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How Non-state Actors Can Deepen Democratic Culture, Values In Nigeria

Four Years After, Bankers' Committee Completes Restoration Of National Theatre, Set For Unveiling



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WEEKEND

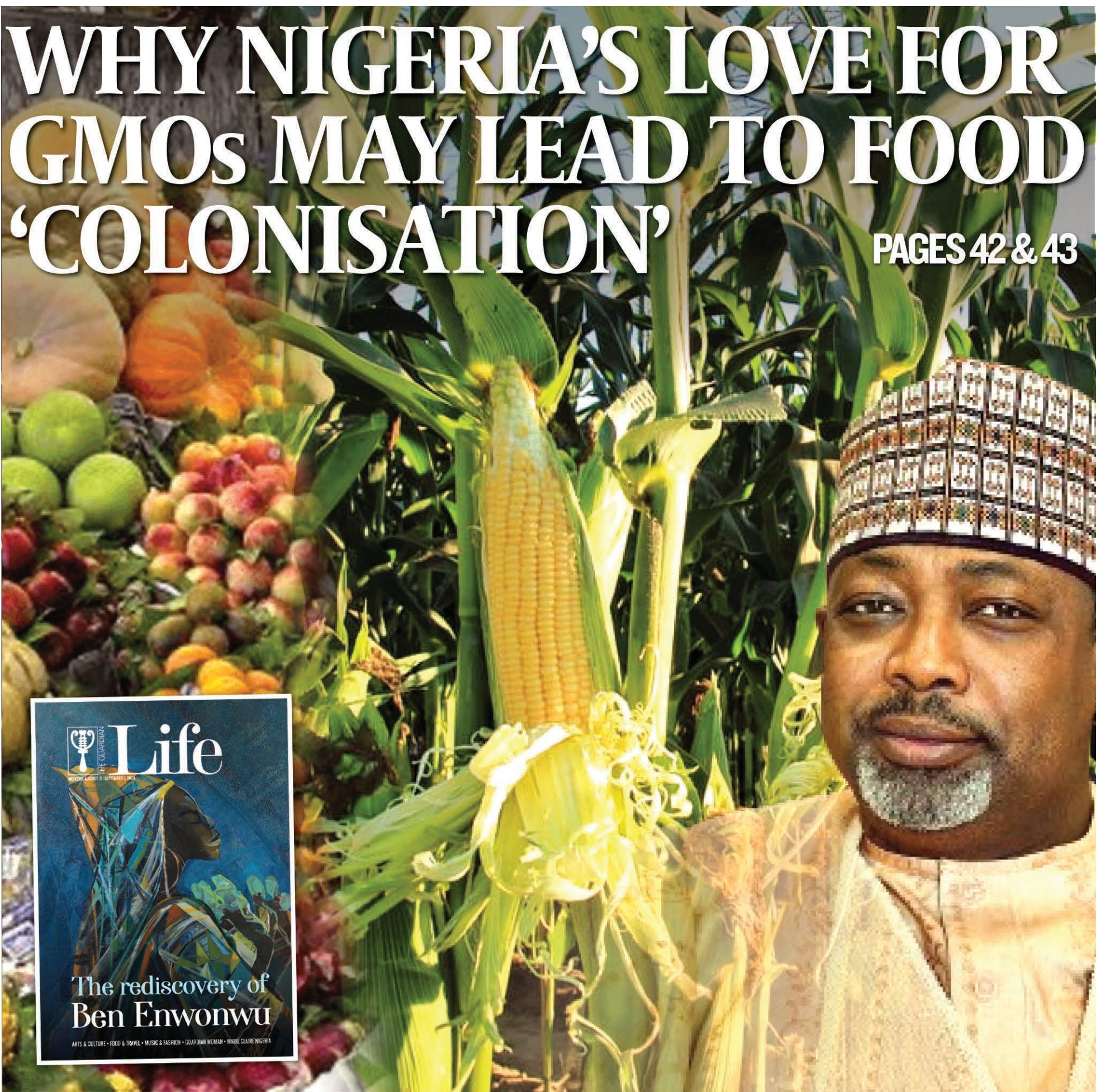
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WHY NIGERIA'S LOVE FOR GMOs MAY LEAD TO FOOD 'COLONISATION'

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Food Crisis: ECOWAS, WFP Provide \$1.6m To Fight Hunger, Poverty In The Northwest

From **Seye Olumide** (Ibadan) and **Joke Falaju** (Abuja)

AMID the banditry and displacements in the North West region, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission and the World Food Programme (WFP) have provided \$1.6 million funding support to tackle malnutrition and poverty in Kastina and Sokoto states.

This came as the WFP is set to receive 5000 metric tonnes of wheat donations from the Ukrainian Government on Sunday, which it plans to distribute in the North West region to fight increasing hunger.

Meanwhile, the Ministries of Agriculture and Food Systems, across the six Southwest states, have recommended that governors across the zone should urgently embark on, and also support strategic initiatives that would enhance food productivity, with a particular focus on rice paddy cultivation. The Deputy Head of Programme at WFP, Manuela Reinfield, disclosed this at the launch of the second phase of the ECOWAS, WFP, Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs Stabilisation Project for 2024/2025 on Friday at the Kastina State Government House.

She noted that the project took off at the right time, given the deteriorating food security situation coupled with the insecurity situation in the region.

She stated that under the programme, they intend to provide monthly cash transfer support of N11,500 to about 14,500 beneficiaries in Kastina and Sokoto states for a six-month period.

The WFP official said they would also provide nutritious food containing corn-soya blend to pregnant and lactating women and their children under two years to prevent malnutrition.

She disclosed that Kastina and Zamfara states would also get unconditional food assistance with the wheat grain expected to arrive into the country from Ukraine on Sunday.

The Permanent Representative of Nigeria in the ECOWAS, Amb. Sani Nuhu, said ECOWAS had established a Stabilisation Fund to assist victims of terrorism and banditry in the Northwest.

He said: "ECOWAS Commission came up with the idea of setting aside \$1 million to be given to Nigeria every year to come up with a programme on providing social alleviation initiatives to victims of insecurity in the Northeast and the Northwest."

He said ECOWAS selected WFP as the implementing partner to ensure that the intervention gets to the intended beneficiaries.

In his remarks, Kastina State Governor, Dikko Umar Radda, commended ECOWAS, WFP and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs for the support, saying the project would empower and transfer best practices to the state's institutions during implementation, noting that there would be room for continuity and technical collaboration

• Plan To Distribute 5000mt Of Wheat In The Region

• Southwest Stakeholders Task Governors On Rice Production Strategies

even after the expiration of the project.

He gave the assurance that the state would be ready to provide a conducive environment for continuous partnership with the donor partners.

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Olumuyiwa Enitan, stated that beneficiaries of the programme were carefully selected in line with global practices, as they are the most vulnerable in the state.

He disclosed that 14,694 vulnerable population were selected from Kastina and Sokoto states, saying 7,347 beneficiaries were selected across two local councils of Kastina State.

He said the initiative has the ultimate goal of ensuring a future where peace, stability and prosperity would not just be aspirations or mere wish thinking, but realities for all.

The Ministries of Agriculture in the Southwest states made the call for increased rice production in the region in collaboration with the Lagos State Commodity and Future Exchange (LCFE), Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL) Plc, Southwest Agro-Commodity Company (SWAgCO), National Agricultural Development Fund (NADF) and Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) Commission.

In a report put together after a meeting convened in Lagos recently against the backdrop of Nigeria's growing population and increasing demand for rice, coupled with production challenges in the northern states due to insecurity, the stakeholders observed that the Imota Rice Mill in Lagos State offers a ready market for rice paddy.

They agreed that there is an urgent need to upscale production in the Southwest to meet this demand and enhance food security in the region.

In the report, made available to The Guardian, the stakeholders further drew the attention of the governors to the fact that the current situation where 16 million tonnes of rice is being consumed yearly in the country needed to be matched up with adequate supply.

Titled 'Rice as a Catalyst: Advancing Economic Integration in Southwest Nigeria', the report, which was presented to the governors for urgent action, underscored the need for collective efforts and commitments to strengthen Southwest's regional economy through increased agricultural production.

The report indicated that the Imota Rice Mill in Lagos State, with its impressive processing capacity, stands as a pivotal asset in the endeavour.

The report also said that the success of the initiatives would depend heavily on a unified approach

and the active participation of each state in contributing to the rice supply chain.

The Guardian learnt that the report is intended as a policy digest for the governor of each state in the Southwest region.

Key highlights of the report include Lagos State's commitment to provide off-taker agreements and purchase of rice paddy at competitive rates, while other states pledged to allocate more land for rice cultivation and provide necessary support to farmers. Part of the hindrances observed by the stakeholders to food production in the region include inadequate modern mechanisation, poor or inadequate security provision and logistics. They therefore emphasised the need for strategic planning across the board if the initiative must succeed.

The report also underscored the potential for economic growth, food security and regional integration through the collaboration, which it said could not be overstated if the plan is appropriately implemented.

The stakeholders said the governors would find the recommendations provided in the report

valuable if they act decisively to support and expand rice production within their states.

The report stated in part: "By working together, we have the unique opportunity to transform the Southwest into a major hub for rice production in West Africa, ensuring food and nutrition security and economic prosperity for all our people."

The primary objective of the initiative is to explore ways to supply the Imota Rice Mill in Lagos State, which has a significant processing capacity of 32 tonnes per hour and a storage capacity of 300,000 tonnes with each state making necessary commitments towards the scheme.

Some other aspects of the meeting include the agreement on the need for individual state's commitments to strategic planning for agricultural development and celebration of farmers while DAWN Commission will coordinate follow-ups, monitoring, evaluation and sustainability measures to ensure commitments are met across all states.

"This collaboration presents a significant opportunity for economic growth, food security, and regional

integration in the Southwest," the report added.

Other areas the stakeholders harped on for action include production gap, which clearly showed that production of paddy rice is seriously lagging behind the 16 million metric tonnes demand, insecurity in the Northern region, which led to a decline in paddy production and necessitating increased production in the Southwest, lack of adequate farm machinery, including tractors, bulldozers, planters and harvesters.

The report stated that while Lagos is committed to provide off-taker agreements and purchasing paddy at competitive rates, Ogun State is to provide 2000 hectares of land for the project. Oyo will be committed to engage rice farmers and provide feedback on meeting discussions while Osun will be committed to increasing rice production and reorienting farmers towards rice cultivation. Ondo, on its part, will intensify ongoing efforts in rural road construction, input distribution and production along water bodies while Ekiti is to receive business proposals from Lagos on supply of rice to the mill and also expand land clearing for cluster farming and establishment of agrorangers for improved security.

Give My Allowances As Pro-Chancellor To Students, Bisi Akande Tells UI

From **Rotimi Agboluaje**, Ibadan

THE Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council, University of Ibadan, Chief Bisi Akande, has asked the university to use his allowances to take care of the education needs of deserving students who are studying either Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry or Biology at the university.

The gesture was conveyed to the university through a letter written to the Registrar, Mr. Ganiyu Saliu. The Guardian sighted the letter dated August 21, 2024, on Friday. Akande noted that his working for the university was not meant for personal gains but more of service to humanity.

The former Osun governor said: "I consider my appointment as the Pro-Chancellor and as the Chairman of Council for the University of Ibadan as a national call to service

from which I do not intend to earn any remuneration.

"However, if the position is entitled to any allowances, for example for attending meetings of the Governing Council and its committees in accordance with the prior approvals of the Federal Government of Nigeria, you will be kind enough to assist me to apply any payments which may be due to me from such allowances solely for the benefits of some deserving undergraduate students of this university who are offering Science courses, namely in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology only.

"I expect the benefit to be in form of a kind of endowment for something like annual scholarships or any other form of awards so as to cover the cost of accommodation and other officially approved fees charged by the university for such

deserving science students."

Akande disclosed that a foundation has been set up to ensure the continuity of the programme. "I suggest that the Dean of Student Affairs office or any such university academic officer shall be involved in coordinating the selection of such eligible science students.

"In the possible event that any such anticipated allowances to me from this university's appointment become terminated by whatever circumstances, to prevent any student beneficiaries of this endowment arrangement from becoming stranded, there is an already incorporated Adebisi Akande Foundation for similar purposes which would augment any shortfall arising from any such commitments incurred from the awards."

Read the remainder of this story on www.guardian.ng



Deputy National Women's Leader, Young Progressives Party (YPP), Tombra Mohammed (left); Chairman, Zenith Labour Party (ZLP), Dan Nwanyanwu and Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Mahmood Yakubu during the INEC's emergency meeting with leaders of political parties in Abuja... on Friday. PHOTO: LUCY LADIDI ATEKO

Our Error

THE photo used on the front page of our August 24-25, 2024 edition to illustrate the story titled 'Glitz, Glamour As Akinmoye Mounts Orungberuwa Of Erinje Throne' is that of Oba of Igodan Lisa instead of Oba Akinmoye. The error is regretted.

Lekki Communities May Sue Lagos Over Free Trade Zone – Lawyer

By Eniola Daniel

COMMUNITIES affected by the compulsory acquisition of the land upon which the Trade Free Trade Zone (LFTZ) was built may sue the Lagos State government over an alleged failure to resettle them properly as enshrined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) it signed with them.

Counsel to the Eto, Idaso, Idotun communities and the Falade Family, Dr. Olatunji Abayomi, alleged that the government has failed to compensate the communities from the monies received from the compulsory acquisition of their land.

The lawyer, who made the allegation during a press conference in Lagos, which was attended by Oloye Olu-dare Falade; Land Consultant to the Kabiyesi, Olumide Osilaja and Otunba Owolabi Odebudo, among others, gave the state government a 30-day ultimatum within which to resolve the issue with them or face a court action.

