low-income households and critical institutions such as schools and hospitals is essential for improving access and affordability.

### Subsidy Arrangements and Fiscal Sustainability

Subsidies should be transparent, targeted, and fiscally sustainable, focusing on vulnerable consumers and critical economic sectors rather than broad distortions.

A well-structured subsidy framework allows tariffs to gradually reflect actual costs, strengthening financial discipline and improving investor confidence.

### Promoting Energy Efficiency

Energy efficiency complements tariff reform. Agencies such as the Energy Commission of Nigeria and the National Centre for Energy Efficiency and Conservation advocate for appliances like LED bulbs, inverter air conditioners, energy-efficient refrigerators, induction cookers, and low-energy televisions.

Widespread adoption will reduce electricity demand, lower household costs, and support Nigeria's \$1 trillion economic goal.

### The Path Forward

To achieve sustainable electricity

and economic growth, Nigeria must:

- Implement cost-reflective tariffs, expand metering, strengthen regulation, and invest in transmission and renewable energy.

- Introduce transparent, targeted subsidies to protect vulnerable households while ensuring sector sustainability.

- Promote energy-saving appliances and enforce efficiency standards to reduce demand and improve affordability.

- Launch a nationwide campaign to explain true power costs, the benefits of reliable electricity, and why targeted subsidies are needed similar to the approach used for fuel-subsidy reforms.

Reliable electricity is not just a sectoral issue, it is the foundation for Nigeria's industrial growth, economic competitiveness, and long-term development. The time to act is now; the country cannot afford further delays if the \$1 trillion goal is to be realised.



•Elatuyi is a public administrator and advocate for Integrated National and Subnational Policy

# News Extra

## David Umahi Varsity's Council sets record straight on 'hijack' allegation

NKECHINYERE OGINYI, Abakaliki

**A**mid growing scrutiny fueled by online reports, members of the Governing Council of the David Umahi Federal University of Science (DUFUHS) have strongly dismissed allegations that the institution has been hijacked or is being run as a personal enterprise.

At a meeting held within the university premises in Ebonyi State, Wednesday, members of the governing council addressed what they described as misleading and malicious claims circulating in an online media outlet. The report had alleged that David Umahi, former governor of Ebonyi State and minister of Works, had taken over the running of the university, sidelining the governing council.

But in a coordinated response, council members painted a very different picture one of cohesion, autonomy, and institutional stability.

Adebayo Shittu, pro-chancellor and chairman of the Governing Council, is at the forefront of the response. He described the allegations as not only false but also an attempt to undermine the credibility of one of Nigeria's fastest-growing federal universities.

Shittu recounted how he first became aware of the claims through an unexpect-



Adebayo Shittu

ed phone call from a journalist based in the United States, who sought confirmation of the alleged sidelining.

"I was surprised when I got the call suggesting that I had been sidelined. I made it clear that I have no complaint against anybody, and nobody could sideline me," he said.

Drawing on his decades-long political career, Shittu insisted that such claims were implausible, noting that his experience spanning over 47 years in public life makes him neither vulnerable to manipulation nor exclusion.

Beyond personal rebuttal, he framed the allegations as part of a broader effort to destabilise the institution.

"Any negative information you hear is a hatchet job by frustrated individuals whose intentions are not noble. We are working in unity, and everything is going on well," he added.

The council chairman emphasised that DUFUHS remains committed to its national mandate as a federal institution, welcoming students from across Nigeria and focusing on delivering quality education in health sciences.

Echoing this position, council member Saliu Aluko dismissed the report as "malicious, slanderous, and unreasonable," stressing that members of the council are independent-minded individu-

als who fully understand their responsibilities.

"We are seasoned politicians. We know our rights and duties. Our meetings are rigorous we cross all the T's and dot all the I's. Nobody is controlling us," he stated.

Aluko further clarified that the council operates without interference from external actors, including the minister at the centre of the allegations, insisting that the claims of a takeover are entirely unfounded.

Also lending his voice, a representative of the Federal Ministry of Education, Paul Okpe, described the report as baseless, reinforcing the position that the university's governance structure remains intact.

Jessie Uneke, vice chancellor of the university, on his part, pointed to ongoing infrastructural developments as clear evidence of effective oversight by the governing council.

"If you look at the infrastructures here, you will see that the council is supervising these projects very well. The stability we enjoy academically and administratively reflects that the system is working," he said.

As the debate continues in public discourse, DUFUHS authorities insist that the institution remains focused on its core mandate, undistracted by what they describe as unfounded narratives.

## Over 10 million hectares of forest lost annually – IUO VC

ELVIS OMOREGIE, Benin

**T**he Vice Chancellor of Igbinedion University, Okada, Prof. Lawrence Ezemoye, has raised concerns over the alarming rate of deforestation globally, revealing that over 10 million hectares of forest are lost annually.

Ezemoye disclosed this during an event marking the International Day of Forests at the university in Okada, Edo State, stressing that Nigeria remains highly vulnerable to the crisis.

Citing data from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, the Vice Chancellor noted that Nigeria ranks among countries with the highest deforestation rates in Africa, with far-reaching environmental and economic implications.

He warned that the consequences of forest depletion are already evident in increased flooding, desertification, ecosystem collapse, displacement of communities, and the acceleration of climate change.

According to him, the annual observance of the International Day of Forests should go beyond ceremonial activities, describing it as a critical call to action for governments, institutions, and individuals.

"As a university, we bear a unique responsibility as custodians of knowledge

and incubators of solutions," Ezemoye said, reaffirming the institution's commitment to environmental sustainability as both an academic focus and operational principle.

Delivering the keynote address, Nosa Adams, Edo State commissioner for Environment and Sustainability, represented by Victor Otamere, permanent secretary, emphasised that forests remain vital climate assets and must be protected to safeguard human survival.

He added that the state government has taken steps to strengthen forest conservation through the establishment of the Edo State Forestry Commission to enhance sustainable forest management.

Also speaking, Joan Omosigho, chairman of the Commission, Valentine Asuen, represented by Area Forest Officer, acknowledged the persistent challenges of deforestation despite the immense ecological and economic benefits forests provide, urging citizens to act as stewards of the environment.

Earlier, Spencer Nwangwu, a professor, and director of the Centre for Climate Change and SDGs, described global forests as being in crisis, driven by agricultural expansion, urbanisation, illegal logging, and rising consumption patterns, calling for collective commitment to reversing forest loss.

## 2027: INEC extends deadline for submission of parties' membership register in revised timetable

AKOMBO AONDONA, Abuja

**T**he Independent National Electoral Commission INEC have announced the extension of deadline for the submission of parties' membership register in the revised timetable and schedules of activities released on Friday night in Abuja ahead of 2027 general election.

In a statement, in Abuja by the National Commissioner and Chairman, Information and Voter Education Committee, Mohammed Kudu Haruna, the commission urges political parties to fix dates for parties' primaries as they requested within the approved period of 23 April 2026.

At the meeting of the Commission with the Political Parties on Tuesday, 24th March 2026, concerns were raised on the timeline for the submission of Political Parties' Registers of Members under the Revised Timetable and Schedule of Activities for the 2027 General Election, which was originally fixed for

1st April 2026 to 21st April 2026.

The Commission, at the said meeting, agreed to adjust the period for the submission of the Political Parties' Registers of Members to align with the 21 days prescribed by Section 77(4) of the Electoral Act, 2026, with the actual dates fixed by political parties themselves.

"Political parties are accordingly informed that they are free to fix the dates of their primaries within the approved period from the 23rd of April 2026 to the 30th of May 2026. It is imperative that parties adhere to this timeline to ensure a smooth electoral process.

The register of party members must be submitted to INEC not later than 21 days before the holding of their respective primaries. This means that the final deadline for the submission of political parties' registers of members is extended to 10th May 2026, from the 21st April 2026 originally contained in the revised timetable.

## FG reiterates NELFUND's merits to varsity students

...As UNIBEN holds NELFUND sensitisation programme

IDRIS MOMOH

**T**he University of Benin has held a programme to sensitise the students on the merits of the education loan fund initiated by the Federal

Government. The event was held recently at the University's auditorium.

Edoba Omoregie, a professor and vice chancellor, said that the NELFUND scheme has eased, tremendously, the burden of students

in public tertiary institutions and their parents with regard to payment of school charges and upkeep allowance.

The Vice Chancellor explained that it was due to the significance of the NELFUND scheme that a directorate was

created in the University to co-ordinate the process of application and access to the funds by students.

Omoregie also said that as the first institution to create such a directorate of NELFUND, the gains have been enormous including the quantum leap in the figure of student enrolment into the scheme.

Akintunde Sawyerr, managing director and chief executive of NELFUND, Abuja, who lectured the students on the modalities for accessing the loan and benefits, announced that the loan was open to all Nigerians in federal and state institutions of higher learning, whether rich or poor.

He encouraged students to take advantage of the federal government's benevolence to pursue their educational goals.

Two students each from faculties and schools were inaugurated as ambassadors to carry out more sensitisation on the NLFUND scheme among their peers.

The programme was attended by the management, staff and students of the University as well as some parents.



Edoba Omoregie, a professor and vice chancellor, University of Benin, with Akintunde Sawyerr, MD/CEO of NELFUND, during NELFUND sensitisation programme at UNIBEN, recently.

# News Extra

## Indian High Commissioner lauds country's push for stronger ties with Nigeria to drive mutual growth

NGOZI OKPALAKUNNE

**I**ndian High Commissioner to Nigeria, Abhishek Singh has lauded India's efforts to bolster trade ties with Nigeria, driving mutual growth and development.

Speaking at the 2nd India Trade Expo in Lagos, hosted by the Indian High Commission and Indian Professional Forum (IPF), Singh highlighted the presence of over 200 Indian companies in Nigeria, working towards shared progress and development.