Abayomi said the communities had written a letter to the state government in July 2017, where they alleged that the obligations of Lagos State government under the MoU it signed with them were unjustly abandoned after the government had effectively taken over their land.

According to him, the obligations in the MoU breached by the state government include protection of the rights, interests and welfare of members of the villages and communities; submission of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) study to the villages and communities for their review and

comments and in particular to ensure execution of the Lagos Free Trade Zone's Social Impact Assessment Study for the benefit of the villages and communities; grant to the communities and villages right to a minimum of five per cent of the total paid up equity share holding of Lekki Worldwide Investment Ltd (LWIL) proportionate to each community/village contribution to LFTZ project; representation on the Board of LWIL; implementation of workforce development programme which entails skill training, job creation, capacity building specifically designed to increase employment and economic well-being of community/village members and provision of effective access to health and recreational services and educational opportunities at primary and secondary school levels for community/village members, among others.

Abayomi noted that while the Chambers has great regard for businesses operating in the LFTZ because of their great commitment to the development of Lagos State, "we hold the view on behalf of our clients that Lagos State government can only lawfully compulsorily acquire land for public purpose not for private purpose; Lagos State government cannot compulsorily acquire and then sell the land to private interest; Lagos State government cannot compulsorily acquire citizens land, sell the same and keep the money; Lagos State government cannot compulsorily acquire land without promptly paying adequate compensation."

Yar'Adua Commends FG On Electricity Subsidy For Public Hospitals

From John Akubo, Abuja

SENATOR representing Katsina Central in the Senate, Senator Abdulaziz Musa Yar'Adua, has commended the Federal Government for its recent decision to reduce electricity tariffs for public hospitals in Nigeria by 50 per cent.

The Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Tunji Alausa, announced the subsidy on August 29, 2024.

The decision follows a motion moved by Senator Yar'Adua on July 9, 2024, titled 'The Increased Cost of Electricity Supply in Federal Teaching Hospital Katsina and the Effect on General Medical Services.'

In the motion, the senator urged the Federal Government to reduce electricity tariffs, highlighting the burden on patients, especially under the prevailing economic downturn with reduced living standards.

Yar'Adua stated: "It is very thoughtful and satisfying to see the Federal Government

adhering to the resolution of the Senate.

"I believe this decision will bring immense relief to public hospitals and the patients they serve. The Ministry of Power's action in implementing this demonstrates a commitment to the well-being of Nigerians and the development of our healthcare sector."

The Senator also praised the efforts of the Chairman of Senate Committee on Power, Senator Enyinanya Abaribe, who facilitated a stakeholders' engagement with agencies in the power sector to address issues related to reducing energy costs in critical sectors of the economy, with healthcare as a priority.

Yar'Adua expressed hope that the Ministry would continue to take progressive steps, including providing metres to millions of unmetred Nigerian households to enhance electricity supply and ensure accurate energy billing.



Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu (third right); his Deputy, Dr. Obafemi Hamzat (left); the Opeluwa of Lagos, High Chief Lateef Ajose Aderibigbe (right) with some recipients during the symbolic presentation of bank cheques to Victims of the Docemo Fire incident at Idumagbo Avenue, Docemo Junction, Lagos Island... on Friday.

Obi Slams Anti-Yoruba Lady, Insists Tribal Bigotry Is Divisive

From John Akubo, Abuja

THE recent anti-Yoruba remarks made by a Canadian woman of Igbo descent have been criticised as extreme bigotry by Peter Obi, the Labour Party presidential candidate in the 2023 election.

Obi, in his reaction, emphasised that such divisive statements have no place in a civilised society and must be rejected by all.

In a statement shared on his

X handle on Friday, Obi expressed his dismay, stating: "I utterly condemn the reported hateful statement and actions attributed to a purported Igbo woman living in Canada against Yoruba or Benin people."

Such divisive comments or behaviour, he said, have no place in the Nigerian society.

"As Nigerians, we should unite and focus on addressing our shared challenges, rather than allowing tribal-

ism and hatred to tear us apart," he noted.

He further questioned the purpose of tribal bigotry, asking: "What does tribal bigotry achieve? Does it lift people out of poverty? Does it reduce the cost of bread, rice, garri or yam in the market? Does it improve our transportation system or enhance electricity supply? Does it ensure good governance? The answer is a resounding NO!!" Obi stressed the importance

of prioritising the nation's progress over ethnic divisions.

He urged Nigerians to focus on building a prosperous, united and equitable nation.

"Let us focus on what truly matters: Building a prosperous, united and equitable Nigeria for all. We must reject tribalism and embrace our shared humanity, working together towards a new Nigeria that is Possible!" he added.

Chief Of Naval Staff Demands Special Courts For Maritime Crimes

From Rotimi Agboluaje, Ibadan

THE Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Emmanuel Ogalla, on Friday, called for the establishment of special courts dedicated to maritime crimes, as it would lead to more effective and efficient justice delivery and curb insecurity.

The naval chief made the call while delivering the third distinguished personality lecture of the Institute for Peace and Strategic Stud-

ies (IPSS), University of Ibadan, Oyo State.

The lecture, themed, 'Role of the Nigerian Navy in Combating Maritime Crimes and Advancing Nigeria's Blue Economy', took place at Senator Abiola Ajimobi Resource Centre, UI, Ibadan.

He vowed to eradicate oil theft completely in the country to increase the contribution of maritime to the blue economy.

Ogalla, who said oil theft had been dealt with, how-

ever stated that the Navy would leave no stone unturned to eradicate the scourge completely.

He said: "The proposed way forward to checking maritime crimes for enhanced blue economy in Nigeria should include designation of special courts for maritime crimes, advocacy for community support and socio-economic prevention strategies."

He argued that establishing special courts dedicated to

maritime crimes would lead to more effective and efficient justice delivery, ultimately resulting in better outcomes for law enforcement.

He also disclosed that there has been no piracy in Nigeria since 2023.

Present at the lecture were Prof. Olawale Albert, Dr. Adeniran Aluko, Mr. Fatai Owoseni, former Deputy Governor Moses Adeyemo, Prof. Osisioma Nwoli and others.

Epidemic Looms In Kano As Fresh Diphtheria Outbreak Kills 10

By Murtala Adewale, Kano

THE deadly Diphtheria disease has killed 10 persons and hundreds of suspected cases admitted in hospitals Kano State in a fresh resurgence that could result in an epidemic.

As a result, the Kano State government has activated special treatment centres across all the secondary and

primary healthcare facilities in the state to curtail the spread of the airborne disease.

The Commissioner for Health, Dr. Abubakar Labaran Yusuf, who confirmed the resurgence, presented the mortality rate to journalists on Friday.

He, however, refuted the escalating figures already in public domain.

Yusuf attributed the resurgence to stark neglect of rou-

tine immunisation by the immediate past administration, claiming that the present NNPP administration inherited 18 months of abandoned immunisation.

"When we came in June 2023, we discovered that no routine immunisation exercise was carried out for 18 months. And as at then, Kano was mounted with 80 per cent of the burden. The record then

showed 23,207 cases treated and 1,000 mortality.

"When we came, we set up machinery and three rounds of immunisation have been conducted and the cases dropped drastically such that the government decided to close two out of the three treatment centres. Presently, we have 100 cases under treatment and 10 casualties in the last one week," Yusuf said.

Rivers Assembly Screens, Confirms Oko-Jaja, Seven Others For BOPP Board

By Ann Godwin, Port Harcourt

RIVERS State House of Assembly has screened and confirmed Lawrence Oko-Jaja (SAN) as Chairman of the Board of Rivers State Bureau on Public Procurement (RSBoPP).

Also screened and confirmed were Dr. Ernest Ibekwe Ekwe, Dr. Mina Ogbanga, Iseleye Amachree, Adokiye Oyagiri, Gift Alex-Hart, Mrs. Grace Osaronu and Selinah Amonieah,

Tasks Members To Put State's Interest First

who will serve as members.

The eight nominees had appeared for screening before the lawmakers shortly after the reading of the letter sent by Governor Siminalayi Fubara to the Speaker, Victor Oko-Jumbo, requesting the House to determine their suitability for appointment as members of the board.

Speaker of the House, Oko-Jumbo, read the letter by the

governor during plenary on Friday.

During the screening, the nominees responded to how they would use their wealth of experience in moving the state forward in relation to government policy implementation, with Oko-Jaja assuring that if confirmed, the board under their watch would ensure value for money for goods and serv-

ices contracted by the state government.

In his remarks, the Speaker advised the nominees to always know that they owe their trust and loyalty to the state government.

Shortly after the nominees were led out of the floor of the Assembly by the Sergeant-at-Arms, David Wariboko, the lawmakers confirmed the nominees one after the other as fitting for the appointment by voice vote.

Despite the efforts of security agencies to contain ritual killings in the country, many Nigerians youths are still attracted to the vice. In this report, **MOYOSORE SALAMI** looks at the root causes of this heinous crime and what could be done to curb it drastically.

NIGERIA is witnessing a disturbing increase in ritualistic crimes, where individuals engage in the macabre practice of human sacrifice believing that it will lead to wealth, power or success.

These heinous acts are driven by deep-rooted superstitions and a twisted understanding of prosperity that question the core values of communities and challenge the effectiveness of the nation's security agencies.

In January 2024, the Ogun State Police Command arrested three suspects in possession of a human skull and other body parts. The suspects were believed to be part of a syndicate involved in the illegal trade of human organs, primarily used for rituals and charms.

On June 12, this year, the police in Ondo State arrested a suspect, Yusuf Adenoyin, with eight human skulls in Isua-Akoko area of the state.

Parading the suspect, the state Police Commissioner, Abayomi Oladipo, said the suspect was arrested by officers attached to Police Safer Highway patrol at Isua/Epinmi checkpoint.

He said the commercial vehicle in which the suspect was travelling was flagged down and immediately the vehicle stopped, the suspect took to his heels and was later arrested.

The police commissioner added that eight dry human skulls were seen wrapped in a polythene bag and concealed in a sack filled with garri.

The suspect, who confessed to the crime, said he was trying to raise N2 million to pay for his sick mother's treatment in the hospital.

In the Amuloke area of Ibadan, Oyo State, recently, a man identified as Mustapha Bello was apprehended by residents after being found in possession of a fresh human skull. The skull, believed to be that of an unidentified woman, was discovered late on a Monday night by residents who became suspicious of Bello's behaviour and, upon inspecting the sack he was carrying, found the skull inside it.

Two men were also arrested with a human skull hidden in a black polythene bag in Lagos recently. The suspects claimed they had purchased the skull from cemetery workers for ritual purposes and intended to sell it to a local herbalist.

The rising demand for human body parts for certain occultic practices has pushed many to the crime, as some individuals are willing to pay large sums for those items.

Those who engage in ritualistic crime believe that the human skull and other body parts can bring wealth, power or protection, hence the trade in body parts. The involvement of organised syndicates in this trade has made it difficult for law enforcement agencies to curb the practice. These criminal networks often operate in secrecy with various actors playing different roles from sourcing the body parts to selling them to buyers.

The recent incidents have highlighted the need for a more robust response from law enforcement agencies. While arrests have been made, the underlying causes of these crimes remain largely unaddressed.

Between January 5 and December 28, 2021, the statistics of ritual-related deaths generated from the Nigeria Watch and



Lax Penalties As Impetus For Surge In Ritualistic Crimes In Nigeria

WANEP's National Early Warning System (NEWS) showed a total of over 168 deaths in 80 incidents across 20 states in Nigeria. Out of the total recorded deaths during the period, 29 were females while 30 were children. In most cases, the gender was unknown due to severe mutilation of the victims.

In 2022, House of Representatives urged the Federal Government to declare a state of emergency on ritual killings. Following a motion by the then Deputy Minority Leader, Toby Okechukwu, the House called on the then Inspector General of Police, Usman Alkali Baba, to enhance surveillance and intelligence efforts to apprehend and prosecute those involved. Additionally, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) was also directed to launch a campaign to address the issue.

Despite these calls for urgent action, ritual killings have continued to escalate in the country, with the latest Global Peace Index rating Nigeria as the 19th less peaceful state among the countries with the least peace in the world.

This has prompted some stakeholders to call for a collective effort to address the malaise.

A cleric, Emmanuel Ajiboye, expressed deep concern over the prevalence of ritualistic crimes in the country.

"This alarming rise in ritual killings is a clear indication that our society is losing its moral compass. We must return to the core values of honesty, integrity and hard work," Ajiboye said.

He pointed out that religious institutions have a crucial role to play in reorienting the minds of the youth.

"As religious leaders, we must lead the charge in educating our congregations on the dangers of seeking wealth through evil means. The love of money is indeed the root of all evils, and we must propagate this message with urgency," he added.

A sociologist, Dr. Abiola Adeniran, told *The Guardian* that the issue of ritual killings goes beyond mere superstition, saying it reflects a deeper societal malaise.

"The increasing disconnect between societal values and economic realities has created a dangerous environment where young people feel disenfranchised and hopeless. In a society where the social contract is broken, they turn to whatever means they believe will give them an edge, including

ritual killings," he said.

While suggesting the ways to address the issue, Adeniran noted: "We must tackle the underlying social issues driving individuals towards these barbaric practices. This includes creating more economic opportunities for the youth, promoting education and fostering a culture that values hard work over quick, ill-gotten wealth."

On his part, a legal practitioner, Tobi Onafuwa, said that Nigeria's current legal framework is adequate to tackle ritualistic killings, including human and organ trafficking.

"The existing laws, such as the Criminal Code and Penal Code, are more than sufficient to address these heinous crimes, which fall under the broader category of homicide," he said.

Onafuwa stressed the need for rigorous enforcement of these laws, urging criminal prosecutorial agencies to exercise due diligence in handling cases related to ritual killings and human trafficking.