According to him, the idea of holding India Trade Expo has been carved to showcase the potential of India companies and reaffirm their engagement with the Federal Republic of Nigeria, chambers of businesses and private businesses in Nigeria.

This expo, the High Commissioner said, would highlight their commitment and entrepreneurship of creating an environment for their fellow Nigeria counterparts to work together as a team.

Speaking also at the event, Consul General of India Lagos, Kannan Chockalingam, emphasised the need for deeper economic integration and strategic cooperation with Nigeria, highlighting opportunities for mutual growth and development.

Chockalingam also emphasised that India and Nigeria's partnership must evolve from transactional trade to transformational collaboration, unlocking new opportunities for growth and expansion.

To him, both countries can work hand in hand in strengthening manufacturing and value addition; promoting joint ventures and local ca-



capacity building; encouraging technology adaption and skill transfer.

Others include; supporting sustainable development and green growth and empowering youth and entrepreneurs in both countries.

"India's experience in digital governance, affordable healthcare, small-scale industry development, and renewable energy can complement Nigeria's vast resources market potential, and development.

"The India trade show is therefore, not just an event, it is an opportunity. An opportunity to build partnerships, sign agreements, initiate dialogue, and lay foundation for long term collaboration.

"I encourage Nigerian businesses to explore India as a reliable partner for quality products, technology solutions and investment collaborations, I equally encourage Indian companies to see Nigeria not just as a market, but as a strategic gateway to West Africa," he added.

While stating that the relationship between India and Nigeria is anchored on trade, technology and tourism, he said: "bilateral trade between India and Nigeria has consistently remained strong and diversified. Indian companies have invested significantly in Nigeria across sector such

as pharmaceuticals, agriculture, manufacturing, power infrastructure and consumer goods. At the same time, Nigeria remains a vital energy partner for India.

"The India Trade show serves as a platform to expand this engagement, to create new supply chain, explore joint ventures, encourage MSME collaboration and unlock untapped opportunities.

"The complementarities between our two economic are immense. By strengthening trade facilitation, improving logistics, and enhances business connectivity, we can significantly boost bilateral trade volume and generate employment in both countries.

"India's growth story over the past decades has been driven by innovation, digital transformation, and entrepreneurship.

"From fintech to digital public infrastructure, from healthcare technology to renewable energy solutions, India has developed scalable, affordable and inclusive technologies that benefit developed economies.

"Nigeria with its dynamic youth population and rapidly expanding tech ecosystem presents enormous opportunities for collaboration.

"By partnering in areas such as digital payments. IT

services, agritech, renewable energy, and STEM development. India and Nigeria can co create solutions tailored to local need technology transfer, startup exchanges and capacity-building initiatives can further strengthen this pillar of our cooperation," Chockalingam added.

Speaking earlier, Lagos Commissioner for Commerce, Cooperatives, Trade and Investment (MCCTI), Folashade Bada Ambrose-Medebem, said that over the years, Indian businesses had played a vital role in Nigeria's industrial development, particularly in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, agriculture processing, and technology.

According to the Commissioner: "Today's engagement therefore builds on an already strong foundation and offers a timely opportunity to strengthen investment cooperation in ways that will benefit both nations."

Under the leadership of Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu, she said that Lagos state is also pursuing policies that promote economic diversification across key sectors which include; manufacturing, digital technology, agriculture value chains, sustainable energy, healthcare management, financial services, and the creative economy.

## IBEDC pledges operational efficiency, improved service to customers

...Appoints Deolu Ijose as MD/CEO

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan

**F**ollowing the emergence of a new core investor and reconstituted board of directors, Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company Plc (IBEDC) has announced the appointment of Deolu Ijose as its new managing director/chief executive officer.

His appointment follows the recent reconstitution of the Company's Board of Directors. Ijose succeeds Francis Agoha, an engineer.

Angela Olanrewaju, coordinating head, Corporate Services IBEDC, in a statement said the new CEO was bringing extensive industry experience to his new role having previously served as managing director of Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC) and chief commercial officer at IBEDC.

His deep sector knowledge and familiarity with IBEDC's operations position him to effectively lead the company through its next phase of growth and transformation.

Commenting on the appointment, the Board expressed confidence in Ijose's ability to consolidate on ex-



isting gains while driving improved performance across the business.

In his remarks, Ijose stated: "I am honoured to lead IBEDC at this critical time. We will build on the foundation already in place by prioritising operational efficiency, strengthening commercial discipline, and delivering improved service to our customers. Our success will be driven by teamwork, accountability, and a shared commitment to excellence."

With the appointment, IBEDC reaffirms its commitment to delivering improved electricity supply while deepening stakeholder collaboration, investing in infrastructure, and leveraging technology to improve customer experience.

The company is well-positioned to accelerate progress and deliver greater value to customers, stakeholders, and the Nigerian economy.

## BudgIT Report highlights Kaduna's progress in LGA budget transparency

BENJAMIN AGESAN, Kaduna

**K**aduna State has been recognised among a select group of states making measurable progress in local government budget transparency, according to a new report by BudgIT.

The report, titled 'The Missing Tier: Mapping Local Government Budget Transparency in Nigeria,' identifies Kaduna as one of only 10 states where local government (LGA) budget data is publicly accessible—signalling sustained efforts to deepen openness and accountability at the grassroots level.

Reacting to the report, the Commissioner for Information, Ahmed Maiyaki, described the recognition as a validation of Governor Uba Sani's governance approach.

"This report affirms the governor's unwavering commitment to transparency and accountability across all tiers of government. By ensuring that local government finances are more visible and accessible, we are strengthening public trust and empowering citizens to actively engage in governance," he said.

He added that the admin-

istration's support for functional local government autonomy is deliberate, aimed at bringing governance closer to the people and improving service delivery.

BudgIT noted that Kaduna provides medium-term consolidated LGA budget information, enabling citizens and stakeholders to better understand how resources are planned and allocated across local governments. This positions the state within a small but significant group advancing transparency reforms, even as broader challenges persist nationwide.

Across the country, the report presents a mixed outlook. While a few states have made commendable strides, many still lag behind, with limited public access to LGA budget documents—undermining accountability at the grassroots level.

The organisation emphasises that improved access to budget data is essential for enhancing public understanding of government priorities, strengthening oversight, and building trust between citizens and institutions. Kaduna's inclusion, therefore, reflects ongoing reforms aligned with the principles of open governance.

## Ayodeji Oluwafemi inducted as associate member, Nigerian Institute of Public Relations

BLESSING ADIMABUA

**A**yodeji Oluwafemi, communication professional and managing director, Mindshare Communications, has been admitted as an Associate Member of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (ANIPR), marking a significant milestone in his professional career in strategic communication and public relations practice.

The membership recognises Oluwafemi's contributions to the field of communication, journalism, and public engagement, as well as his commitment to upholding professional standards in public relations practice in

Nigeria.

Oluwafemi holds a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Mass Communication from Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, and a Master of Science (MSc) in Communication Studies from Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos. He is currently pursuing a Doctoral degree in Communication Studies, further



Ayodeji Oluwafemi

deepening his academic and professional engagement in the field of communication.

With a strong background in journalism, media development, and strategic messaging, Oluwafemi has built a reputation as a communication strategist, media consultant, and educator. Through his leadership at Mindshare Communications, he has supported organisations in strengthening their corporate communication, branding, and stakeholder engagement strategies.

Speaking on the recognition, Oluwafemi noted that becoming an Associate Member of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations reinforces his commitment to ethi-

cal communication practice, professional development, and advancing the role of strategic communication in national development.

The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) is the statutory body responsible for regulating and promoting the practice of public relations in Nigeria. Admission into the institute reflects professional competence, commitment to ethical standards, and dedication to the advancement of the communication profession.

Oluwafemi's induction further positions him among a growing community of certified public relations professionals contributing to excellence in communication practice across Nigeria.

## News Extra

# PR expert makes case for Ogoni state

...As momentum builds on proposed Anioma State

CHUKA UROKO

**D**ormene Mbea, a journalist and public relations expert, has called on President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and the National Assembly, to extend equal legislative consideration to the creation of Ogoni State, just as momentum continues to build around the proposed Anioma State.

In statement, Mbea urged Godswill Akpabio, Senate president and Abbas Tajudeen, speaker, House of Representatives, to immediately commence the constitutional process required for the creation of Ogoni State.

According to him, for equity, fairness and national cohesion the creation of an Ogoni State from the present Rivers State demanded no less.

He said that recent remarks by Akpabio reaffirmed legislative and political backing for Anioma State, and he argued that such support established a precedent that should not exclude Ogoni aspirations.

Mbea also said that justice within a federal system must be balanced and inclusive, en-



Dormene Mbea

suring that no ethnic nationality or region was sidelined in the ongoing discourse on state creation.

He maintained that Ogoni, with Bori as its proposed administrative capital, possessed all the defining charac-

teristics of a viable state.

The PR expert explained that the region has a significant population base, strong economic potential and strategic geographical advantages, including land resources and access to waterways,

which position it for sustainable development without excessive reliance on federal allocations.

He further emphasised that the demand for Ogoni State went beyond political recognition and was deeply

rooted in the historical experiences of the Ogoni people.

He noted that for decades, Ogonis have endured political marginalisation, economic exclusion and severe environmental degradation arising from oil exploration activities that began in 1958.

Mbea recalled the sacrifices made by Ogoni leaders and citizens during the struggle against military dictatorship, particularly under the regime of Sani Abacha.

He stated that while many regions hesitated during that era, the Ogoni people stood firm in the fight for democracy, environmental justice and human rights, paying a heavy price with the loss of some of their most prominent voices.

Mbea said that those sacrifices were yet to be adequately acknowledged through concrete political action, noting that the creation of Ogoni State would serve as both recognition and restitution for the injustices suffered by the people.

He also pointed to the continued environmental crisis in Ogoniland, describing it as a lingering national concern that required more than policy promises.