"Criminal prosecutorial agencies must ensure due diligence in prosecuting cases of ritualistic killings and human trafficking. Convictions in such cases should serve as a strong deterrent to both current and potential offenders," Onafuwa added.

Another lawyer, Victor Anifowose, called for the adoption of stringent laws similar to those enacted by the Osun State House of

Assembly recently.

Anifowose emphasised that while ritual killings are prosecuted as murder or manslaughter depending on the specifics of the case, the recently passed Anti-Kidnapping, Banditry, and Ritual Killing Law in Osun State provides a robust legal framework that other states should emulate.

"The offence remains murder or manslaughter, governed by the Criminal Code Act and Criminal Code Law in the southern states, and the Penal Code Law in the northern regions of the country. These laws prescribe the death penalty for capital offences, including murder, while manslaughter may attract a mitigated punishment," Anifowose explained.

He argued that Osun State's legislative action should serve as a model for other states and the Federal Government.

"In my opinion, other states in Nigeria and the country at large should adopt what the Osun State House of Assembly has done on this subject matter," he emphasised.

Anifowose, however, cautioned that legal reforms alone might not be sufficient to combat the menace. He stressed the importance of societal attitude to the crime.

"Assuming but not conceding that the laws are not sufficient, it is crucial that society frowns upon these acts and unites to combat this menace. No matter the laws in place, if society sees it as a normal thing, enforcement will be difficult," he noted.

A security expert, Olawale Adedokun, also said there was a need for more robust law enforcement to combat ritualistic crimes.

"The rise in ritual killings is not just a failure of morality but also a failure of law enforcement. There must be a concerted effort to crack down on those perpetuating these crimes. We need specialised units within the police force dedicated to handling ritualistic killings. These units must be well-trained, well-equipped and supported by the judiciary to ensure swift prosecution of offenders."

He, however, noted that law enforcement alone would not be enough, adding: "Community policing and intelligence gathering are critical in preventing these crimes before they occur. We need to build trust between the police and the communities they serve so that information flows freely, and potential ritualistic crimes can be thwarted before they occur."

The rise in ritual killings is not just a failure of morality but also a failure of law enforcement. There must be a concerted effort to crack down on those perpetuating these crimes. We need specialised units within the police force dedicated to handling ritualistic killings. These units must be well-trained, well-equipped and supported by the judiciary to ensure swift prosecution of offenders.

Prof. Emmanuel Ufuophu-Biri is the Rector, Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe-Oghara. In this interview with OWEDE AGBA-JILEKE, the Professor of Mass Communication and Journalism speaks on underage admission into tertiary institutions, the students' loan programme of the Federal Government, brain drain in the education sector and other issues confronting the sector.

How would you describe the outcome of the 2024 JAMB Policy Meeting?

SUMMARILY, the outcome was very successful; beautiful because it is what I can call an outcome of a democratic process because every participant was allowed an opportunity to partake in the meeting. So, it was not just decisions coming from JAMB or the Federal Ministry of Education. These are resolutions from fallouts of the collectivity of JAMB, the Federal Ministry of Education, Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, Provosts and other principal officers who accompanied them.

A vice-chancellor raised the issue of underage admission; it was well debated and reasons were adduced to it. The policy can't be retroactive. Before the decision came up, people had subscribed to JAMB and some of them fell below the age of 18. So, it was just unjust to them. And I thank God the JAMB Registrar saw reasons and systematically, tactically and wisely put it before the Minister of Education who also accepted it. There were diverse views. The views, both vocal and body language of the heads of institutions and other administrative heads, is that the minimum age should be 16 and not 18.

Some have argued that pegging it at 18 years from next year is unfair to brilliant chaps who could excel in institutions of higher learning, as seen in other climes. Do you see the government rescinding the decision?

Well, in the educational sector, we are very diplomatic. Like the way it was handled at the JAMB Policy Meeting, we are diplomatic and democratic. We try to organise rather than antagonise. You saw the way it was brought down to 16 years for now. I think stakeholders - the Committee of Vice-Chancellors, Committee on Rectors and Provosts, if they are so interested, may do something. It's all about discussion. At the end of it, reasons will prevail; facts will prevail, data will prevail, truth will prevail.

It is not something I can give my personal opinion. If I have to give my personal opinion, I will be drawing inferences from global outlook. But people who have reasons, just like what happened at the meeting, will begin to push. And I think if interested parties, parents, National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), administrators of other higher institutions and other stakeholders, for instance, see reasons other than 18 years, they may engage the government. And if the government sees superior argu-

'Stakeholders' Voices Can Shape Minimum Admission Age To Tertiary Institutions'

ment, why not?

You saw the level of democracy at the meeting where the voices of 'let it be 16 years for now' were louder than that of 18 years. Democracy prevailed. *Vox populi, vox dei*. So, it's a continuous process. Nothing is static. With constructive engagement, things may work the way the majority want them to work.

How would you react to the students' loan programme where there seems to be apathy in the south than in northern Nigeria?

Well, I had a sideline discussion with the Managing Director of the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) and President of National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS). I saw in them the genuine pursuit and intention for the Nigerian students to gain from this loan. In the first place, this is what we read of in other climes. When the mobile phone was first introduced into our country, there was apathy. There is this initial phobia towards some innovation. We call it innovation diffusion. From what the NELFUND MD said, there could be apathy, disbelief in some quarters. When I spoke with the NANS President, we spoke about enlightenment, orientation to potential beneficiaries. It has just come; it's a new programme. There are early and late adopters. It's always like that. When a new product comes into market, there are those who would adapt to it so quickly. There are others who would want to observe it. When you watch the lions crossing water, they cross it with caution. There are those who want to cross immediately and those who will want to study it first. It's normal. I do believe that subsequently it will be massive.

However, from what I have come to see and know of loans outside this country, student loans are not general. You can't have somebody whose father is a billionaire applying for such a loan. I wish it should be limited to some extent to people who are relatively disadvantaged to be able to pay. If you enter some buses in the United Kingdom, they will say 'Please, give up these seats for those who are less able than you to sit'. I can't see somebody whose father is riding a Bugatti, whose father is living in a mansion, whose parents fly Business Class competing for that loan with the downtrodden. You don't take a loan for what you have money to do. But how you can work out that criterion is what I don't know. But as time goes on, it should actually be for students who are less able than others to pay their fees. As it is right now, it is general. The heads of institutions, NANS and SUGs in different institutions should encourage students to subscribe to it.

We must also commend the initiators of the loan scheme, believing that there will be total sincerity in it. It will alleviate a lot of difficulties in scholarship. And the monthly stipend for the students is a great thing. But what I want to advise is that criteria should be worked out. Let's look at the socio-economic

backgrounds of the parents. But if the government has the money to meet up with all students that applied, so be it.

Do you subscribe to calls in some quarters that it should be a grant and not a loan?

I am a comrade with objectivity. If it's a grant, then education becomes totally free. If that is what the government will do for the students let it be. We will clap for the government. But if that has to be done, then when the child graduates, he should think of what to do for his nation because such offers are not common. I think in Germany, for postgraduate studies, there is no tuition. But I don't think to the best of my limited knowledge of countries there are places where tertiary education is totally free. But if Nigeria wants to start it, then we become models for other countries. If NANS and other stakeholders have called for that and they can substantiate it and they are able to convince the government, why not? There is a saying in Urhobo where I come from that nobody puts sugar in his mouth and spits it.

At the inauguration of governing councils of tertiary institutions, the Minister of Education lamented that more lecturers have sought for greener pastures abroad than medical doctors. What should the government do to address the issue of Japa syndrome by lecturers?

Water finds its level. The cricket does not perch on mud; it perches on white sand. The ant doesn't perch on bitter leaves; it goes to where there is sugar. When you leave your village to your state capital, you are looking for greener pastures. When you leave your state to Abuja, you are looking for greener pastures. *Japa* is a global thing. When you go to the creeks of the Niger Delta, you see white people working there. That's *Japa*. When you go to the forests of northern Nigeria, you see white people mining. That's *Japa*. When you go to big towns, you see towns populated by the Chinese, that's *Japa*. The same thing with Indians, Filipinos.

Japa is not a new phenomenon. But it becomes dangerous when your best hands begin to go because you could not satisfy them. Look at this year's European Cup of Nations. One of the matches played by the French team, nine are Blacks. The English team, two of the wonderful players: Saka and Ezech are Nigerians. The Spanish team, two of them are Blacks. The Netherlands team, one is Nigerian. If they were to be here, would they have made the first 30? So, you look for greener pastures. When there were so many white people teaching in our primary, secondary schools and universities, were Nigerian lecturers running

away the way they are running right now? In 2009/2010 when the Nigerian professor's salary was about \$3,500 to \$4,000 was he running away? So, if he has an offer that is five times his salary outside this country, will you stop him from going? There is what we call positive and negative geotropism. When the tree grows up, it gets gravity. That is negative geotropism. When it grows down, it is called positive geotropism. The tree must have its roots strong otherwise the storm will make it fall. In essence, you must have a strong root. You must first of all solidify yourself economically and socially, if not you fall. It's not just being named a professor, medical doctor, journalist but above all, what do you have? It's a global world. The person who just left as British Prime Minister is of Indian origin. There was a time in Britain when the head of the Central Bank was from Canada. If you go to South Africa right now, you will see a lot of deans and heads of departments that are Nigerians and Zimbabweans. So, this issue of *Japa* doesn't come into play. If your country offers what is good, it will attract others to you.

We have the oil sector here. You have the white guys coming because they earn so much from it. If you make the education, health sectors attractive, they will also come. It's a force of gravity. When people get better offers, they go there. So many Nigerian lecturers are getting better offers, hence they are going there. If you feel it is bad, give a good offer and let others also come to you. We have the very best of brains in Nigeria. But for me, nobody's navel is tied to a particular country. You go to where you think is best for you. It's like a football match. If today Ronaldo is playing for one team and another team is bringing another tempting offer, he will go for it. But if you think there is a kind of loss, you up your offer where you will attract others.

National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), administrators of other higher institutions and other stakeholders, for instance, see reasons other than 18 years, they may engage the government. And if the government sees superior argument, why not?

You saw the level of democracy at the meeting where the voices of 'let it be 16 years for now' were louder than that of 18 years. Democracy prevailed. *Vox populi, vox dei*. So, it's a continuous process. Nothing is static. With constructive engagement, things may work the way the majority want them to work.



Ufuophu-Biri



Deputy Country Director, Nigeria British Council, Chilufya Besa (left); Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian International Film and TV Summit, Ijeoma Onah; Head of Arts, Nigeria/Regional Head, Creative Economy, British Council, Brenda Fashugba; Lead Partner, Film Lab Africa, Olasunkanmi Adebayo; Chief Executive Officer, Sterling One Foundation, Olapeju Ibekwe and Film Director Ebony Life Academy Creative Academy, Tolu Ajayi at the British Council Film Lab Africa Session at Nigerian International Film and TV Summit in Lagos...



Chairman of Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Dr. Musa Adamu Aliyu (right) and daughter of the late former ICPC Chairman, Justice Emmanuel Olayinka Ayoola, Mrs. Yemisi Odeniyi, during Aliyu's condolence visit to the family in Ibadan, Oyo State.



Chairman, Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, Sokoto State chapter, Dr Ben Musa (left); the author, Pointman, Remnant Christian Network, Lagos, Rev Austin Ukporhe; his wife, Rev Grace Ukporhe, and the editor of the book, Pastor Bridget Jangfa of the Lord of Hosts Harvest Ministries, Jos, at the dedication of book titled, *The Field of Boaz*, at The Forge, Ojodu, Lagos



African Vice Chancellor of Highstone Global University, Texas, United States of America (USA), Prof. Val Iheukwumere (left); Prof. Bumie Samuel Ovuru, who bagged the varsity's academic professorial chair of Public Administration and Prof. Okeke Gerald Nduhuisi, who received the academic professorial chair of Climate Change and Sustainability, at a special convocation ceremony held at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), Akoka...

Metronotes

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Police Arrest Notorious Pirate Over Internet Piracy

In a significant victory against internet piracy, the Intelligence Response Team (IRT) of the Force Intelligence Bureau has successfully apprehended the operator behind the notorious pirate domain www.score808.com.ng.

This domain was infamous for illegally streaming MultiChoice (SuperSport) content, drawing millions of visits from across Africa and beyond.

The arrest, which took place on August 22, 2024, in Osogbo, Osun State, marked a major milestone in the ongoing battle against intellectual property theft and online streaming piracy.

A FORTY-THREE-YEAR-OLD woman, Mrs. Peace Aruma, is battling breast cancer and needs the financial assistance of Nigerians to survive.

Her histopathology report at the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital (UNTH), Enugu, jointly signed by a Consultant Pathologist, Dr. C. C. Eluke and Registrar, Dr. G. O. Okonkwo, which was seen by The Guardian, read in part: "Sections from the lymph node shows effacement of

Enugu: Engineers Lament Rot In FG's Multimillion Naira Digital Bridge Institute

From **Lawrence Njoku, Enugu**

The Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), on Friday, lamented the rot at the multimillion Naira Federal Government's Digital Bridge Institute in Enugu State and sought a collaboration with the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) to manage and put the facility to use. The communications tech-

nology hub located at Ugwuogo -Nike Road, in Enugu State, was completed over 10 years ago, but has never been put to use. Speaking during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the society, Enugu Branch Chairman, Chigbo Obealor, stated that collaborating with the NCC at the facility would help realise the vision of the centre.

He said: "The multi-million naira facility is rotting away since its completion along Enugu - Nike - Ugwuogo Road. We, hereby, convey our interest in ensuring that the facility is put to use for ICT-Youth Training and Manpower Development of the state".

Obealor also appealed to Enugu State Government to provide an Advanced Engineering Workshop

(AEW), for the state-owned Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), saying it would assist in the realisation of the state government's Smart Schools initiative and form a research platform for graduates of the Smart Schools. "This request is in good faith and will bring to realistic end the vision of the Smart School of the state government..."

ICPC Boss Pays Condolence Visit To Late Justice Ayoola's Family In Ibadan

The Chairman of Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related offences Commission (ICPC), Dr. Musa Adamu Aliyu, has described the late Justice Emmanuel Olayinka Ayoola as a man of honour and integrity.

• **Eulogises Him As A Man Of Integrity, Honour**

Aliyu made this remark when he led an ICPC delegation on a condolence visit to Ibadan, the residence of the late jurist, who died on August 20, 2024. He said while Justice Ayoola lived, he transparently and assiduously waged war

against corruption in Nigeria.

Aliyu noted that Ayoola left a solid footprints in ICPC for his successors, describing it as "a good road map for waging war against corruption." In her response, the

deceased's first child, Mrs. Yemisi Odeniyi, appreciated the visitors and thank them immensely.

She spoke how his late father, radiated love and admiration to all who came across him, while touching many lives, both old and young.

Help Peace Aruma To Survive Breast Cancer

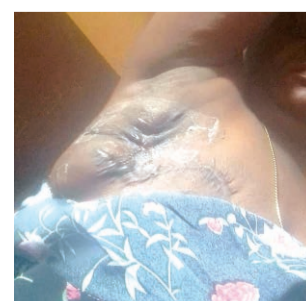
the nodal architecture. There is a malignant epithelial of atypical cells disposed in cords, trabeculae and nests. Four out of the 11 lymph nodes contain tumour deposits."

The mother of three, who was diagnosed of metastatic lymphadenopathy with poorly differentiated adenocarcinoma at the hospital, had earlier received neoadjuvant chemotherapy and

then had mastectomy at Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Parklane, Enugu on December 14, 2023, after which she was referred to UNTH for further treatment. She has undergone another surgery at UNTH and is billed for radiotherapy sessions at the hospital but has no money to fund the treatment.

Narrating her ordeal in tears, Peace said she was

billed N1,250,000, which must be provided before the



The affected breast

treatment can start but the efforts of her family to raise the money was not yielding results.

"They said I must provide the money before the treatment can start but my family cannot provide the money. Everyone around me has become poor because of me. This bill is like my death sentence because I don't see where the money will come from. That is why I am plead-

Anosike Conferred With CRMI's Honorary Fellowship

The Director General and Chief Executive Officer of Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet), and Nigeria's Permanent Representative with the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), Prof. Charles Anosike, was among eminent Nigerians and professionals conferred with the prestigious Honorary Fellowship (HFCRM) of the Chartered Risk Management Institute of Nigeria (CRMI).

The conferment formed part of the proceedings at the institute's 23rd yearly-binternational conference which had the theme, 'Emerging Crises In Africa: Way Forward'.

ing with Nigerians to help me. I don't want to die now. My children are very young and I don't want them to be motherless. They told us at the hospital that cancer is not a death sentence, that people survive it. I want to be among those that will tell their stories of survival," she said in tears.

To assist Peace, you can pay into Access Bank, 1863794044, Aruma Peace Chinedu or reach her via 09150449806.

Wukari University Pro-chancellor Meets Council Members

By Opeyemi Babalola

THE Chairman, Governing Council/Pro-Chancellor, Federal University, Wukari, Taraba State, Professor Iyasa Ade Bello, has held his inception meeting with council members following his appointment by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Addressing council members, Bello thanked Tinubu for deeming him suitable for the assignment, optimistic that the university is destined for ceaseless ascent. "With a burgeoning population, rich natural resources, and a youthful spirit, the

stage is set for greatness. Yet, to harness this potential, we need institutions of higher learning that are not merely repositories of knowledge, but catalysts of transformation.

"The world is evolving at an exponential pace. Technological advancements, globalisation, and societal shifts are reshaping every facet of human existence. To remain competitive, we must adapt, innovate, and lead.

"As a veteran university scholar, I must register it with everyone that I'm committed to this university to being more than an ivory tower and I want you to share that vision

with me."

Bello said that the university deserves to be a living, breathing organism, deeply rooted in the challenges and aspirations of his people. "We must bridge the gap between the academia and society, ensuring that our research and teaching intensify the focus on pressing issues confronting our nation.

"Agriculture, the backbone of our economy, presents an immense opportunity. Our university must be a hub for agricultural research, development, and exten-

sion services in line with the aspirations of the nation's current leadership.

"We must cultivate the next generation of agricultural scientists, entrepreneurs, and policymakers who can drive food security, rural development, and economic growth.

"Conflict, a persistent shadow over our nation, also demands the attention of our universities. Our university should be a sanctuary for intellectual discourse, where diverse perspectives converge to forge solutions. This will go a long way at enhancing development and inspiring internal and external stakeholders."

American Community Honours Ara

By Adelowo Adebumiti

AFRICA'S foremost female talking drummer, Aralola Olamuyiwa, popularly known as Ara, has received a prestigious honour from the Mayor of Yeadon, Delaware County of Pennsylvania State.

The town's Mayor, Rohan Hepkins, conferred the 'Trail Blazers' award on Ara, who is currently on a professional tour of America.

Responding, Ara expressed gratitude to Hepkins and the

entire people of Yeadon for recognising her contribution to the promotion and preservation of African culture and heritage.

She described the honour as most inspiring to her Afrocentric pursuit in the global arts, culture and entertainment industry.

Ara added: "My love for all humanity is unwavering. I love all cultures.

African culture and heritage deserve more exposure and promotion in the international community. My work is defined by, but not limited to the profoundness of Yoruba talking drum of the motherland. This award proves that my years of

commitment to the vision and mission of bringing better global understanding and appreciation to African culture and heritage has not been in vain. I express my deep and sincere gratitude to Mayor Hepkins and I promise to keep doing the good work."

Ara is scheduled to meet key-interest-drivers of America's arts, culture and entertainment industry as part of her tour.



Canada-based Nigerian Artiste Releases New Single, My Dreams

By Jeremiah Kehinde

ANIGERIAN gospel artiste, Adewalé Adé Adéyè with stage name, "Adewalé" has released a new single, My Dreams, after his earlier two music albums in 2003 and 2021 including three other singles; Mercy Lord, Lover of My Soul, and Light Rays.

Adeyeye, an African historian, lawyer, and songwriter/singer from Okeigbo, Ondo State, holds multiple degrees in History and International Studies and Law. He is currently undergoing his PhD studies in Indigenous and Comparative International Law at Osgoode Hall Law School, Toronto Ontario, Canada.

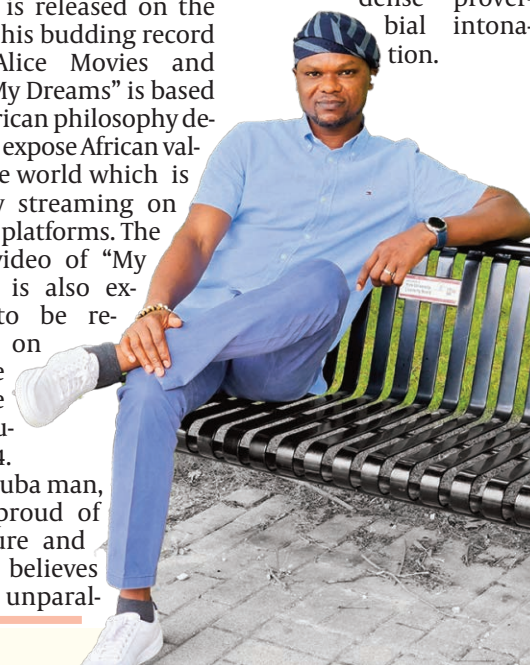
As a songwriter and passionate lover of good music, Adéyeye started singing over two decades ago. However,

his penchant for academics eclipsed his passion for music for a while.

Adeyeye's current single "My Dreams" is released on the stable of his budding record label, "Alice Movies and Music, "My Dreams" is based on his African philosophy designed to expose African values to the world which is currently streaming on all audio platforms. The official video of "My Dreams" is also expected to be released on YouTube by the end of August 2024.

As a Yoruba man, who is proud of his culture and strongly believes in the unparal-

leled values inherent in the African cultural system, Adéyeye's songs are mostly laced in Yoruba lyrics and dense proverbial intonation.



Mentees, Others Celebrate Prince Olusi Over Honorary Doctoral Award

By Gbenga Salau

MENTEES, associates, family members during the week held a get-together to celebrate the conferment of an honorary doctorate degree on the Chairman of the Governor's Advisory Council (GAC), Prince Tajudeen Olusi by Lagos State University (LASU).

Speaking at the event, President Bola Tinubu described Olusi as a mentor who has groomed many generations of political leaders.

The president in a message to the reception dinner in Lagos in honour of Olusi following the conferment of an Honorary Doctor of

Literature in History, Education and Community Development by the LASU.

Delivering the message, the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media, Mr. Tunde Rahman said Olusi remains an individual who was tireless in the development of his community, Lagos State as a whole and a repository of wisdom.

In a message to the occasion, the First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu described Olusi as Mr. Consistent for his wisdom and support for progressive leadership. In his remarks, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu described Olusi as a leader who speaks truth to power and shows younger politicians the way to go.

Council To Equip 40 Youths With ICT Skills

By Olaifa Omolola

SOMOLU Local Council has launched an innovative tech initiative to offer 40 outstanding youths a chance to develop their tech skills and transform their futures. Speaking at a press conference, the Chairman, Somolu Local Council, AbdulHamed Salawu, said that the initiative, established under the Somolu Tech Intervention (SoTech), is aimed at creating digital literacy programmes for indigents youths.

Salawu, represented by his Vice, Lateef Ekiyemi-Odujubi, stressed that the programme demonstrates the council's commitment to creating a customised pol-

icy for human capital development of indigent youths.

He said: "Following the achievements of previous tech programmes like GoTech, ICT/TECH, #TechSpark2024, which focused on teens and children, the initiative- 'youth digital pathway to sustainable development' sets to encourage Somolu youths to harness opportunities in information technology.

In his remarks, Special Adviser to the Chairman on ICT, Fola Mohammed, explained that the council will be partnering with tech shepherd to provide scholarships for youths in the areas of front-end web development, digital marketing, and UI/UX design.

By Tobi Awodipe

TO impact women, the Bond Hair, recently hosted a group of women at its first wellness night in Lagos.

The event aimed at helping women escape the stress of everyday life and indulge in general body wellness activities.

The night kicked off with some wellness-based games and trivia for participants. This was followed by a meditative aromatherapy session where some women with the help of aromatherapy oils connected with their inner selves. Thereafter, a healing/sharing circle session was held where women received non-judgmental advice to questions presented. Founder, The Bond Hair and

Firm Promotes Healthy Living Among Women With Wellness Night

co-founder, Eami's Place, Itoro Okopide, said hosting the night was important to her as it aligns with her brand's core values.

The beauty entrepreneur said she would host a bundle viewing event next month where free vouchers would be given to women, especially the brand's loyal customers.

Women at the wellness night went home with personalised mini mindfulness cards to help them with meditation and strengthen their wellness journeys.

By Gbenga Salau

Cycology Commends Sanwo-Olu For Accepting Club's Patron Role

MEMBERS of Cycology Cycling Club paid a courtesy visit to Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide

Sanwo-Olu, recently, for accepting to be the club's patron and approving the state's non-motorised transport



policy. Speaking at a luncheon hosted by the governor for the visiting cyclists at the State House, Marina, the Captain of Cycology Cycling Club, Temitope George, commended the governor for the greater Lagos vision and keeping Lagos safe.

She also thanked the governor for responding promptly to the club's requests. "We want to thank the governor for approving the Lagos State non-motorised policy, which is complimentary of the government's THEMES agenda and vision of safe and reliable intermodal transport system which accom-

modate non-motorised road users.

"As a club, we have constantly associated with the state government through the Lagos State Waste Management Authority (LAWMA)'s subcontractors, through our Road Sweepers' Initiative where we appreciate road sweepers annually for keeping our roads clean and safe for vulnerable road users like ourselves and pedestrians.

"We have collaborated Lagos Metropolitan Area Transport Authority (LAMATA) and the ministry of transport as we provided input into some transport policies as a

key stakeholder in the transport sector. We are very excited about the Lagos non-motorised policy and the state having cycle lanes, cycle infrastructures to make the road safe for non-motorised road users like ourselves.

"We are confident that with our continued collaboration with MoT, lamata and other agencies, we would continue to showcase Lagos as a safe, multimodal mega city to residents and visitors."

George told the governor about the club's share the road and healthy lifestyle campaigns that have been carried out in different parts of the state.

Politics

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How Non-state Actors Can Deepen Democratic Culture, Values In Nigeria



A cross section of participants at the summit

By Gbenga Salau

FOR Nigeria's democracy to continue to flourish, non-state actors must actively play positive roles as they are very critical to sustainable democracy.

Participants at the recent summit of the Alliance for Yoruba Democratic Movement (AYDM) in Lagos expressed this view, stressing that toeing that path would deepen democratic culture and ideas and confine the military to their constitutional role of protecting the country from external aggression.

The summit was attended by delegates drawn from artisans, farmers, pan-Yoruba self-determination groups from the six South West states, plus Kogi and Kwara states, Akoko Edo and Itsekiri in Delta State.

In his welcome address, General Secretary of the AYDM, Popoola Ajayi, noted that Nigerians have found themselves at a pivotal moment in the nation's history that demands both reflection and decisive action.

"Nigeria, our great nation, stands at a crossroads. On one hand, we possess the resilience, diversity and resourcefulness that have carried us through countless challenges. On the other hand, we face threats that could undermine the very foundations of our democracy. Recent events have brought to light the dangerous undercurrents that threaten to destabilise our nation," he said. According to him, the misguided calls for military intervention and the seeming gang-up to frustrate the efforts of the present administration are not only reckless but also deeply unpatriotic.