He argued that only a

state structure controlled by the people can effectively address the scale of environmental restoration, economic rebuilding and social healing required in the region.

Mbea warned that the importance of Ogoni oil to the Nigerian economy must be matched with genuine commitment to justice and fairness for the host communities.

He stressed that any continued engagement with Ogoni resources without addressing the political and structural concerns of the people raised serious moral and national questions.

Mbea urged the Federal Government and the National Assembly to act decisively, insisting that extending the same consideration given to Anioma to Ogoni was not only a matter of fairness, but a necessary step toward strengthening Nigeria's unity and addressing longstanding grievances in the Niger Delta.

He reiterated that time has come for deliberate action, noting that the creation of Ogoni State remained the most practical pathway to restoring dignity, ensuring development and securing lasting peace in the region.

## Expert urges Kogi government to collaborate with FG, dredge Rivers Niger, Benue

...Says, Rivers Niger, Benue are lifeblood of nation's economy, supporting agriculture, fishing, commerce

VICTORIA NNAKAIKE, Lokoja

**K**ogi State government has been advised to collaborate with Federal Government and sustainable dredge River Niger and Benue, saying it would reduce road transport in Nigeria that is currently a topsy-turvy caricature.

Femi Ajisafe, president of Kogi Chambers of Commerce, Industry Mines and Agriculture, stated this on Thursday, during the grand finale of Correspondent's Chapel of Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Press Week 2026, in Lokoja.

Presenting his paper themed 'Bad Road: Looking for Alternative Mode Through the Inland Waterways Corridor - Passenger and Cargo Transportation in Nigeria', Ajisafe pointed out that Nigeria's transportation infrastructure was largely dominated by roads network of about 195,000 Km; a distant second position to South Africa that reportedly has

about 750,000Km of roads. According to ICRC, only about 30percent of Nigerian roads are paved (tarred).

He said: "This lends credence to the hazardous nightmarish experience of commuters — Vehicle owners, travelers and transporters.

"The prevalent influx of travel time, high probability of accidents and the attendant high cost of maintenance add-up to making road transport in Nigeria as is currently, a topsy-turvy caricature.

"On the other hand, inland waterways infrastructure is, in all, about 10,000 Kilometers. About 3,000 kilometers of Nigeria's inland waterways are seasonally navigable."

The Rivers Niger and Benue are Nigeria's principal rivers which merge into a confluence at Lokoja.

"They both account for about 1,900 Km of waterways before letting their waters into the Niger Delta or entering the Ondo waterways on to the Lagos lagoon.

"Nigeria's Rivers Niger and Benue are the lifeblood of the nation's economy, supporting agriculture, fishing, and Commerce.

"However, their potential as transport arteries remain largely untapped. With congested roads and underutilised rail networks, it's time to turn these waterways into bustling transport hubs.

"Nigeria's waterways stretch over 8,000 km, with Rivers Niger and Benue forming the backbone. The Inland Waterways is a game-changer."

He equally pointed out that it would be cost-effective, saying river transport is 20-30 percent cheaper than road for bulk goods (World Bank). It is also eco-friendly, lower emissions compared to truck and lorries.

He equally disclosed that it would provide job creation, boosts riverine economies, as it supports thousands of livelihoods, adding that it will at the same time reduce congestion, take pressure off roads and reduce accidents.

## Ademola calls for overhaul of Nigeria's security architecture

INIJOBONG IWOK

**O**jo Emmanuel Ademola, Africa's first professor of Cybersecurity and Information Technology Management, has called for a comprehensive reform of Nigeria's security architecture, citing the need to align national security systems with emerging digital threats.

Ademola made the call while reflecting on the outcomes of the Professor Ademola Ojo Emmanuel Foundation (PAOEF) Summit held on February 3, 2026 in Abuja, where stakeholders from government, academia, the private sector, and youth groups discussed strategies for strengthening Nigeria's digital ecosystem.

He warned that Nigeria's development aspirations could be undermined without corresponding improvements in security, describing national security as fundamental to economic and technological progress.

"A nation's security is the oxygen of its development; without strengthening it, even the brightest digital dreams will suffocate," Ademola said.

He noted that Nigeria con-

tinues to face multiple security challenges, including insurgency in the North-East, kidnapping, communal conflicts, and a rise in cybercrime, all of which he said are placing pressure on national stability and investor confidence.

Ademola also highlighted the growing exposure of Nigeria's digital systems to cyber threats, pointing to the expansion of mobile transactions, fintech platforms, and online services as factors increasing vulnerability to attacks.

"Nigeria cannot achieve economic resilience or digital competitiveness without first building a secure and stable national foundation," he stated.

He argued that the country must move from fragmented security operations to a more coordinated and technology-driven framework capable of addressing both physical and cyber threats.

According to him, modern security responses should include the deployment of artificial intelligence-enabled surveillance systems, drones for reconnaissance, digital forensics capabilities, and enhanced cyber-defence infrastructure.

Ademola further stressed the importance of treating data as critical national in-

frastructure, noting that its protection is now essential to both governance and economic survival in the digital age.

"Data has become a core national infrastructure, and its protection is now essential not only for national defence but for economic survival," he said.

He also called for increased investment in education and human capital development to produce skilled cybersecurity professionals capable of defending the country's digital systems.

As part of his recommendations, Ademola urged the establishment of a Nigeria National Cyber Security Council to coordinate cybersecurity efforts across government agencies, the private sector, and civil society.

He said such a body would improve intelligence sharing, reduce duplication of efforts, and strengthen national resilience against evolving cyber threats.

Ademola also referenced the "Abuja Compact," a framework presented at the summit, which outlines a seven-pillar approach to Nigeria's digital transformation, including digital identity systems, broadband access, AI-driven governance, cybersecurity, innovation, human capital development, and ethical leadership.

# News Extra



L-R: Cordelia Ekeocha, head, Marketing and Corporate Communications Group; Abimbola Akinloye, head, General Business Underwriting; Akinjide Afolabi, regional Manager, Stephen Alangbo, GMD/CEO; Temitope Adobe, team lead, Victoria Island Branch; and Valerie Erewa, Warri Branch Manager at the award ceremony in Lagos.

## Cornerstone Insurance underscores industry wide shift toward innovation, resilience

MODESTUS ANAESORONYE

Cornerstone Insurance Plc, one of Nigeria's leading underwriting firms have underscored the industry wide shift towards innovation and resilience, while emphasising on the Company's positioning as a leading player.

Stephen Alangbo, group managing director, Cornerstone Insurance Plc speaking during receipt of Award as Insurance Company of the year for 2025 captured not just the company's momentum, but a broader shift shaping Nigeria's insurance industry.

He said as operators re-

spond to changing customer expectations, digital disruption, and economic realities, the emphasis is increasingly on innovation, resilience, and value-driven service delivery areas where Cornerstone Insurance Plc says it is deliberately positioning itself.

"This recognition as Insurance Company of the year is a strong affirmation of the dedication, resilience, and professionalism of our entire team at Cornerstone Insurance Plc."

With these words, Alangbo set the tone as Cornerstone Insurance Plc reflected on its continued drive for excellence, innovation, and customer-focused service in Nigeria's insurance industry.

Alangbo reaffirmed the

company's commitment to building trust and delivering value, noting that Cornerstone Insurance remains focused on continuously improving its products and services to meet the evolving needs of customers and stakeholders.

He added that as the insurance landscape changes, the company will keep investing in innovation, technology, and talent to remain a dependable partner in protecting the dreams and aspirations of Nigerians.

Beyond the recognition, Cornerstone Insurance's growth has been driven by strategic investments in digital platforms, efficient claims management, and customer-centric offerings. The

company has continued to strengthen its position in the market by providing accessible and innovative insurance solutions tailored to individuals, families, and businesses.

As it expands its footprint, Cornerstone Insurance remains focused on deepening financial protection and empowering customers to confidently navigate life's uncertainties.

Cornerstone Insurance Plc is licensed by the National Insurance Commission (NAI-COM) to provide both general and life insurance services. The company pioneered online insurance transactions in Nigeria and continues to leverage technology to make its services easily accessible across digital and mobile platforms.

## Stakeholders seek improved investment in special schools, teachers, facilities, others

REMI FEYISIPO, Ibadan

Stakeholders in the education sector have called for improved government commitment to infrastructure development, investment in digital learning tools as well as up-scale investment in special schools.

They also stressed the need for specialised teachers, sanitation facilities and hygiene to boost learning in schools, re-engage communities and ensure that every child, regardless of location, has access to quality education and opportunity to thrive.

The Oyo State chapter of the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All and Educare Trust, which made the observation during a press briefing on the current state of Basic Education in Oyo State, held at Educare Trust Youth Centre, Aerodrome GRA, Samanda, Ibadan, expressed worries about the poor level of preparation of students in an increasingly digital learning environment especially in Oyo State.

The stakeholders also stated that although the teacher-pupil ratio had improved at all levels, according to the Annual School Census Report, the number of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) in primary and secondary schools in Oyo State, is approximately 3,139 learners.

Iskil Yusuf, a member of

the Caretaker Committee of CSACEFA, Oyo State chapter and executive director of the Child Development and Concern Foundation, emphasised the implications of digital gap on students' academic progression, stating that "students are expected to sit for JAMB through computer-based testing, yet many of them have never used a computer before."

Emphasising the impact on rural education, Yusuf said: "The shortage of teachers in these areas worsens the situation. Many teachers are unwilling to be posted to rural communities, and this leaves children in those areas without access to quality education."

According to him, "While Oyo State has one of the largest student population in the southwest, second after Lagos State, it also records the highest number of Out-of-School-Children in the region."

On factors that could deny access to education, he said: "There are so many hidden costs that are hindering access to education; these include the distance from home to school, and transportation, particularly at the present time. And besides, there are some grants promised by the state for schools, but if those grants are not coming as and when due, then the principals or school authorities will be forced to charge students certain amount of money either for exams or for printing papers."