"These actions, if left unchecked, could reverse the hard won gains of our democratic journey and plunge our country into chaos," he warned.

Ajayi called for a renewed commitment to the principles of democracy, urging Nigerians to unequivocally condemn any conspiracy to derail the efforts of the current administration to build a better country.

"Non-state actors, including civil society organisations, informal sector workers, self-determination groups, community leaders and the youth have a crucial role to play in safeguarding our democratic institutions. It is our responsibility to ensure that our democracy is not only sustained but also strengthened in the face of adversity," he said.

Ajayi noted that ongoing attempts by the government to impose a unitary system of government under the guise of ensuring local government autonomy were deeply concerning.

He added: "We must resist any attempt to centralise power in a way that stifles regional autonomy and innovation. Instead, we must advocate for the restructuring of our country in a manner that allows each region to develop at its own pace."

Also speaking at the event, the Director General, Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN), Seye Oyeleye, said there was a need for collaboration, dialogue and advocacy among stakeholders.

Commenting on the theme, 'Strengthening Democracy in Nigeria: The Critical Role of Non-state Actors', he further said that non-state actors and civil societies could help bridge the gaps; even as he underscored the need to strengthen institutions.

On his part, the Chairman of the event, Adewale Adeoye, stated that the country was facing a very difficult and unpredictable future, no matter the way it was looked at, noting that the three main indices of human development are threatened – food, human cum environmental security and leadership with good conscience that brings hope to people's long suffering. "It has come to a time that millions of Nigerians no longer have

Non-state actors, including civil society organisations, informal sector workers, self-determination groups, community leaders and the youth have a crucial role to play in safeguarding our democratic institutions. It is our responsibility to ensure that our democracy is not only sustained but also strengthened in the face of adversity.

access to good food, which is tied to poverty, deprivation, poor health, depression, hunger and associated human misery. Without food, life is short, brutish and nasty. The lack of food affects both the young and the old, men and women, armed and defenceless people alike," he stated.

Adeoye added that insecurity was compounding the problems of the country, stating that there were ceaseless killings and kidnapping across the states.

"Today, Nigeria has one of the highest terrorism threats in the world. The South West is not free from the carnage. In Ekiti State, at least two prominent traditional rulers were mauled down by gunmen."

"If a country has major challenges but has a trusted leadership that brings hope, the citizens would have a million reasons to be patient. But in Nigeria, there is a lack of leadership with good conscience and hope is dim."

"Today, we are experiencing fuel shortages, something that has been part of our life for the past 30 years. We produce oil, but we cannot refine the oil; we have to take it abroad to refine, thereby losing more than 300 byproducts of petroleum. We were asked to pay higher for petroleum, we did; but today, there is no fuel in our towns and villages."

"On leadership, hope is lean and weak. From 1960, we have seen the same people parading different assorted clothing but in substance, they are the same. We have seen the economy and social life regress. Yesterday in Nigeria has always been better than the years after. We are a country that celebrates our yesterday as the reference point of development," he said.

Adeoye noted that supporting democracy was not about those in power, but about the right of the people to choose, question and democratically engage their leaders.

"I am aware that the process of even choosing the right leaders by the people in Nigeria is flawed. Nevertheless, it does not in any way justify the call for military intervention in Nigeria."

"Nigeria cannot continue to go in this way. We must address the hydra-headed problem of food scarcity, insecurity and leadership deficit. We must address the national question. Other countries did. We must recognise our differences. We must be honest to know that resolution of economic needs does not automatically resolve conflict arising from clash of heritage and values."

"The best way to lay the foundation for the resolution is for Nigeria to go back to the dream of the founding fathers who opted for a country where each ethnic group would be able to develop on its own terms. The greatest pathway to this goal is to

restructure Nigeria to stem the violent clashes of civilizations," he submitted.

In his remarks, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu urged aggrieved groups and parties to leverage the power of dialogue rather than violent protests in addressing issues.

The president stated that his administration was willing to engage and dialogue with citizens on their grievances, enjoining genuine protesters and progressive non-state actors to come forward with their demands for a peaceful resolution.

"We need people to maintain peace. Our administration believes in resolving conflicts by negotiation and dialogue. You will recall the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) went on strike over the minimum wage, but they had a meeting and there was an increase to N70,000. That's the power of negotiation and dialogue. So, we recommend this to various groups that think they have issues with the government," the President said.

Tinubu, who was represented by his Senior Special Assistant on Media Affairs, Tunde Rahman, added that genuine protesters should come forward like the proponents of the Not-too-young-to-rule movement who through dialogue achieved some results to get more young people involved in politics.

A communiqué signed by the General Secretary, Mr. Popoola Ajayi, and 135 leaders of other organisations including the O'odua Nationalist Coalition (ONAC), Yoruba Traders and Artisans Association (YATA), Yoruba Community in Northern Nigeria, (YOCON), South West Vigilante, Nigerian Automobile Technicians Association (NATA-South West), Amalgamated Union of Mechanics and Artisans in Nigeria, South West; O'odua Peoples Congress (New Era), Agbekoya Solidarity, South West Farmers Union (SWFU), Oodua Hunters Union, (OHUN), Yoruba Communities in West African Coast (YOCWC), O'odua Peoples Congress (Reformed), among others, was issued at the end of the summit.

In the communiqué, the group said Nigeria came together as a country in 1914 by the wish of the British without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples.

"We are aware that for centuries, before 1914, Oduduwaland had a flourishing political, social and economic enterprise with a system of government that met the needs of the people in times of peace and war; we lived and died on our own terms. That in ancient Oduduwaland, commerce, art, science, trade, maritime economy and checks and balances in governance thrived for over 2000 years before contact with the Europeans whose influence disrupted our heritage," the group noted.

The group further said that carbon dating in Igbo-Elewu dates back to 35,000 years, indicating the long-standing civilisation and heritage of Oduduwaland people. It added that before 1966, Oduduwaland had a regional government designed to meet the fears and aspirations of the people in the old Western Region.

"We are concerned that since the 1960 Independence, sustainable peace and development have eluded Nigeria and life and living have been characterised by lack of a national consensus, which was largely responsible for the unfortunate civil war that lasted for 30 months with close to a million souls lost. "That ahead of Nigerian independence in 1960, at the 1957 Lancaster House Conference, the Yoruba leaders had proposed a 1960 constitution with a secessionist clause to preserve the civilisation of Oduduwaland and prevent avoidable atomic strife with other ethnic groups."

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Politics

‘APP Is Now The Veritable Platform For People To Fulfill Their Political Ambitions In Rivers State’

With the internal crisis rocking the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) in Rivers State still persisting, as well as wrangling in major opposition parties in the state like the Labour Party and the All Progressives Congress (APC), there are insinuations that Governor Siminilayi Fubara and his followers are behind the sudden rise in the popularity of the Action People’s Party (APP) ahead of the October 5, 2024, local council elections in the state. In this interview with ANN GODWIN, the state Chairman of the APP, Sunny Wokekoro, puts the facts clear.

There are speculations that Governor Siminilayi Fubara and some of his followers are behind the sudden popularity and growth of APP in Rivers State. How true is that?

Let me tell you something. If the APP is gaining momentum because of insinuations that Governor Fubara has a hand in it, that simply tells you that the governor is popular. That also indicates that the governor is being unjustly persecuted; that also tells you that Fubara is doing the job he ought to do and doing it well; hence, he is steadily gaining organic support from the people. But be that as it may, I can tell you authoritatively that Governor Fubara, even though our party is not antagonistic to him unlike other parties just as our party is also not antagonistic to President Bola Tinubu, he is not a member of our party. But as a good party administrator, the work of a good party administrator is to go out there and shop for the best candidates for the party. So, from the accusations I’m getting, I am beginning to get convinced that I should go for Governor Fubara and convince him to run under my party during the 2027 elections and also convince other people who have been deprived of opportunities in their parties. So long as they have the right character, we will go for them to run under our party. It is obvious that APP is now the veritable destination for anybody who is looking for any platform to fulfill his political career both in Rivers State and national level. What is actually giving you this impetus?

I have been in politics for over 35 years now. At the age of 22, I became the financial secretary of the defunct National Republican Convention (NRC). That was the party that produced the then governor of the state, Chief Rufus Ada George. From there, we proceeded to form the association that midwived what we have today as the PDP and other political parties. Before that, I was the coordinator of G34 in Rivers State, the platform that brought other political groups together that produced PDP.

I became the chairman after we navigated through the water of politics and established the party. I was privileged to serve as a commissioner in the Dr. Peter Odili administration. We had a small break and I later came back to become an adviser to the immediate past governor of the state, Nyesom Wike. I was still in PDP but the events that have happened and appear to have no political solution necessitated my exit and I got into a movement to find a way to address the several injustices that are going on in the PDP where the leaders at the national level, even the state level, seem not to have the morals and strength of character to deal with the challenges. So, we thought that enough was enough. So, we took the path of honour by exiting PDP. We exited the party when we did the Simplified Rally in Port Harcourt where I accused the national chairman of PDP, the secretary and the legal adviser of ineptness and lack of party administrative dexterity. There are assumptions that some members of the troubled big parties in Rivers are joining your party...

(Cuts in) The whole thing happening is because people trust us. They have seen the characters involved. That’s why you see people who are not satisfied with what is

going on in APC, PDP, LP now coming to us because we are now forming a team, an unbreakable bond that will change the narrative of things in the state and at the national level.

APP is a movement that is championing the realisation of hope. APP is a party that is not just championing hope but the realisation of that hope. Nigerians have been chanting the hope slogan for several years. Successive governments will come and promise hope but it is amazing that the citizens still suffer under the yokes of poverty. So, our political party is not just preaching about hope but we intend to make that hope a reality.

You know when something begins to gather momentum; people try to give it different explanations. Some could be positive; some could be negative. But I must say that the fortunes of the party are changing tremendously and positively. It is born out of the fact that a new political dispensation has been birthed. Nigerians, Rivers people and several other political parties are tired because they have seen the pros and cons of the existing parties. People are dissatisfied following the norm where the government keeps promising hope upon hope year in year out yet they don’t see any change.

So, people are looking for someone who is genuine and passionate, who can deliver promises made to them during electioneering campaigns. Right now there is a lot of internal wrangling among the so-called major political parties whether it is PDP, APC, LP and all that. You don’t even understand what is generating all those kinds of controversies. So, among all these political parties, those who are not happy about what is happening are looking for a platform to express themselves. So, when we came, considering the characters of the people who are involved, people who their yes is their yes and who their no is their no; people who are not into the business of deceiving people because they want to get into office; people who have sympathy and passion on the plights of the people. So, it is just natural that when they see you doing something exceptional, people will naturally gravitate towards you and align because they see trust, which is the key word here. APP has been registered with INEC since 2017. When the hope is achieved, do you think it will birth a new Nigeria that Nigerians have been yearning for?

Our party believes that a new Nigeria is possible. A new Nigeria is where the numerous challenges of hunger and poverty will be addressed; where we have a sense of unity; where each person sees the next person as his neighbour; where crime will be reduced if not totally eliminated; where a poor man will go to the court and obtain justice

The whole thing happening is because people trust us. They have seen the characters involved. That’s why you see people who are not satisfied with what is going on in APC, PDP, LP now coming to us because we are now forming a team, an unbreakable bond that will change the narrative of things in the state and at the national level.

because that is the last hope of the common man. A new Nigeria where security agencies will be professional in the discharge of their duties and not constitute themselves into a menace of the society or aid in criminality; a Nigeria where any person known to be a cultist cannot be allowed to hold public office because there’s no moral to do that; a Nigeria where the educational system will be functional and will churn out graduates who we can be proud of; where hospitals will be working; where medical tourism will be discouraged because the medical facilities are working effectively; where Nigerians will hold their heads high and not embarrassed abroad; where women will have equal rights to contest any elective positions; where our children will not be treated like slaves; where contractors will be held accountable when awarded contracts and where electricity will be available to attract investments.

Other political parties had made similar promises in the past but failed to fulfill them. What is the assurance that APP won’t join the ranks of those parties?

Members of our party are majorly people who have suffered one injustice or the other from their previous parties, people who have been unable to actualise their dreams because there is no godfather supporting them, people who have not gotten to the pinnacle of their political career because they do not belong to one club or the other.

So, if these people who have been treated unjustly are given responsibilities, you will agree with me that the narrative will

change because in the first instance, it’s not your godfather that brought you to where you are; you got there through merit. And we also have people who have fear of God.

The major challenge with the Nigerian system is that we do not have people with fear of God in power. They got into office through various means; hence they behave anyhow. So, we will ensure that only those who merit it will be elected so that you don’t get into office and begin to focus on the bids of your godfather but on addressing the problems of society.

How prepared is your party to face other major political parties in the local council elections billed for October 5 in Rivers State?

You know it’s people that make any political party thick and the moment people are dissatisfied with how you are running the party and decide to leave, the party becomes powerless. I read recently where the chairman of a party in the state boasted that they wrote results in their parlour. If you are popular you can’t be writing results in an office or parlour; you go out there to convince the people to vote for you. Sadly, the same political party that said they wrote results is saying they will not participate in the upcoming local government elections. If they are popular why are they shying away from the local government elections?

The Rivers State Independent Electoral Commission has said the election must be held. So, let me correct the impression; we are the popular party now in Rivers State and we are contesting the election and we are confident that with the support of the people and God by our side, we are going to clear the 319 councillorship positions and the 23 local government chairmanship positions in the state. That is the way to tell other parties that we will no longer be taking the nonsense they are giving to Nigerians.

How would your party tackle the issue of high nomination fees and do you have the structure to win the election?

I can assure you that our party’s nomination is affordable compared to other parties. I said earlier that what makes a party thick is the people. APP has the people; we have the structure to go in and conquer. We are prepared and ready because we have the people.

Political gladiators in the state have been accused of putting the state under political unrest. Do you have any words for them?

Rivers State has been of tremendous benefit and help to a lot of people. Some top politicians today are Rivers indigenes who have benefited so much from the state. But it is so discouraging that as they grow politically, they turn Rivers State to a war zone, using the benefits the state has given to them to fight the state. So, if their aim is to make Rivers become ungovernable because they have benefited, we will no longer allow them. As progressive people, let us at all times defend the collective interest of the state. When we have collectively defended the interest of the state, we can now sit down on a roundtable and negotiate our individual and community interest. At no time should our individual interests supersede the interest of the state. That is what is happening; where one person feels he has arrived and every other person must bow to him. But unfortunately, we are now in a dynamic system where things are evolving and we can no longer tolerate that style anymore.

Do you have any word for the youth who politicians often use to perpetrate mayhem?

Do not allow yourselves to be taken for granted any more. We have come of age. We know ourselves; we know who has good intentions towards the people and who does not have good intentions. Do not allow anybody to use you as an instrument to bring the state down. Do not be an instrument to destroy the state. Don’t allow politicians to use you to cause mayhem because they will surely dump you after elections. Don’t sell your future because of peanut; be responsible and avoid being used for thuggery.

Perhaps the politicians send their children abroad thinking they can now destroy the state; certainly one day, their children will feel the impact of the seeds they sowed.



Politics

Jonathan/Kauran Bauchi: A Winning Ticket For Nigeria?

By Joshua Titus Sanga

Nigerians are yearning for good leadership, where credibility and capacity define the direction of voters, as the country seeks to overcome its numerous challenges. The desire for a leadership that can harness the nation's potential and unite its people has never been more pressing.

Former President of Nigeria Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and Senator Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed, the current Governor of Bauchi State, also known as Kauran Bauchi, could potentially form a strong ticket for the 2027 elections. Jonathan's experience as a former President and Governor of Bayelsa State, combined with Mohammed's governance skills as a former Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and his strides in Bauchi State, make them a formidable team.

Jonathan's leadership style and understanding of Nigeria's complexities make him an attractive candidate. During his presidency, he implemented policies like the *Almajiri* education programme and the YouWin entrepreneurship scheme, showcasing his commitment to youth development and economic growth.

Historically, the former President has set precedence of good leadership with emphasis and priorities on Nigerians and Nigeria at the core of his ambition. His commitment to the welfare and development of the country is evident in his policies and programmes, which have had a lasting impact on the nation.

Kauran Bauchi had the fortune of working closely with Jonathan, and thus has been able to rewrite the history of Bauchi State through his current legacy projects.

As a governor, he has built on the foundations laid by Jonathan, and has taken the state to new heights of development and progress. His achievements in Bauchi State are a testament to the impact of good leadership and the impor-

ance of continuity in governance.

As the current chairman of PDP Governors' Forum, Kauran Bauchi's network and influence will be a significant advantage in building a strong opposition party. His commitment to unity and collaboration among governors will help to create a formidable force that can hold the ruling party accountable.

Governor Bala's recent statements criticising President Tinubu's administration are a testament to his willingness to speak truth to power. At a time when average Nigerians are struggling to make ends meet, his words resonate with the masses. By highlighting the failures of the current government, he is giving voice to the voiceless and demonstrating his commitment to advocating for the people.

As a leader who is not afraid to speak his mind, Kauran Bauchi's presence on the ticket with Jonathan will bring a sense of boldness and courage to the ticket. His ability to mobilise governors and party stakeholders will be crucial in building a strong grassroots movement that can propel the ticket to

victory. With his network and influence, he will be a valuable asset to the Jonathan/Kauran Bauchi ticket.

Having contested the party's ticket in the 2023 PDP presidential primaries, Kauran Bauchi possesses the political acumen to make it an easy ride for the party to return to power. His experience and knowledge of the party's inner workings will be invaluable in navigating the complexities of party politics, making him an ideal running mate for Jonathan as Nigerians continue to yearn for Jonathan's return.

Consequently, the infrastructural development in Bauchi State since he took over has already earned him two distinct national service awards, one during the former President Muhammadu Buhari's administration and another in the current administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. This rare recognition from an opposition political party speaks volumes about his reconnection with the grassroots.

This achievement is a testament to Kauran Bauchi's commitment to delivering tangible results and improving the lives of his people. His ability to transcend party lines and receive accolades from different administrations demonstrates

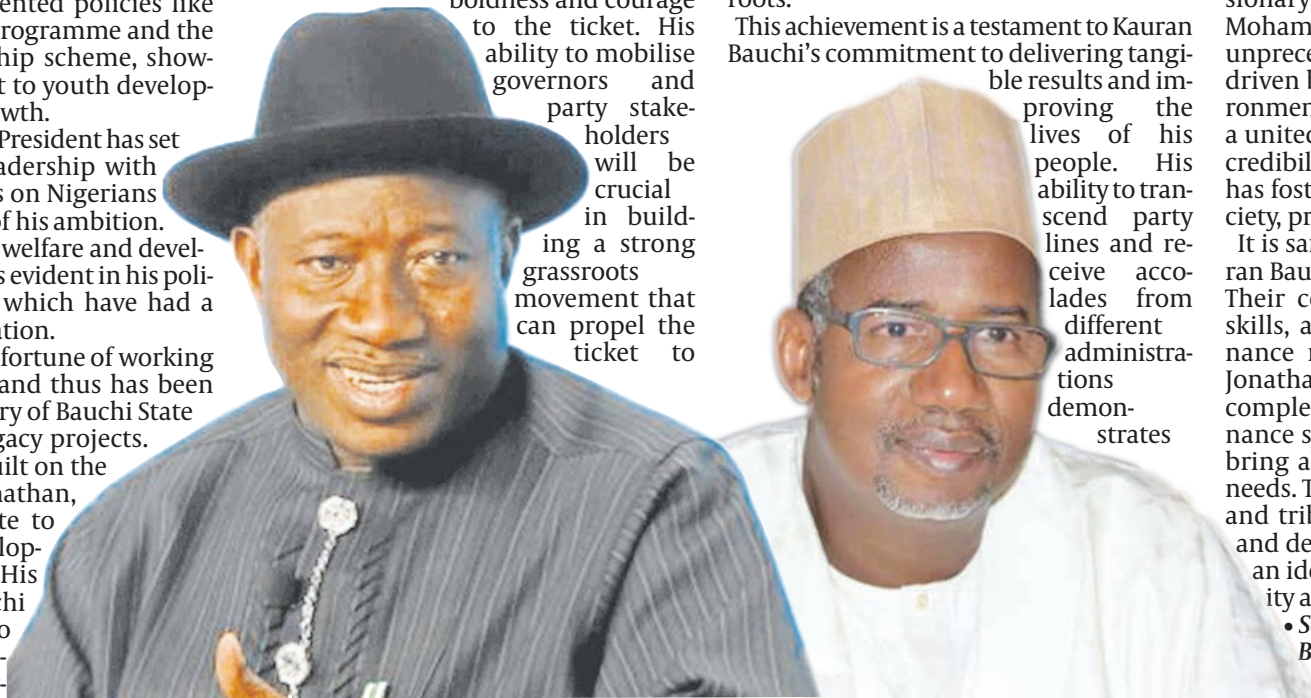
his focus on governance rather than politics. This unique blend of leadership and governance skills makes him an ideal partner for Jonathan, and together, they can bring about the transformation Nigeria so desperately needs.

I had the privilege of meeting with Kauran Bauchi in 2018 to express my desire to work with him. Initially hesitant, I revealed my Christian faith, to which he responded, 'If Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from Southern Nigeria, can work with me, a Muslim from the far North, why can't I work with you, a Christian from Bauchi State?' True to his word, he has collaborated with me till this day, despite all odds.

This testament to his character is further evidenced by his balanced political appointments in Bauchi State, which transcend religious and tribal biases, fostering trust and unity throughout the state. This inclusive approach could be replicated nationwide with their ticket. Under the visionary leadership of Governor Bala Mohammed, Bauchi State is experiencing unprecedented growth and development, driven by its inclusive and peaceful environment. His unwavering commitment to a united Nigeria, where competence and credibility are the sole criteria for success, has fostered a harmonious and stable society, propelling the state to new heights.

It is safe to conclude that Jonathan/Kauran Bauchi is a winning ticket for Nigeria. Their combined experience, leadership skills, and commitment to good governance make them a formidable team. Jonathan's understanding of Nigeria's complexities and Kauran Bauchi's governance skills, network, and influence will bring about the transformation Nigeria needs. Their ability to transcend religious and tribal biases, foster trust and unity, and deliver tangible results makes them an ideal pair to lead Nigeria to prosperity and harmony.

• Sanga, Is Jagaban Wunti writes from Bauchi via jotisanga@yahoo.com



Business

TETFund Partners Military On Research, Innovation, Technology

THE Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) and the Nigerian military have entered into a partnership to leverage each other's strengths in research, innovation and technological development.

Specifically, both parties underscored the necessity of a collaborative effort between TETFund and the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) following President Bola Tinubu's assent to the DICON Act, which seeks to drive technological innovation in education and stimulate economic growth.

Speaking when he led the management of the Fund on a courtesy call on the Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa, the Executive Secretary of TETFund, Arc. Sonny Echono, eulogised the Armed Forces under the leadership of the CDS for its selfless services to the nation, even as he commended the military for their commitment to tackling the security challenges in the country as well as protecting educational institutions.

The Armed Forces, he said, has always been supportive of educational establishments in Nigeria, applauding them for providing an enabling environment for education to thrive despite the challenges posed by insecurity in the country.

Echono also expressed the willingness of the Fund to partner with the military and educational establishments, especially in the areas of research, innovation and technological developments. He disclosed that the intervention agency

would partner with DICON and other sectors of the economy to achieve national aspirations. He further eulogised the Armed Forces of Nigeria for being the vanguard of innovations that bring about solutions to critical national issues.

While commending the CDS for the relative peace witnessed in the country so far, he pledged that the agency would sustain its supportive responsibility towards military institutions.

The TETFund boss, while assuring of sustained investments in Nigerian Army institutions, emphasised that the military has been a vital supporter of educational institutions in Nigeria, making significant sacrifices in challenging environments and conflict zones as well as checkmating incidences of militant attacks and kidnapping within institutions of higher learning. His words: "The military establishment has been so supportive of our educational institutions. And we thank you for your service to our country. We thank you for the huge sacrifice that is being made to ensure that education contin-

ues even in times of conflicts, difficult environments

"We also want to commend the fact that we have seen real slow down on the rates of such challenges in the recent past. We are able to ensure that schools run without disruptions and unsavoury incidents of attacks by either militants or kidnappers.

"In the area of research and development, we see it as a major frontier for collaboration; because research into security services and development of our defence industries and being able to service that sector is one area that we can express our national aspirations as a people."

He expressed the commitment of the Fund to continue to support institutions of the Nigerian Army including the Nigerian Defence Academy, Army University, Bui, among others.

Responding, the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) gave the assurance

that the Armed Forces would continue its unwavering support to educational developments in the country.

He made a case for partnership between the DICON and TETFund.

On the restrictions on importation of certain calibres of arms and ammunition into the country by the Ministry of Defence, he said it would make Nigeria a major hub of arms production, save our foreign currency and generate employment.

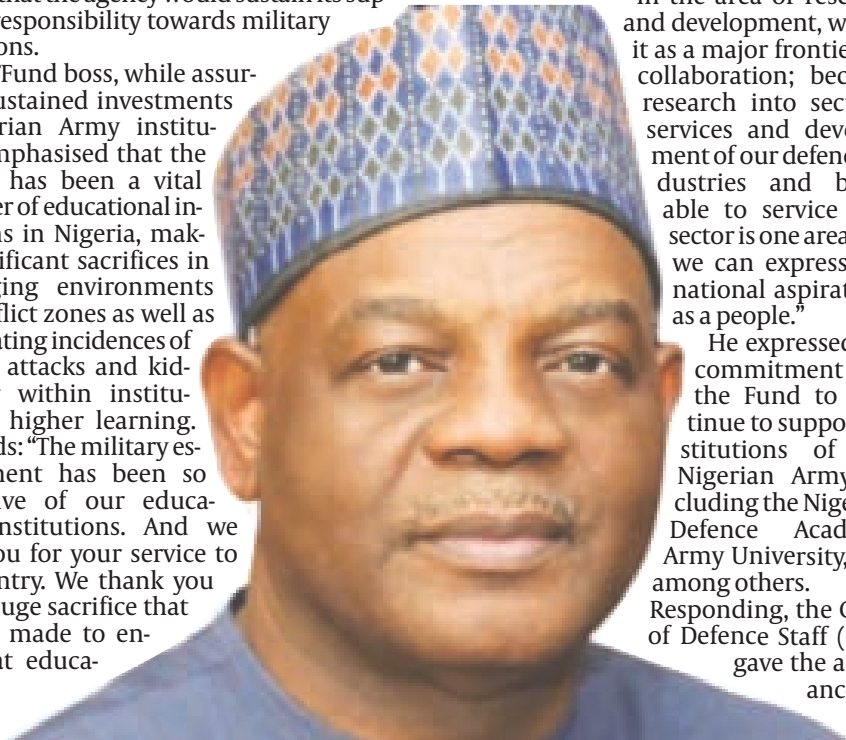
Musa expressed his gratitude for the Fund's support to the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) and other Army institutions, stating that it had significantly enhanced their capacity and ability to achieve more.

He emphasised the relevance of education to human capacity development, pointing out that without education, most people would not have been in various important positions they find themselves in today.