## HQ moves to enhance business ecosystem for startups with accessible co-work spaces

EMMANUEL SALAWU

Determined to enhance access to a profitable business environment for startups, HQ, a subsidiary of International Workplace Group, has unveiled its newest modern co-working space in Lagos State.

According to HQ, through the collaboration with The Alternative Bank, it would provide not just work spaces for businesses, but also financial services to boost profitability.

Ayo Akinmade, country manager, International Workplace Group (IWG), said the opening of the new location is in furtherance of HQ's strategic partnership plan with The Alternative Bank to set up between six and eight locations across Nigeria before the end of 2026.

Akinmade said that among the next set of locations already selected for the expansion drive are Kano,

Maiduguri, Jos and FF Towers, Lagos.

He said that the first decade of the company's operation in Nigeria was concentrated in Lagos, Port Harcourt and Abuja, adding that the next phase of its expansion must cover all the other locations where there are significant business opportunities happening.

He further said that IWG,

as a leading global workspace provider, have built an unparalleled network of office, co-working and meeting spaces for companies to use in every city in the world.

Mohammed Yunusa, director of Products, Digital and Innovation, The Alternative Bank, said that the partnership with IWG is a collaborative step that brings everybody together by en-

hancing co-working and community living.

He said that one of the benefits of the new location is that it provides a good avenue for start-ups to do business, with the added advantage of having Alternative Bank provide them with financial services.

According to him, across the world, businesses and corporate organisations are realising that they don't need to have plenty of brick and mortar for people to come in; they need to have a space that is multi-purpose, which is what this new location serves.

Yunusa said that the future view of the bank in the short, middle, and long-term is to keep having such collaborations with HQ to provide co-working setup for small businesses, big businesses, and enterprises that need an accessible environment to grow their businesses, while the bank provides the needed financial solutions for them to thrive.



L-R: Mohammed Yunusa, director Digital and Products Innovation-The Alternative Bank; Oyebimpe Oyedeji, IWG Growth and Property Director; Khafil Animashaun, group head, Strategy and Innovation, Sterling Bank; Ayo Akinmade, IWG Country manager at the opening of HQ workspace Allen Avenue and signing of HQ new locations in Nigeria.

## Solar provides effective alternative to grid with rising energy cost - Jammal

JOHN SALAU

Rabi Jammal, chief commercial officer, JMG, says solar provides an effective alternative to grid and other forms of electricity with the rising cost of fossil fuel on the back of ongoing US-Israel-Iran war.

"Traditional energy is becoming costly, especially with the cost of diesel rising. Solar energy provides a very effective alternative to this kind of energy," Jammal said during the Engineering sustainability and solar adoption walk, held on Friday March 27, 2026 to deepen awareness about solar adoption.

Themed, 'Smart Engineering for a Sustainable Future', Jammal said the essence of the walk was to deepen awareness about solar power adoption as alternative to grid and other forms of power in Nigeria.

He disclosed that the theme was influenced by the public on the need to effectively interact with consumers on the back of

making solar adoption relatable with end users as a critical service and contribution in community building.

According to him, the sustainability walk will help drive the message home to consumers that renewable energy adoption is the way to go. "There's a lot of adoption in Nigeria. It is growing steadily day by day. We are very glad to see that the technology is being believed in and it's successful," Jammal said, adding that solar is essential to achieve energy access for all.

Engineering has always driven progress, but the choices we make today will define the future we leave behind. Solar energy is no longer an option; it's the path forward. This walk is our way of taking ownership, our way of leading that change, responsibly and boldly."

Jammal disclosed that JMG is positioned as a catalyst for Nigeria's renewable energy transition, and not just reinforcing its leadership in engineering excellence.

# News Extra

## Experts at Scrum Day Nigeria highlight product delivery challenges, risks

CHISOM MICHAEL

Organisations in Nigeria face challenges in delivering products effectively, with industry leaders highlighting weak quality control, workplace stress, and cultural barriers as key issues. Experts warned that the rush for faster outputs and widespread adoption of artificial intelligence could create unsafe systems and overburden teams if not properly managed.

These points were shared at Scrum Day Nigeria 2026 in Lagos, under the theme, 'Building Better Products—Sooner, Safer and Happier.'

Sam Adesoga, convener, managing partner at ValueHut Consulting, said Scrum, a framework used in software development, allows teams with diverse skills to collaborate and achieve shared goals. He added that organisations often focus on speed, which can come at the expense of quality and employee wellbeing.

According to Adesoga, the objective should be to strike a balance where teams can deliver quickly without compromising product integrity or staff welfare. He noted that adoption in Africa remains slower than in the United Kingdom, the United States and Europe. He attributed the gap partly to workplace hierarchies, which may limit junior staff from raising concerns. He said these challenges can be overcome with practitioners who understand how to tailor the framework



L-R: Joshua Adedayin; Product Owner, Gopaddi, Dolapo Kuye Otegbayi; Principal Consultant, DKO Consulting, Sam Adesoga; Managing Partner, ValueHut Consulting, at the Scrum Day Nigeria in partnership with MTN and organised by ValueHut Consulting, held at Lagos Oriental Hotel, recently.

to local conditions.

On trends shaping product development, Adesoga highlighted artificial intelligence. He cautioned that while AI can speed up processes, it should be integrated responsibly to avoid overloading teams or producing unsafe outcomes.

Jeremiah Odey, principal product owner, Gopaddi, said planning alone is not enough for sustained business success. "Organisations need systems that allow repeatable execution," he said. He added that relying solely on plans can give the impression of success in the short term while failing to secure long-term results.

Odey also pointed to AI as a growing influence, noting the rise of systems capable of performing tasks across multiple stages of product development. While concerns about

job displacement exist, he said his organisation retains its workforce and uses AI to enhance productivity rather than replace employees.

Bukola Ajayi, general manager of Architecture and Engineering, MTN Nigeria, said leadership support is vital for successful transformation. She explained that Scrum adoption improved collaboration between business and technology teams and reduced time to market, while early setbacks offered lessons that strengthened later performance.

Dolapo Otegbayi, principal consultant at DKO Consulting, said innovation is shaped by real-world constraints, including cost, risk, consumer behaviour and scalability. She warned that assumptions about markets, rather than validated insights, can result in products that fail

despite internal optimism.

Abimbola Babalola, Agile Solutions Practice Centre Head at Sterling Bank Plc, stressed that quality should be embedded throughout the development lifecycle. "Quality thinking is a mindset that must be embraced collectively," he said. He added that team members must continuously assess whether features meet user needs and that constructive disagreement can drive better outcomes when managed effectively.

Babalola concluded that quality assurance goes beyond testing; it involves ensuring that products deliver value and align with the needs of users. He emphasised that sustainable product development depends on combining disciplined processes with a culture that encourages continuous evaluation and improvement.

## Africa's AI future to be defined by data governance across the continent— Gyekye

CHUKA UROKO

Africa's Artificial Intelligence (AI) future will be defined largely by the continent's data governance, Akua Gyekye, government affairs director at Microsoft, has said, stressing that the continent's digital future will be determined not only by how quickly AI spreads across the continent, but by how deliberately it governs and shares the data that powers it.

He noted that, across the continent, digital public infrastructure is expanding, connectivity is improving, and governments and businesses are increasingly exploring how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence can support economic growth and public service delivery.

For Africa, the defining question is not only whether Africa participates in the AI economy, but whether value created from African data, talent, and deployment is captured within African economies.

At the centre of this challenge lies data. AI systems rely on data to learn, adapt, and generate value. African countries are increasingly recognising data as a form of strategic infrastructure, similar to energy grids, broadband networks, and cross-border financial systems.

Yet, across Africa, the governance structures that determine how data is shared, protected, and used remain fragmented. Without trusted

and interoperable data systems, AI cannot scale responsibly across sectors or across borders.

Gyekye says there is strategic opportunities for progress, explaining that over the past decade, there has been significant progress in data governance across Africa.

"Current UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) data show that 76 percent of African countries have data protection and privacy legislation in place. That is significant progress, but progress alone will not be enough if governance remains fragmented," he noted.

According to him, progress is being held back by persistent data silos and overly restrictive data localisation and cross-border transfer restrictions. These barriers can limit innovation, constrain economic growth, and reduce opportunities for cross-border collaboration at a time when scale is increasingly important.

"Unlocking trusted cross-border data flows, while respecting national sovereignty and privacy protections, will be critical to enabling a digital economy that works across borders, not just within them," Gyekye suggested.

He said that the risk is not only slower adoption, but reduced influence over how AI systems are designed, trained, and deployed, adding that current data governance efforts across the continent also tend to focus heavily on data protection and privacy.

## Dominion City's global summit targets leadership development, kingdom alignment

BLESSING ADIMABUA

Dominion City, a global Church committed to raising leaders who transform society, has said that it had perfected plans to enhance leadership development and kingdom alignment for national growth.

The step, it said, would be achieved during the Global Camp Meeting and 2 Nights of Glory 2026 events in Lagos and Europe, which is expected to bring together over 30,000 participants and millions of others online across the globe.

According to the organisers, the annual events scheduled from Wednesday, April 1st, through to Monday, April 6th, 2026, are expected to attract thousands of worshippers, ministers, and believers from Nigeria and across the world for a season of revival, teaching, and spiritual renewal.

Speaking at a press conference held to officially announce the programme, Nobbert Onaga, president of the Golden Heart Foundation and senior pastor, Dominion City Lagos & Europe, said the gathering would feature dynamic teachings and powerful worship sessions focused on healing, salvation, revival, deliverance, miracles, and breakthrough.

He said that the programme serves as a platform for spiritual impartation, leadership development, and kingdom alignment, drawing participants from different nations who seek deeper encounters with God and practical teachings for impactful living.