Speaking further, he stated that education is pivotal to efficient service delivery in the Armed Forces and appreciated numerous interventions in military institutions by TETFund. He noted that the Armed Forces would continue its unwavering support to educational development in Nigeria.

"What you are doing has enhanced the capacity of the education system. For the Armed Forces, we can only continue to appreciate what you are doing.

"Everywhere we have our men, one of the key areas we told them is to make sure the schools are secure because without that, as a nation, we can't move forward," he said.



Politics



Stakeholders in the youth engagement and advocacy sphere are driving discourse on initiatives and deliberate ways for youth enlightenment on constructive political and civic education. The core aim is to foster environments where young people, and indeed, the society at large will be informed enough on their representatives, politicians and government. The non-state players seek catalysts for fair and thorough election processes where accountability and transparency embody benchmark systems and structures for ideal candidature. **OLUDARE RICHARDS** writes:

THE need for better civic education and engagement to empower young people and women to participate in politics comes now to the fore amid youth engagement efforts in activism and civic actions such as the #EndSARS protest and the more recent #EndBadGovernance protest.

Stakeholders and civic space actors are urging young people on the need to focus on civic building, consolidation, and mobilisation rather than protests.

Most of all, youths are being urged to take advantage of the Not Too Young To Run law, which allows for youths as young as 25, to vie for seats both at the State Assembly and Federal House of Representatives, age 35 for presidency and senatorial seats and even the governorship. Before now, a candidate has to attain the age of 40 to be president and to run for the office of the governor.

Emphasis leaned on the importance of civic education and enlightenment as pro-active means to counteract the challenges of corruption and financial hardships. The advocacy for focus on civic education and responsibility to empower citizens to participate in the democratic process is followed by a call for better organisation and strategy by youths in being more deliberate in conscious effort to choose their leaders and representatives.

Research and policy analyst at BudgIT, Oluwatosin Iseyin, speaking with *The Guardian*, said first, as a citizen, one needs to understand that transparency and accountability is not a luxury but a basic right.

He said Nigerians should know that as citizens, they have the right to demand accountability and transparency but to do that, people need to be part of the system which means participating in elections.

"This is because people as representatives did not get there overnight, they are voted in. So, from the first step, which is during the elections, you do your own part by knowing the credibility of the candidate. If you're not fine with the credibility of the person, you vote against the person. You've done your own part," he said.

He stressed that if the citizens do their own part, then it will be left for the other stakeholders to play their part also, in reference to politicians, technical supporters and international organisations.

Civic, Pre-Election Engagement Critical In Achieving NotToo YoungToRun Goals

Iseyin explained that when the citizens play their part or are well informed, the politician cannot sell any crap to them.

"The reason a politician can continue to win and continue to rub their nonchalant attitudes on the citizenry is because even the citizenry are not prepared for the politics.

"If they are strengthened and know they can write an FOI and be responded to, they will do more. The citizen first needs to know about the office of the citizen.

"The citizen can even call a House of Representatives back to the constituency to come answer to what he has done in the last three months. It is constitutional. The representative is supposed to constantly report on what has been done.

He described the structure as a monitoring and evaluation system but citizens don't know they have such power.

"There are so many things citizens need to know. For example, the citizen should know who is responsible for what.

"The citizen should know who the local ward head is, which is the councillor, the local government chairman and of course the state governor. There is power with the grassroots.

"If the person is in position, you demand accountability by being a part of the system. When they want to create policies, they call for citizens and stakeholder. However, citizens are stakeholders in their own right and are critical in pushing for development.

Iseyin said citizens could play their part through active participation and engagement. For example, when there is a call for budget circular or when there is a policy that is about to be drafted, citizens can speak up on the contents especially on how the policy will affect them, whether tangible or monetary policies.

Consequently, before these policies are drafted, citizens are expected to be heard. Citizens though might not be there when certain policies are passed. However, when these policies are brought before the National or State Houses of Assemblies, a citizen can kick against certain parts of the document or the policy in its entirety, and it is going to be reverted.

"Normally, policies come to change the system and citizens being part of drafting will only strengthen the process and output. It will have no adverse effect on the policies.

"Talking about the budget itself, it is meant for the citizen, it is for capacity development, capital projects and implementation. So, the budget is not made for the representative

but the citizens. It is important that citizens' contribution to the drafting of the budget.

"During budget presentation, citizens can decide what needs to be removed or added. Basically, governance cannot work without citizens because the people there are going to represent citizens," Iseyin said.

Iseyin said this during a Citizens Hangout event, organised for active youth inclusion with interactive workshops, games, open mic and spoken word.

Victoria Oladipo with pro-civic engagement organisation, LearnPolitics, who was also at Civic Hive venue of the Hangout, said the importance of the kind of gathering is notably the new ways to get young people involved in not just politics but what is going on in governance.

She said people need to know how they can hold their government accountable, what they need to do as citizens of a state and whom they need to hold accountable, not just about being them every election year.

She disclosed that in the last one year of LearnPolitics' active engagement with youths in Nigerian in assessment of their knowledge base in politics, her organisation found out that people do not actually know about politics and political engagement.

She particularly, to her surprise, found out for the first time that there are citizens who have never had a glimpse of the Nigerian Constitution. She discovered in her first meeting of someone who has never seen a document of the constitution and this person is of voting age.

"Imagine never having seen a document of the Nigerian constitution before until you're taught about the contents in the constitution. The importance of this level of rudimentary knowledge is that it helps people make better decisions in the long run because if they under stand why they are voting, whom they are voting for, what kind of policies the candidate, representative or politician can enact for them, they would more likely make better voting decisions in the coming elections.

"Talking about civic enlightenment, voting is almost the result of civic engagements. We want to see that people actually vote and that they vote the right leaders for themselves," she said.

Concerns raised by a participant at the event regarding government reactions to civic actions such as protests, especially with clampdown on protesters, was shared by several others at the gathering.

Victoria said in reaction that youths would

still have to keep engaging the government but rather more constructively and with more informed ways.

Habib Sheidu, Co-founder/Project Director, AdvokC Foundation, expressed his view regarding the verdict of the Abuja Federal High Court which ordered the freezing of accounts linked to organisers of the #EndBadGovernance protest.

He noted that the freezing of accounts linked to the #EndBadGovernance protest raises serious questions about the respect for civil liberties and freedom of expression in Nigeria.

"Such actions can create a chilling effect on civic participation and undermine citizens' trust in democratic processes. I am deeply concerned about the recent increase in activities that further shrink our civic space. I use this opportunity to urge the authorities to reconsider this decision and ensure that all actions taken are in line with democratic principles and the protection of citizens' rights."

Founder of social accountability initiative, FollowTheMoney and Chief Executive of Connected Development (CODE), Hamza Lawal, said the government now at least approached the bench, and would allow for the protesters to have their day court because what they're doing now is rather taking cue from the military junta, putting fear in the hearts of people.

Hamza noted that they're not actually also dealing with the problem and the symptoms of the problem, because for the end bad governance, citizens didn't just wake up and decide to protest.

"Something led to it; there is hardship. There is still inflation. Fuel is sold for as much as a thousand naira, depending on where you buy or which state you are. Today we are talking of unemployment of as high as 33%. If they are not dealing with this but are clamping down on some group of people and freezing some accounts.

"So, if tomorrow, another group emerges, or another citizen group emerge and call themselves something else for another nationwide protest, how many people can the arrest, how many can they kill, how many bullets do security agencies have? So, I think what is happening is what I call institutional capturing," he said.

The anti-corruption activist said young people still have the opportunity to change the narrative with the NotTooYoungToRun Movement.

He urged for active participation of youths and women in politics with continued engagement and action to ensure that young people and marginalised groups have a voice in politics.

Hamza called for the intensification of non-election period civic education and voter registration drives, adding that there is need for post-election review meetings to evaluate youth performance in the last elections and to identify opportunities for the upcoming 2027 elections.

He noted that the movement has given hope to Nigerian youths to participate in politics, particularly elective offices and certain perceived impediments, such as the party system and monetary politics should be seen as an opportunity for young people to leverage ward and local politics to make a difference while building a formidable grassroots system that could further advance for the emergence of a youth-led party system in Nigeria.

Editorial

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The Anomaly Of N2.3b Expenses On Foreign Trip

There is little to contend with the fact that a country in need of foreign direct investment needs to reach out to other countries to showcase its credentials. All the same, it is worrisome that at a time Nigeria's economy is bleeding profusely, a whopping sum of N2.3 billion was spent on President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's foreign trips. This was specifically within six months, from February to July 2024.

For a country that is still struggling with high inflation and hardship, whose citizens cannot afford decent meals, the question is at whose expense and to what benefit are these expenditure? Can the country sustain it? Are there other ways to attract investment? And can't the huge funds involved be better utilised to lift Nigerians from the grip of poverty and want? These questions and other relevant ones should agitate the mind of the president and his team.

As of May 2024, report also claimed that President Tinubu, who had visited over 10 nations since assuming office, spent over N3.4 billion on local and foreign trips within one year. Data from GovSpend, an affiliation of BudgetIT showed that between February 21 and July 19, 2024, the President spent N2, 346,623,000 on foreign trips. Next month, President Tinubu will be jetting out to China to meet his counterpart, President Xi Jinping. Expectedly, the trip, which the Presidency claimed is expected to enhance economic collaboration, attracts investments to Nigeria and a strategic move to strengthen bilateral relations between the two nations while pursuing key economic opportunities, would involve more expenses from the public till.

As of May 2024, checks showed that President Tinubu had been to Paris, France (thrice); London, the United Kingdom (twice); Bissau, Guinea-Bissau (twice); Nairobi, Kenya; Porto Novo, Benin Republic; New Delhi, India; Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates; New York, the United States of America; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (twice); Berlin, Germany; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Dakar, Senegal; Doha, Qatar and The Hague, The Netherlands. President Tinubu was in South Africa in June and France earlier this month.

The President and his handlers need to exercise restraints on this incessant spending and rather divert these funds into fixing the crawling economy. Certainly the country's economy is too unstable to bear the financial strain. Nigeria's food inflation in the last one year rose by 15 per cent, specifically from 24.82 per cent in May 2023 and 40.01 per cent in March 2024. The headline inflation also rose by 10 per cent from 22.41 per cent in May 2023 to 33.20 per cent in March 2024. The Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) puts inflation as of July 2024 at 33.40 per cent, while food inflation is 40.9 per cent.

It should worry government that these trips are not having the desired effects for obvious reasons. In fact, foreign trips by Nigeria's presidents in the past have not been impacting the economy. This, former President Obasanjo admitted while in office, and after several trips and billions of naira. Surely it should have dawn on government that the country must first be in much better shape, politically, economically and socially for it to attract foreign investors.

In the past when foreigners made Nigeria their home and industrial favourites, the reason was the country's stability and hospitality, not international travels by presidents. One of the chief reasons for poor foreign preference for Nigeria now is insecurity of lives and property; and this, government must earnestly address. At the moment, insecurity is festering, and life is cheap and meaningless.

Charity should begin from home! The President and his team should first rescue this floundering economy, bring it back to life and steady it against internal aggression and suppression. No investment thrives in an atmosphere of chaos, insecurity, uncertainty and corruption. There is still erratic power supply, hospitals are not well-equipped, roads are still dangerous, manufacturers are on the edge and citizens' growth has been dwarfed by policy summersault.

The challenges in the country have further been compounded by foreign exchange fluctuations, which continue to hinder business growth. The dollar has edged the naira by about 120 per cent in the last one year. It currently hovers around N1, 600/\$.

Fiscal and monetary policies from the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank of Nigeria have not been able to stem this tide. The President should look inwards and divert these billions used in junketing the globe into fixing the economy.

In the absence of impact on living standard, Nigerians believe that the president is embarking on too many foreign trips and neglecting his basic responsibilities at home. And indeed, the challenges confronting government at home are enormous. The Federal Government can use part of the funds spent on foreign trips to boost the manufacturing sector, the mainstay of every economy; and to stem job losses and exit of more major players, all which have negative multiplier effects on the country's economy. A few jobs lost here and a few there can have a substantial effect far beyond the local economy.

Despite all the junketing, the renewed hope promised Nigerians by the President has not materialised. In fact, it has turned into misery in the past year. President Tinubu should spend less time away and more at home, if only to enable him further appreciate huge domestic issues that the average Nigerian is contending with daily.

More importantly, he should accept the fact that investors will not come into the country on account of his own trips to their countries but on account of security of lives and property, availability of inexpensive, regular supply of power and energy; and prevalence of an environment conducive for transacting business and investing in industries.

LETTER

How AI Is Blurring Lines Between Reality And Fiction

SIR: In the age of Artificial Intelligence, Deepfake is used to generate someone's speech and images, videos and making somebody believe as who it is.

A growing number of people rely on social media and other online sources for information and are susceptible to convincing deep fakes.

The emerging technology is apparently misused to create a lot of problems such as inappropriate political statements that could lead to even civil unrest, fake promotions and false information in society.

It is used to create false narratives by making it appear that people said or did things they never did.

Deepfakes are confusing reality and in recent times well known political statues such as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, President of United States of America, Joe Biden, India's home minister, Amit Shah are the victims.

Celebrity Hoaxes:

There are many other film and sports celebrities such as Sachin Tendulkar, RashmikaMandanna, and even Pope is not an exception from deepfake.

Some examples of Deep fake exists online but not in real life

1.Deep fake image of Katy Perry posted in social media received 17.4 million views.

2.Pope Francis wearing a white puffer jacket got over 30 million views across several posts.

3.Deep fake of Sachin Tendulkar praising a gaming

app and claiming that her daughter is making huge money by playing the game posted on social media.