Onaga said that the meetings align with Dominion City's mission of equipping believers to influence society positively through faith, leadership, and transformation.

Shola Olapade, senior pastor, Dominion City Headquarters (DCHQ), said

the essence of having the programme annually is to, among other things, tackle the leadership, spiritual and moral issues that other institutions in the society cannot tackle.

Olapade said the event will address issues around human capital development with spe-

cialised training sessions on artificial intelligence, innovation, arts and entertainment, media, business, and career for both adults and youths.

The six-day international conference taking place at Golden Heart Place, Km 22 Lekki-Epe Expressway, Lagos, will bring together respected

ministers from different parts of the world.

"The meeting will be hosted by David Ogbueli, founder of Dominion City, and will feature a line-up of anointed ministers and worship leaders, including Charles Ndifon, Andres Bissonni, Randy Mitchell, Ikechukwu Peter

Nnajofo. Ferdinand Nweke, Ben Hanyani Ndobe, Dan Scott, and Chiefo Ejiofobiri," he said.

He further said that the programme will also feature inspiring music ministrations from renowned gospel artists like Grace Idowu, Rhema Onuoha, Once More Six, David Nkennor, Anthony Kani, and GUC

The event is designed to provide participants with an atmosphere of deep spiritual encounter, prophetic ministry, and life-transforming insights, noting that there will be free transportation for attendees from designated locations to ensure ease of access to the venue.

Olapade urged participants to register for the Global Camp Meeting by scanning the QR code on the event flyer, noting that both events are open to the public and promise to be a significant spiritual highlight in Nigeria's Christian calendar for 2026.



L-R: Godwin Efobi, Head, Medical Team, DCHQ; Shola Olapade, Senior Pastor, Dominion City Headquarters (DCHQ); Nobbert Onaga, President, Golden Heart Foundation and Senior Pastor, DC Lagos & Europe; Chuks Anochie, Head of Security and Traffic Control, Dominion City Headquarters (DCHQ); Camp Meeting 2026 and Josh Tim Vaduchi, Head of Event & Programmes, DCHQ.

# NewsXtra

## Jobberman, Mastercard Foundation commit to talents-employers linkage to tackle youth unemployment

BLESSING ADIMABUA

Career development and recruitment solution company, Jobberman Nigeria, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, has pledged to support young professionals between the ages of 18 and 34 in job search and career development, as part of ongoing efforts to reduce unemployment and underemployment in Africa.

According to the organisations, through its Associates Programme, which runs specifically in Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and The Gambia, it places trained young professionals in vetted organisations to gain valuable experience for twelve months.

Phase 2 of the initiative will focus on graduates with the onboarding of employers who will host these professionals, called Associates.

Speaking at the Jobberman Employer Onboarding event held in Lagos, Olamide Adeyeye, country head of programmes at Jobberman Nigeria, said the partnership builds on years of collaboration with the Mastercard Foundation aimed at improving youth employability across Africa.

According to him, the



L-R: Ukinebo Dare, head of industry engagement and ecosystem building, Mastercard Foundation; Olamide Adeyeye, country head of programmes, Jobberman Nigeria; Carol Hondonga, director of transitions, Mastercard Foundation; Kehinde Ayeni, executive director, LEAP AFRICA; and Toluwani Aina, programme coordinator, Mastercard Foundation Associates Programme at the Jobberman Employer Onboarding event held in Lagos.

partnership with Mastercard Foundation since 2020 is one of the projects focused on skilling millions of young people to transition into the digital economy, adding that knowledge and skills alone are not enough; experience makes a huge difference.

Adeyeye said that the current phase of the programme bridges the gap between training and employment through paid internships that provide real work experience.

"This programme connects skilling with earning by giving young talent the opportunity to enter the work-

force through paid internships," he said.

He further said that in the first phase, 375 young people participated, with over 68 percent transitioning into meaningful employment after completing their internships.

He added that the new phase, launched in October last year, aims to scale impact across West Africa.

"We are expanding into 5 West African countries: Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. The objective is to support 3,650 young people, with 70 percent being women, 5 percent

persons with disabilities, and 5 percent internally displaced persons, to gain valuable experience through internships and transition into dignified, fulfilling work," Adeyeye said.

He noted that the initiative also supports small and medium-sized enterprises by providing access to trained talent without significantly increasing staffing costs.

"While young talent builds valuable experience, we are also helping entrepreneurs who want to expand but are limited by staffing costs. This programme provides them with the right talent," he explained.

Adeyeye emphasised that prioritising women in the programme is critical to unlocking Nigeria's full economic potential.

"Women have historically been marginalised from opportunities like this. If only one segment of society contributes meaningfully to the economy, we all lose. When everyone participates in the workforce, we reach our objectives faster," he concluded.

Toluwani Aina, programme coordinator, Mastercard Foundation Associates Programme, said that the initiative was designed to address the employment challenges faced by young people transitioning from school to the workplace.

"The programme is designed to support young people between the ages of 18 and 34. Its primary aim is to reduce unemployment, the shock and gap young people face when they leave school and enter the workforce. The second aim is to tackle underemployment," Aina said.

She added that the programme also promotes inclusivity by targeting women, persons with disabilities, and internally displaced persons, while helping young people develop clearer career paths.

"We are very intentional about inclusivity. We focus on women, persons with disabili-

ties, and internally displaced people. The programme is meant to help young people create a career focus," she said.

Aina urged organisations to participate by hosting associates, stressing that the initiative would strengthen Nigeria's labour market and support business growth.

"For the good of Nigeria and Africa as a whole, it is the responsibility of all of us who understand the impact of this programme to be part of it. It helps build talent pipelines. Once interns come in through this programme, it reduces recruitment stress," she explained.

She further highlighted that participating employers would receive structured support, including trained talent, HR advisory services, and continuous engagement throughout the programme cycle.

"We support our employers throughout. For one year, and even beyond, we provide assistance in developing policies, structures, and systems that strengthen organisations," Aina said.

The event marked the first stage of this phase of the Associates programme, and it solidifies the commitment of Jobberman Nigeria and the Mastercard Foundation to the development of the workforce of young Africans.

## Bayelsa monarchs urge pipeline surveillance firms to emulate PINL

SAMUEL ESE, Port Harcourt

Traditional rulers in Bayelsa State have lauded a pipeline surveillance company, Pipeline Infrastructure Nigeria Limited (PINL), for its various initiatives aimed at improving the well-being of its host communities.

Bubaraye Dakolo, chairman of Bayelsa State Council of Traditional Rulers, made the call while giving a goodwill message at PINL's stakeholders engagement on Thursday in Yenagoa.

Dakolo, who is also the Ibenanaowei of Ekpetiama Kingdom, commended the company for its relentless efforts at ensuring that oil and gas communities are carried along in its operations.

Also speaking, David West, chairman of Civil Liberties Organization (CLO) in the state, said PINL has understood the yearnings and aspirations of the host communities and working to assuage their challenges.

Azibator Efere, secretary of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Central Zone, urged PINL not to relent in its efforts to pay

all outstanding stipends and remuneration owed benefiting stakeholders.

Efere urged the host communities to also reciprocate the good gesture of the surveillance firm by ensuring that peace and tranquility prevail in their domain.

Akpos Mezeh, PINL general manager, Community and Stakeholders Relations, in his welcome address, said the attendance of stakeholders reflected the shared dedication to strengthening cooperation, sustaining peace, and advancing development across the host communities within their operational corridors.

Mezeh explained that PINL skipped the February meeting to consolidate on some important aspects of community empowerment programmes, including the disbursement of scholarship grants to beneficiaries from the host communities.

He advised beneficiaries who were yet to receive their scholarship grants to visit the help desk to address such concerns and ensure that no beneficiary was left behind.

"At PINL, we hold firmly to one guiding principle, community partnership is

national security. When communities protect infrastructure, they protect livelihoods, national revenue, and the future of our country," he said.

On Nigeria's energy outlook, he said the oil and gas sector remained central to national development and economic stability, citing recent developments which he said reflected renewed progress and growing opportunities.

Mezeh assured PINL would sustain its advocacy for oil and gas riverine communities to also enjoy uninterrupted supply of petroleum products through the provision of functional floating petrol and gas stations.

He said the Federal Government was aware of the challenges confronting the people who continue to buy petroleum products above prevailing market prices.

Mezeh disclosed recent cases of crude theft in Rivers and Bayelsa states saying, "Preliminary findings point to a possible coordinated conspiracy. Let me be clear, once investigations are concluded, everyone found culpable will be brought to justice, and no one will be spared."

## 2027: Aba South PDP structure collapses into LP

...Two former LG Transition Committee Chairmen, others declare support for Otti

GODFREY OFURUM, Aba

Over 230 strong members of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State, have dumped the party for the Labour Party (LP), the ruling party in the state.

The decampers, who declared support for Governor Alex Otti, were received by Emmanuel Emeruwa, speaker of Abia State House of Assembly, who represents Aba South State Constituency and other leaders of the Labour Party in the state at the elaborate event, held at the Aba Town Hall.

Receiving the defectors, at an elaborate event, held at the Aba Town Hall, Emeruwa, welcomed them as his kinsmen, who appreciate the good works of Governor Otti in Aba and the entire state.

Emeruwa also described the defectors, as notable indigenous political gladiators over the years in Aba South political field, stressing that even before they joined the Labour Party

that they have been supportive after seeing some progressive impacts of the Governor.

He said that he had expected them to take this type of decision they took, to join and fully support a government that means well for their people, because of the way Governor Alex Otti has brought a paradigm shift that is visible to the blind and audible to the deaf.

Emeruwa described the coming of the defectors as a plus to the Labour Party and advised, Mmaju Egbebu, the party's chairman in Aba South, to integrate them into the party immediately, as they will be vital to the already concluded plan that Aba belongs to Otti in 2027.

He said that the Labour Party in Abia was not leaving anything to chance in the 2027 election, stressing that they're already aware that it would be technical, but expressed confidence that they would emerge victorious, because the government has gained the trust of the people.

He advised both the old and

new members to ensure that they register and revalidate their membership of the party on or before March 30, 2026, which is the deadline for the registration.

Emeruwa said that the membership registration has become extremely important, because the forthcoming primary election would be a direct primary, as there will be no room for delegates.

"You should know that the power is in your hands now. There's nothing like taking wine to delegates anymore. Those of you, who are registered will be eligible to vote."

He called on all residents of Aba South to take the continuous voter registration seriously as well as it is only through registration that they will be able to vote for Governor Alex Otti and other people he is working with, so that the ongoing good works will be sustained.

Chiji Nkaru, the immediate past Abia State legal adviser of the PDP, said that even in his former party, he has always been pro labour, pro people, pro progressives and pro development.

# Sports

## Dakar 2026 targets 900,000 youth in grassroots sports development

JOHN SALAU

**T**he local organising committee of Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games, says it aims to reach 900,000 young people aged 9 to 15 across 11,000 schools before the start of the Games in October as its push to deepen grassroots sports development.

The team in charge of implementing the Olympic Values Education Programme (OVEP), as part of the Games' legacy programme, are tapping educators, youth leaders and sports facilitators to deepen the impact of the Games beyond stadiums into schools and classrooms.

"Women are integrated at both governance and operational levels," stated Fanta Diallo, director, engagement and mobilisation, Dakar 2026, whose department is overseeing the rollout.

Diallo's team – a group of educators, youth leaders and



sports facilitators with near-perfect gender parity – are involved

in training teachers, mentoring students and supporting schools

and youth programmes as they introduce OVEP-related activities and clubs.

"Women are represented within our leadership and delivery teams; and play an active role in curriculum delivery and mentoring."

According to her, the programme is active in Senegal's 'toddler huts' – community centres for kindergarten-age children, ensuring that the Olympic values of excellence, respect and friendship are introduced from an early age.

She added that facilitating equal access to sport, education and leadership opportunities is a priority of the Brevet Olympique Civique et Sportif (BOCS).

Targeted outreach is directed at girls in schools and community settings, while the programme is aligned with national and local initiatives promoting girls' education, health and participation in sport and community life.

"Particular attention is given to parity in access, participation in practical sports sessions, civic modules and leadership activities linked to the Olympic values," Diallo stated.

According to her, girls represent about 50 percent of the beneficiaries of the BOCS programme, which is a significant proportion in a country where many girls face cultural and socioeconomic barriers to sporting and educational opportunities.

Cécile Faye, director, National Olympic Academy of Senegal, stated that BOCS outcomes demonstrate the importance and value of having women in leadership roles, and their capacity to imbue positive values in younger generations.

"What makes female leadership important in society is transmitting values to young girls," Cécile explains. "Seeing them become autonomous and reproducing the same behaviours is reassuring."

### Abia Soccer Fest (ASF) 2025/2026 enters state finals

...as Otti commits to creating opportunities for Abia youth

GODFREY OFURUM, Aba

**T**he 2025/2026 Abia Soccer Fest (ASF) has progressed into the state finals with draws held to pitch competing soccer teams against each other for the football festival.

Alex Otti, governor of Abia State, while speaking at the recent state finals draw, held at the JAAC secretariat, Umuahia, stated that his administration remains committed to creating opportunities for youth in the state to thrive in sports and continue to serve in vital platforms across the state.

Otti stated that the successful conduct of the draw signals the official takeoff of what promises to be an exciting and highly competitive tournament.

"Remember, beyond winning, you are ambassadors of your local government areas and role models to pop young, inspiring athletes," stated Otti, who was represented by Ikechukwu Emetu, deputy governor, Abia state.

According to the governor, Abia State Soccer Fest stands as a testament to his vision of discovering talents, promoting discipline, and encouraging healthy competition to all participating teams.

"It is our expectation that the same level of professionalism will be maintained throughout this very special competition," Otti stated.

Nwaobilor Ananaba, the State's

Commissioner for Sports, described the draw as a significant step in the preparation for the state finals.

He noted that a remarkable enthusiasm has been witnessed during the lower stages of the tournament, noting that the next level calls for healthy competition excellence and sportsmanship.

Ananaba encouraged participants to compete in passion with respect for the rules of the games, adding that the ministry of sports remains committed to the initiative that empowers youth, harnessing potential and position Abia state as a hub for sports excellence.

Uzor Nwachukwu, Abia State commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, disclosed that about 60 outstanding talents have been discovered from the competition that started from the ward level, through the local governments to the draws for the state.

He expressed optimism that at the end of the competition the talents would be sought after, by football clubs within and outside the country.

John Udeagbala, chairman, Local Organising Committee (LOC) noted that the Abia State Soccer Fest was created as a platform to discover talents at the grassroots, promote unity and engage the youths positively.

Udeagbala disclosed that over 100 matches have so far been played across the 17 LGAs, while the best teams have earned their place in the State finals.

### FOJEIS urges youth to leverage football talent for lifelong learning

JOHN SALAU

**T**he Friends Of Jesus Excelling In Sports (FOJEIS) has urged grassroots football players to leverage their sporting talents for lifelong learning.

This was made known during a one-day workshop on grassroots sports development tagged 'FOJEIS TALKS' with focus on voluntary, self-motivated, and continuous pursuit of knowledge for personal and professional growth.

"I thank God for how far it has gone and the meaningful conversations that we've been able to have," Tolu Joshua, convener, FOJEIS, said on Saturday during the workshop, themed,

"Turning Grassroot Sports into Real life Opportunities."

She added that the aim of the workshop was to directly impact the youth on and off the field towards becoming meaningful individuals in the society.

Joshua said FOJEIS plans to organise a football camp meeting for 200 young footballers and a cup tournament sometime in August as part of its 10th anniversary celebration.

"This is also a landmark year for us because this is our tenth



year. And I think our general target for the year also will be that we can also have a tournament cup, where we can also engage them on the pitch," Joshua said.

Angel Salt, founder, F8ballers Africa, said grassroots sports academies must understand the business side of sport development.

He added that it is very important that the people who are running football academies should both learn about structure and practice a structure-based academy.

"And this structure we're talking about is not just filling up positions. It's a business-oriented, entrepreneurship mindset. And that means in

business, you're either making profits or recording losses."

According to him, the structure behind sporting academies provide platforms for the exchange of football education and life skills.

"And their parents are appreciating that knowledge exchange. So, whether you call that payment. But what I'm saying is that in the past eight years, F8ballers Africa has been sustained. We keep bringing up new things," he said.

According to him, sports management has gone beyond having passion for the games. "I call myself a football preneur because I brought an entrepreneurship mindset into starting a football academy."

# Sports

## Iran coach hails Super Eagles after friendly defeat

Stories by ANTHONY NLEBEM

Iran head coach Amir Ghalenoei has offered high praise to the Super Eagles of Nigeria, describing them as a "strong and physical" side following their 2-1 victory in Antalya, Turkey, on Friday.

Nigeria delivered a composed performance in Antalya, combining attacking sharpness with defensive resilience to secure the win over the Iran national football team.

Goals from Moses Simon and Akor Adams proved decisive, as the Super Eagles took early control and maintained composure under late pressure.

Nigeria made a fast start, with Samuel Chukwueze threading a precise pass to Simon, who finished calmly after six minutes.

Head coach Eric Chelle made key adjustments at half-time, introducing Emmanuel Fernandez,



while Ademola Lookman later set up Adams to double the lead early

in the second half. Iran responded through Mehdi

Taremi, but Nigeria managed the closing stages effectively, with

substitutes including Paul Onuachu, Chidera Ejuke, and Fisayo Dele-Bashiru helping to see out the result.

Ghalenoei Reacts

Reflecting on the defeat, Ghalenoei admitted Nigeria's physicality and quality made the difference.

"This was a very useful preparation game, especially as we were able to implement Plan B in defence against a strong and physical team like Nigeria," he said.

What's Next

The result marks Nigeria's second-ever win over Iran, following their 1998 Carlsberg Cup victory, while their 2014 FIFA World Cup meeting ended goalless.

Both teams return to action on March 31, with Nigeria facing Jordan, while Iran takes on Costa Rica as preparations continue ahead of future international competitions.



## Morocco warns Senegal over AFCON trophy parade

The Moroccan Football Federation has threatened legal action against Senegal over plans to display the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) trophy during an upcoming international friendly in France.

The dispute follows a controversial ruling by the Confederation of African Football Appeal Board, which stripped Senegal of the AFCON 2025 title and awarded it to Morocco, overturning the original result on the pitch.

Despite the decision, Senegal are reportedly preparing to parade the trophy ahead of their friendly against Peru at the Stade de France, a move that has triggered a strong response from Moroccan authorities.

Moroccan lawyer Mourad Elajouti confirmed that formal notices have been sent to event organisers, includ-

ing the stadium operators, warning against any public presentation of the trophy.

According to Elajouti, proceeding with the display would amount to recognising a title that has already been revoked by football's governing authorities.

He argued that following the CAF Appeal Board's ruling on March 17, the trophy legally belongs to Morocco, and any attempt by Senegal to present it could be deemed unlawful.

Morocco is also considering escalating the matter through legal channels, including the possibility of placing the trophy under judicial custody pending a final resolution.

The case could yet be taken to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, as the dispute over the 2025 AFCON title continues to deepen.

## Barcelona blow as Raphinha ruled out for weeks

Barcelona forward Raphinha has been ruled out for several weeks after sustaining a muscle injury during Brazil's friendly defeat to France.

The Brazilian winger was forced off at half-time in Brazil's 2-1 defeat in Boston after complaining of discomfort. Subsequent medical tests confirmed a muscle issue, prompting the Brazilian Football Confederation to release him from the squad.

Brazil's head coach, Carlo Ancelotti, confirmed that Raphinha, along with teammate Wesley, would not continue with the national team following the injury.

"Raphinha and Wesley felt pain in the back of their right thigh during the match against France. They are free to continue their treatment. No replacements will be called up," the CBF said



in a statement.

The setback adds to Raphinha's recent injury concerns, having previously missed two months earlier in the season with a similar issue.

Blow for Barcelona

For Barcelona and manager Hansi Flick, the news comes at a critical stage of the campaign. The 29-year-old has

been a key figure in attack, and his absence is expected to impact the club's push across multiple competitions, including the UEFA Champions League.

Raphinha is also set to miss upcoming fixtures for Brazil, dealing a further blow as the team continues preparations ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

## BAL secures record partnerships ahead 2026 season tip-off

The Basketball Africa League (BAL) has announced a record 15 marketing and merchandising partnerships to support its 2026 season, underlining the league's growing commercial appeal and global reach.

The expanded portfolio includes five new partners: Amazon Web Services, PUMA, Qatar Foundation, South African Tourism, and FLEXX, joining a strong lineup of returning stakeholders.

Among the returning partners are Foundational Partners Rwanda Devel-



opment Board and Wilson, alongside Official Partners such as AB InBev, Afreximbank, Air Senegal, Hyundai, RwandAir, the French Embassy of Senegal, ServiceNow, and Wave.

The BAL's sixth season, which tips off in Pretoria, South Africa, is set to

reach fans in more than 200 countries and territories, including all 54 African nations.

Broadcast coverage will be extensive, with games airing across major platforms.

BAL President Amadou Gallo Fall described the partnership growth as a reflection of the league's rising influence.

"This incredible roster of new and returning partners reflects the sustained growth and momentum around the BAL and the African sports industry more broadly," he said.

# Sports

# Butt urges Man United to sign Osimhen to boost attack

Stories by ANTHONY NLEBEM

**F**ormer Manchester United midfielder Nicky Butt has urged his former club to pursue a summer move for Nigerian striker Victor Osimhen, currently on the books of Galatasaray.

Butt raised concerns over United's current attacking options, suggesting that while Benjamin Šeško possesses potential, he may lack the consistency required to lead the line at a club of United's stature.

Speaking to the Mirror, Butt emphasised the need for an experienced and reliable goalscorer, particularly with the demands of the Premier League and Champions League in mind.

"I don't think Šeško can carry the club up front on his own; they will need another No. 9,"



Butt said, "I don't think he needs replacing, but someone better

who can lift his game as well." The former England interna-

tional identified Osimhen as an ideal candidate, citing his phys-

ical attributes and goal-scoring versatility.

"I know Osimhen isn't proven in the Premier League, but you look at his physicality and the way he plays football, he can definitely handle it," Butt added. "He's powerful, quick, can run in behind, strong, and scores different types of goals. He's good in the air."

Butt also noted the practicality of signing the striker, suggesting players in Turkey could be more attainable targets compared to those in Europe's top leagues.

With United expected to reassess their attacking options ahead of the new season, Osimhen has emerged as a strong recommendation from within the club's alumni, as they seek a more potent and reliable focal point in attack.



## Iran players honour school strike victims before Nigeria friendly

**I**ran's men's national team paid tribute to victims of a deadly school airstrike by wearing black armbands and holding school bags before their international friendly against Nigeria in Belek, Turkey, on Friday.

As the national anthem played, players, including Mehdi Taremi, stood with pink and purple rucksacks adorned with ribbons in a solemn gesture to commemorate those killed in the February 28 attack on a primary school in Minab, southern Iran.

The airstrike reportedly claimed at least 170 lives, including students and teachers, on the first day of the escalating Middle East conflict following strikes launched by the United States and Israel.

Iran's foreign minister described the incident as a "calculated, phased assault," while a report by The New York Times cited preliminary find-

ings from a U.S. military investigation suggesting the school was hit by a Tomahawk cruise missile due to a targeting error. According to the report, the intended target was a nearby Iranian base, with outdated coordinates contributing to the strike.

U.S. President Donald Trump had initially suggested Iran might have been responsible, despite the country not possessing Tomahawk missile capabilities.

The emotional pre-match tribute came ahead of Iran's 2-1 defeat to Nigeria, but the focus remained on remembrance rather than the result.

Iran, who have qualified for the upcoming FIFA World Cup, have also requested that their matches be moved from the United States to Mexico, citing security concerns after warnings about potential risks to players' safety.

## Woods charged with DUI after Florida crash, released on bail

**G**olf icon Tiger Woods has been released on bail after being charged with driving under the influence following a rollover crash in Florida.

The 15-time major champion was arrested on Friday after his vehicle overturned while attempting to overtake a trailer. Although Woods escaped unhurt, responding officers described him as "lethargic" and suspected impairment.

Authorities said Woods tested negative on a breathalyser at the scene but refused to provide a urine sample. He was subsequently charged with DUI, property damage, and refusal to submit to a lawful test, offences that are



not classified as felonies.

According to Martin County Sheriff John Budensiek, Woods exhibited "signs of impairment" during roadside assessments conducted after the incident, which occurred shortly after 2 p.m. local time near his residence.

"He did a breathalyser test with triple zeros," Budensiek said. "But when

it came time for a urinary analysis, he refused, and that led to additional charges."

Police indicated that Woods had been driving at high speed on a road with a 30mph limit before losing control. His vehicle tipped onto its side and slid a considerable distance before coming to a stop.

Woods was held in custody for approximately eight hours before being released on bond in the early hours of Saturday. No injuries were reported in the incident, including to the driver of the other vehicle involved.

Investigations into the crash are ongoing.

## Klopp hails Salah as Liverpool's 'all-time great'

**F**ormer Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp has described Mohamed Salah as an "all-time great," insisting his legacy at Anfield will be difficult to surpass.

Salah confirmed this week that he will end his nine-year spell with Liverpool at the close of the season, bringing the curtain down on one of the most prolific eras in the club's history.

Klopp, who signed the Egyptian from AS Roma in 2017 for £34 million, managed him for seven seasons and witnessed his transformation into a global star.

The 33-year-old has made 435 appearances for Liverpool, scoring 255 goals, placing him third on the club's all-time scoring list behind Ian Rush and Roger Hunt.



Reflecting on Salah's impact, Klopp said: "With the bigger view, it is just ridiculous. Unmatched numbers. I think it will be really difficult for anyone to surpass that. He is one of the all-time greats."

During Klopp's tenure, Salah played a central role in a golden era for Liverpool, winning the UEFA Champions League, Premier League, FA Cup,

League Cup, UEFA Super Cup and FIFA Club World Cup.

He was also part of a formidable attacking trio alongside Sadio Mané and Roberto Firmino, with the trio combining for 338 goals in five seasons. Salah led the way with 156 goals, 49 more than Mané and 81 ahead of Firmino.

"He was part of the best front three in world football for a long time," Klopp added. "They all had their qualities, but Mo was the one for the final moment. He wanted it more than anybody."

Klopp, who stepped down in 2024 after nearly a decade in charge, revealed he has remained in touch with Salah and hopes the forward receives a fitting farewell from supporters.

# Legacies of selfless leadership

According to John C. Maxwell, a world-renowned American leadership expert, speaker, pastor, and #1 New York Times bestselling author, "a leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way."

Leadership is therefore, defined as a blend of vision, action, and mentorship. It takes the 7 C factors of character, competence, commitment, courage, constancy of purpose, candour and of course, compassion. Not left out are the unfailing 3H principles of humility, honouring others for their contributions to achieving the common vision and of course, leading others with honesty of purpose.

Experts on leadership across different professional landscapes highlight the significance of Vision which is that of having a clear purpose, pathway setting practice-based examples through personal action, and guiding others diligently on the pathway to success. True leaders therefore, understand the purpose, and destination or goals of where all the actions are taking them to. But it goes beyond rhetoric.

To 'Go the Way' simply means taking the needed Action as at when due: Leaders live out their vision, rather than just giving orders. They also

'Show the Way' which is all about Mentorship. Leaders act as the moral compass to guide and empower others to achieve their own success along with their God-given talents, honing such with professional competence and navigating the way out of all manner of obstacles. That perhaps, explains why yours truly has described life as a hurdle race. So, to succeed one has to muster the will and the courage to lift oneself above such hurdles while exhibiting focus on your goals, not minding or listening to the cheers and jeers of the onlookers or spectators.

In essence, selfless leadership, which is often characterised as servant leadership, is driven by one propelled by the larger picture of seeking for and achieving the common good. It leaves a legacy focused on empowerment, reconciliation, and long-term societal growth. That is rather than the insatiable quest for personal power, to ride roughshod over others or for the accumulation of

wanton wealth which the biblical King Solomon described as "vanity upon vanity, all is vanity." The servant leaders prioritise the needs of their followers, communities, and countries. It all boils down to self-sacrifice which only few are ready to do.

Stated here are some examples of the legacies of selfless leadership from different personalities beginning with Nelson Mandela (South Africa). His was the Legacy of Reconciliation.

After spending 27 years in prison, Nelson Mandela emerged not with a desire for revenge, but with a vision of unity. As South Africa's first Black president, he prioritised national reconciliation over personal bitterness, setting a global standard for forgiveness and unity, with his "rainbow nation" concept.

On his part, Mahatma Gandhi (India)

**"Leadership is not about being in charge. Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge"**

— Simon Sinek, author and inspirational speaker

is remembered for his Legacy of Nonviolent Resistance. Often referred to as the "Father of the Nation" by Indians, he utilised selfless leadership to lead a massive, Satyagraha nonviolent campaign for independence against British rule. He practiced voluntary simplicity and lived alongside those he led, embodying the change he wanted to see in the world.

As for Abraham Lincoln, his leadership during the American Civil War was marked by a commitment to preserving the union and ending slavery. This was a process that necessitated immense personal fortitude and political risk.

With regards to Mother Teresa (India/Albania) she dedicated her life to serving the "poorest of the poor" in Calcutta and beyond, founding the Missionaries of Charity. Her leadership was rooted in extreme humility, compassion, and a direct, hands-on approach to assisting the destitute.

She amply demonstrated that true leadership

is all about serving, rather than being served. Her organisation expanded to over 130 countries, continuing her work of providing comfort and dignity to the forgotten.

Standing tall on the Legacy of Advocacy for Education is Malala Yousafzai (Pakistan). According to historical records as a young girl in Pakistan's Swat Valley, Malala opposed the Taliban's ban on girls' education with an uncommon courage. After surviving a Taliban attack in 2012, she did not step back; instead, she used her platform to fight for girls' education globally.

As the youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate, her courage has inspired a global movement for educational rights, demonstrating that leadership can be driven by a young voice standing up for human rights. Yours truly inspired by what John Harold Johnson, the then globally recognised publisher of Ebony Magazine would describe as succeeding against all odds!

When the name of King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand is mentioned, it rings a loud bell of the Legacy of "Sufficiency Economy." Oh yes, he ruled for seven decades, and was revered for his humility and dedication to his people's well-being.

As the people's president, he often visited the poorest regions of Thailand personally. He promoted the "sufficiency economy" philosophy, which focused on self-reliance and moderation in lifestyle.

He was a unifying figure in an often politically unstable country, remembered as a compassionate father-figure who sought to improve rural livelihoods. How one wishes that our political leaders could borrow a fresh leaf from him.

In a similar vein, Pepe Mujica (served 2010–2015) was nicknamed the "world's poorest president" due to his extreme austerity, donating roughly 90 percent of his \$12,000 monthly salary to charity, and living on a ramshackle farm instead of the presidential palace. His 1987 Volkswagen Beetle was often his only declared asset, and he famously remarked, "I'm not poor... Poor are those who need too much."

As for George Washington (USA), his is the Legacy of Voluntary Surrender of Power. This was defined by his willingness to step down



**AYO OYOZE BAJE**

Baje is Nigerian first food technologist in the media and author of 'Drumbeats of Democracy'

from the pedestal of political power after leading the Continental Army and serving as the first U.S. President. He refused a third term, setting a precedent for the peaceful transition of power.

That reminds us of one former Nigerian president who goes by the name of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ). Knowing full well of the political gimmicks, gambits and desperation of his unrelenting traducers to cause chaos and anarchy, if he hung unto power he graciously and peacefully handed over power to Muhammadu Buhari back in 2015. And he stated that his political ambition was not worth the drop of blood of even one innocent Nigerian. That is servant leadership for you.

Still talking about Nigeria one unforgettable icon of servant leadership was Dr. Stella Adadevoh (Nigeria) noted for the Legacy of Selfless Sacrifice. In 2014, Dr. Adadevoh stopped a patient carrying the Ebola virus from leaving a hospital in Lagos, despite the patient's insistence and pressure from diplomatic figures. Her courageous, "greater good" decision saved the country from a widespread Ebola outbreak. Eventually, she paid with her life, and her supreme sacrifice spared Nigeria from a national health catastrophe. That incident exemplifies ultimate commitment to public duty. May her great soul keep resting in the bosom of the Lord.

Definitely, Nigeria needs more servant leaders, especially in the political spectrum. We need leaders who can subsume their craving for money and materialism and sacrifice their whims and caprices to hang onto power more by crook than by hook and be propelled by the search for the common good.



**IKEDDY ISIGUZO**

Isiguzo is a major commentator on minor issues

HAMISU Abdullahi, 38, an electrician, and father of four, was arrested in Suleja, Niger State, the other Friday. His offence, ordinarily, should have been laughed off. Not when his "joke" tangled the nerves of Governor Mohammed Umaru Bago, a famous proponent of no speech. Bago has excelled in deciding who speaks and what is said.

Above the din and dust associated with the presence of a Governor, Hamisu started shouting, "No water, no light", shattering the pretence of governance which mainly includes ensuring a Governor only hears things pleasing to his ears.

Did Hamisu lie? No. The truth no longer sets people free. They could end up in jail. If they are lucky, they could survive.

Hamisu was speaking for Nigerians, all over the land, where governance has been reduced to speeches laced with layered lies, jumbled jamborees abroad, and curated photo opportunities.

Hamisu was reporting Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Jagaban Borgu, President of Nigeria, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, a man with immense powers, plus the ones he has appropriated through Executive Orders or others orderlessly taken.

Tinubu is powerful enough to ensure there is electricity round the clock in Nigeria. He has doused his electricity policy in such sophistry that it guarantees failure.

In a Nigeria that people provide their own water and electricity, Hamisu's was a cry for help - a cry

## 2027: Does Tinubu still need our votes?

on behalf of all Nigerians who suffer the double jeopardy of high prices for poor services, where they are available.

Price of petrol on the eve of Tinubu's presidency in May 2023 was N195 per litre in Lagos and N197 in Abuja. The current price is N1,500 per litre not because of the war in Iran as they shamelessly say, or the removal of subsidy but the incompetence of Tinubu that he hauntingly displaces in every aspect of his administration.

Tinubu spent billions of our money on a solar power system that effectively relieved his official residence and offices of the menace of national electricity supply.

Did he apologise to anyone or lift a tiny finger to improve our electricity situation? Selfish like Tinubu, no cares about the common good.

Tinubu is an embarrassment on many scores. The bigger embarrassment is the millions of Nigerians who go through these Tinubu-induced circumstances and justify them.

"By all means necessary, you must have electricity, and you will not pay for estimated billing anymore. We will honour the promises we make. If I don't keep the promise and I come back for a second term, don't vote for me," said Tinubu in December 2022 to a mixed town hall gathering of business people and politicians in Lagos.

Applause rented the air. Tinubu had no plans to provide electricity in any form. His promise is as hollow as things Tinubu. Those who are reminding Tinubu of that promise are not fair to themselves.

What will we do about the devastating consequences of Tinubu on most of us? Tinubu is defiant and unapologetic over his serial failures. He would rather shift blames, share blames than admit that his administration has been an unmitigated disaster in all areas.

"Today, we just want to take some time to remind President Tinubu that he promised Nigerians uninterrupted electricity within four years. Yes, that's right, Mr President promised us 24/7 power. All by himself," Bolaji Abdullahi, National Publicity

Secretary of the African Democratic Congress, stated in a long X post on 20 July 2025.

"Since Tinubu took office, electricity tariffs have jumped by 240%, but the grid has collapsed 12 times, plunging millions of homes and businesses into repeated darkness.

"Over 90 million Nigerians still lack electricity, while many get just 4 to 6 hours a day under Tinubu's failed Band A-E system.

"In rural communities, most of Nigeria's 50 million families remain completely off the grid, with no access to electricity at all.

"Yet, Mr. President still has not moved the needle. In 26 months, there has been no major power sector reforms, no clear roadmap, and no sense of urgency.

"We are past the halfway mark of this administration, and millions of Nigerians are still charging their phones at mobile charging kiosks, and spending hundreds of thousands to fuel their generators," Abdullahi stated.

Things have worsened since then. The collapse of the national grid has become more frequent, and Tinubu no longer discusses the electricity debacle. He ignores it.

Abdullahi seemed to have misinterpreted Tinubu who did not say he would not run for second term. He said we should not vote for him.

Tinubu sounds like our votes would not matter. More like, if you like, don't vote for me because of electricity.

It is typically Tinubu to mock us. He has all the 36 Governors pledging their support for him. Yet Tinubu is in a panic. Sometimes, he remembers that he is a human being, no matter how his panjandrum promote him.

He may still consider a constitutional amendment to return him unopposed since all the Governors support him.

For Tinubu, Nigerians do not count. We do not matter. We are mere statistics that frighten him.

Nigerians have been mistreated enough to punish Tinubu with their votes. We count.

Hamisu's lone voice was considered a threat that could "disrupt government activities". What if more

voices shout, "No water. No light"?

**Finally...**

CHIEF of Defence Staff General Olufemi Oluyede has confirmed that terrorists in the North-East (only?) should be allowed to repent instead of being killed. He spoke at a lecture in Abuja. He likened terrorists to the prodigal son in the Bible who the father accepted his repentance. Who did the prodigal kill?

Exactly what battle instructions does Oluyede give his troops? Capture terrorists for repentance even if they kill you. And our military and other security agents who terrorists kill daily should follow this instruction which one thought was the brainwave of the National Security Adviser, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu.

Does this instruction also apply to terrorists in other parts of Nigeria?

A MOTHER of eight, in Kano, died a day after she was delivered of five babies from her latest pregnancy. She left behind 13 children whose future bears the extra burden of being motherless. There was a point she should have stopped. Sadly, it took death to stop her.

DELEGATES of the All Progressives Congress, APC, reportedly over 8,000 of them, descended on Abuja on Friday for a national convention that would crown Bola Ahmed Tinubu as the party's presidential candidate. National deceit would be in abundance when thousands who know their lives were better pre-Tinubu would put up shows to affirm Tinubu as Nigeria's best President forever.

HERDERS chose when the APC North Central zonal congress was going on in Lafia, Nasarawa State, to unleash mayhem on the State in broad daylight. Their target was Mararaba, about 170km to Lafia and just 14km outside Abuja. Reports say it was a reprisal attack on a farmer. Number of casualties remains unknown. Lawlessness continues to be accommodated

NIGERIA Democratic Congress, NDC, held its first National Executive Committee meeting on Wednesday in Abuja. Delegates from across the country deliberated on creating in-roads into Nigeria's democratic space.

• ISIGUZO is a major commentator on minor issues