4. Deep fake of Trump being arrested posted on social media having seven million views.

5. Audio deepfakes impersonate voices for scams, such as fooling family members or employees.

Recently, a famous engineering company (ARUP) that is behind world famous building company, such as Sydney Opera house has recently confirmed that it was a target of deepfake that lead of its employee paying \$25million.

How is deepfake content created?

Creating deepfake involves complex and sophisticated AI and Machine learning algorithms and techniques

A. AI Voice cloning

You can create your AI voice clone from just a few minutes of sample audio. There are tools available online with easy access to do this.

One example is elevenlabs.io. Just with around 4000 INR one can create a clone voice and it can reach unparalleled accuracy across 29 languages, including Hindi. Even there are some free tools out there

B. AI Avatar Cloning

A custom avatar is a realistic digital version of yourself. They are designed in the same style as you, they capture your unique likeness. This allows someone to create a personalised video. All one need to do is submit the video footage and there are AI video creation platforms that will process the video footage using the advanced

AI algorithms and generate a custom avatar.

Platforms like synthesis.io, deepbrain.io create the custom video AI cloned avatars.

I have myself visited the Deep Brain booth at CES 2022 in Las Vegas and seen their models. However using these platforms, it is not possible to create avatars for anyone without the explicit consent of the person involved.

How to detect Deepfake

Can normal end users detect? Yes and No.

Yes, some of the images if you zoom them, you will see body collisions and finger collisions.

No, some of the videos it's hard to detect for common people.

See example 1 of Kate Perry: All the photographers except one are not looking at her.

Example 2 of Pope Francis: Right hand fingers holding cup have collisions.

Top tech companies are planning to use AI technology itself to detect Deepfake. McAfee and Intel are collaborating to combat the Deepfake detector (link). Open AI like ChatGPT is releasing their own deepfake detector.

Lack of legislation around AI

Deepfakes are largely unregulated at this time. Keeping the law in sync with the new technology is important. Voices/videos generated using AI should be brought into disclosures. Hope to see the government regulations soon on Deepfakes.

• Boyapati Sai Chand works at Samsung Research United States of America. He can be reached via Boyapati Saichand@gmail.com



Opinion

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The Long Winding Road To Judicial Salary Review

By Ayo Joseph

A FEW days ago, lawyers woke up to emails, one from the President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Mr. Y.C. Maikyau, SAN, and another from the Association's publicity secretary on the subject of review of judicial officers' salary. The email was not pretentious that it was Maikyau and his team (and not anyone else), who initiated the whole idea of the review of judicial officers' salaries. Call it an ostentatious assertion of ownership right and you would not be wrong.

In the email which was circulated to all lawyers, Mr. Maikyau stated: "By the grace of God Almighty, and without any intention of sounding immodest, we successfully undertook this task which culminated into the enactment of the Judicial Office Holders (Salaries and Allowances, Etc) Act, 2024, which was a product of constructive engagement with all the arms of Government."

But is Maikyau actually the "brain-father" of the Judicial Office Holders (Salaries and Allowances, Etc) Act, 2024? The whole idea far precedes his ascension to the presidency of the NBA. I recall that reports of an ongoing process had been in the news, long before Maikyau became the President of the NBA.

The Body Of Benchers' Intervention

The road to the review of remuneration of judicial officers has no doubt been a torturous one, with many harrowing bends and bumpy stretch. As far back as 2018, under the government of Muhammadu Buhari, there had been a report, proposing a review of judicial salaries and conditions of service. While the report continued to gather dust on the president's shelf, a rare diatribe emerged from the Justices of the Supreme Court, around June, 2022, with bitter complaints about the condition of service of the court and the nation's judiciary at large.

The first regulatory body in the legal profession to react to this, was the Body of Benchers, then chaired by Mr. Wole Olanipekun who wrote to all the Justices of the Supreme Court, urging them to exercise patience while the Body engages with the relevant stakeholders towards addressing their complaints. Body of Benchers' sources has it that Olanipekun had set up a Judicial Advisory Committee head-

ed by the former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Mahmud Mohammed, with representatives from the NBA and the Judiciary. The same sources also revealed that the then Chairman of the Body of Benchers engaged the consulting firm of Earnst& Young to do a comparative analysis of salaries and emoluments of judicial officers across the commonwealth countries, with a view to achieving an internationally acceptable scale.

It was in the news that in July 2022, Olanipekun led other Benchers to Buhari to register their concerns and to "parley" with the then President towards addressing the issue. It was in furtherance of these engagements that the President directed the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RAMFC) to begin the process of implementation of the 2018 report, pending the conclusion of the Earnst& Young report commissioned by the then Body of Benchers leadership.

While the engagements with Buhari and his eventual commitment took place around July 2022, Maikyau did not become the President of the NBA until 26 August, 2022. At the commissioning of the Body of Benchers Complex on September 29, 2022, Mr. Buhari acknowledged the assiduous efforts of the Body of Benchers and its leadership, in his address, when he said: "I am not unaware of the passion and commitment of Chief Olanipekun in championing the cause of the welfare of Judicial Officers in Nigeria, as well as the commitment of the Body of this goal. May I restate my commitment towards this ideal and to reiterate our administration's willingness to implement the 2018 Report of the Committee on the Review of Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service. In similar vein, I have been intimated on the engagement of Consultants by the Body, through its Advisory Judicial Committee, to amongst other things, come up with a peer review of the conditions of service of Judicial Officers in Nigeria with other countries and jurisdictions, within and outside Africa. I earnestly look forward to the completion of this peer review and the submission of recommendation, as this will assist us in no small measure, in our review of the welfare packages."

Earnst& Young's findings were documented in a report, which was submitted to the President, the RAMFC, the National Assembly and other stakeholders in the value chain. It would later be discovered that the N15 Million professional

fees of Earnst& Young were personally borne by the duo of Olanipekun and the current Attorney-General of the Federation, Mr. Lateef Fagbemi at a ratio of 10:5. No doubt, the report presented a basis and resources for the legislative processes that followed, before the eventual enactment of the Act.

Joint Efforts Of Senior Lawyers And The Judicial Staff

Long before the intervention of the Body of Benchers, the eminent Senior Advocate, Mr. Olisa Agbakoba had in two separate actions, that is, Suit Nos. FHC/ABJ/CS/63/2013 and Suit No: NAD/56/2013, against various governmental stakeholders, including the Federal Government, the National Judicial Council, the National Assembly, Ekiti State Government, etc., obtained judgments in his personal capacity, granting financial autonomy of the judiciary.

More recently in 2022, another respected Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Mr. Sebastain Hon, in his personal capacity and supported by over 100 members of the Inner Bar and 30 members of the Outer Bar, appearing as counsel, made another attempt through an action against the National Assembly (NASS), the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF), the National Judicial Council (NJC) and the Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC), over the poor salary of judges in Nigeria. This action predated Maikyau's assumption of office as NBA President, even when very gray hairs like Solomon Awomolo, SAN, J.B. Daudu, SAN, OCJ Okocha, SAN, Kanu Agabi, SAN, and E.C. Ukala, SAN, registered their unequivocal support, both in court appearance and preparation of processes. Or what do you say of the daunting efforts of the handlers of the Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria, who had in January, 2014, obtained judgment against the National Judicial Council and the Governors of the 36 States of the Federation to court, over the same issue?

Men had committed their voices, goodwill, efforts, intellect and resources to the cause which has eventually culminated in this result. No doubt, the story may not be complete without a mention of Mr. Maikyau's name, as his voice was very loud in support of a review of salary review for judicial officers. However, he only arrived at the racecourse at a time the horse had already bolted. He is at best, a joint tenant with several other tenants, owning very limited interest in the pool.

• Joseph, a Public Affairs Analyst, wrote from Lagos.

By Tunde Akanni and Amira Obi-Okoye

MOST credible English Language Dictionaries provide at least 10 synonyms for the word protest - object, disagree, oppose, complain, disapprove, declare, insist, affirm, avow, declare, grouse, holler, belly-ache. One Thesaurus, in fact, offers 106 synonyms and antonyms of the word "protest". Yet writers don't often consider any of them good substitute for "protest", because over the decades, the word has assumed a much deeper, complex and lethal meaning.

Palpably so, perhaps. The past decade or thereabouts, protests have become a dominant instrument of people and issue management across the local and international arena. The famous six-letter English noun (which doubles as a verb) has not only assumed new meanings, it has also grown in power and influence. How powerful a word can be!

Nigerians in particular now have an unprecedented appreciation of the phenomenon. When the raging protest was still in the offing with the commencement date announced, there were mixed feelings. Planners, including their lawyers, assured that it would be peaceful. The agitated government folks repeatedly alerted that hoodlums could take advantage of it.

Eventually, the truth of the fears manifested with several properties vandalized and looted in addition to lives lost. Indeed, such is the magnitude of the losses that some initial promoters of the protest now want it halted. But it is merely easier said.

Yet the protest, in our own reckoning as experts, was avoidable in the first place. What else was left for the media to register on the consciousness of government functionaries? Not even in this age of buoying media abundance with increasing actualities can anyone accuse the media of under-reportage of visible signals. So much more offered by informed comments and analyses could not have been more timeous either.

Minding The Mutating Protest

Interestingly, one of the promoters of the protest, Omoyele Sowore, barely parroted an old claim of the nation's socio-economic situation which ironically has even accentuated over decades. Years back, foremost leader of Yoruba politics, Obafemi Awolowo, was reported to have said: "We have won the civil war. Yes, indeed. But to win the war for peace, we must recognize the real enemies. As far as I can understand, the aggressors against peace and stability in Nigeria are abject poverty, hunger, disease, squalor and ignorance." These have combined to now compel some fire-brigade interventions with no feasible sustainability promise. Its Nigeria's hard and painful share of the mutating historic phenomenon.

About a decade ago, this famous word took the Arab world by storm. Now famously referred to as the Arab Spring, it was a wave of pro-democracy protest that began in 2010 with Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in Tunisia, sparking the Jasmine Revolution. Similar movement sprang up in the Middle East and North Africa with significant uprisings in Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria. The protests which were chaotic to say the least, highlighted the people's desire for political freedom. But it snowballed into a protracted unintended instability and economic hardships.

Just this July 2024, "protest" rode virulently in the manner of a hurricane through Bangladesh and the United Kingdom. In Bangladesh where it finally tragically culminated in a military take-over, demonstrators trooped out against discontent over government job quotas reserved exclusively for families of veterans from the 1971 independence war, and turned into demands for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation.

The government returned with fire, felling no fewer than 250 lives. The military, led by General Waker-Uz-Zaman, announced

Hasina's resignation and set up an Interim Government to address the demands of the protesters.

Though with fewer deaths, the UK protests are not any less unnerving. Since 2011, there have been pockets of protests across the country but three weeks ago, it became disturbingly violent. The immediate explanation of the mob was the alleged police complicity resulting from the shooting of a Briton, Mark Duggan allegedly by an immigrant. The shooter turned out to be a British with Rwandan mother but it did not matter. The protests highlighted system issues with British society and strained community-police relations.

A few months earlier, in Kenya, protests were ignited by opposition to the Finance Bill 2024. It was tagged "#RejectFinanceBill2024". It quickly snowballed into a cross-divisional and multi-dimensional flame of riots against the leadership of President William Ruto. The President was forced to dissolve his cabinet but the crises have not fully abated.

Now, "protest" has landed in Nigeria, after weeks of hovering in the cloud as deadly thunderstorms do, leaving its trademark - devastations, trails of blood, deaths and empty canisters beclouded with police tear gas.

Even the most virulent leader shivers at the threat of a protest, because when it starts no one knows what will follow and how it will end. Although protest as an activity or action is as old as humanity, its encroachment into the international political arena deserves a more critical look.

All of the examples of escalated protests that we just referred to except that of Nigeria (Arab Springs, Kenya protests, the "coup" in Bangladesh and the Britain) have diplomatic or international undertones.

That is the reason the Tinubu Administration in Nigeria should not take the current wave of "#Endbadgovernance" with kid's gloves especially with brazen flaunting of Russian flag in Kano, Kaduna and some other parts of northern Nigeria.

But public discontents can always be nipped in the bud by listening leaders. They need to make better and more sincere and effective use of the knowledge of the concept of multi-track diplomacy. The concept (or theory if you like) has grown in acceptance among scholars as a conflict resolution tool. Put simply, it says that a menu of nine factors, when properly blended and applied proactively would bring about peace in the international arena. These are: Government (executive, legislature and judiciary); Professional conflict resolution (especially by non-state actors); Business (how economic activities could address disparity and poverty); Private citizens (individuals and groups); Research, training and education; Peace activism; Religion; Funding and the Media (and public relations).

Clearly, Abuja did not make up its mind to meet with the leaders of the relevant segments of the society in good time, just that it made huge shows of the meetings. Were the meetings also sufficiently frank, not merely cosmetic? Were there implementable plans to step down the messages duly suffused with sincerity and completely bereft of political arrogance? How mindful were such engagements mindful of the peculiarities of the various regions with varying bents of insecurity? No one, for instance, could have imagined the brazen and wanton destructions of private and public properties carried out in Kano including attacks on facilities that serve the common man daily like traffic lights. What worse level can we further descend into?

The truth: Peace is always negotiable when the right steps are taken at the right time.

• Tunde Akanni, PhD and Amira Obi-Okoye, a doctoral student, are Media and Conflict scholars based at the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, FCMS, LASU.

Andropause: How The Silent Male Menopause Impacts Ageing Men

Moyosore Salami examines what andropause entails, its symptoms, and its impact on daily life, on a condition that is frequently underrecognised and undertreated.

As society becomes increasingly aware of menopause and its effects on women, another age-related condition affecting men is gradually gaining attention: andropause. Often overshadowed by its female counterpart, menopause, sometimes referred to as male menopause or Partial Androgen Deficiency of the Aging Male (PADAM), is a significant health issue impacting many men as they age.

Andropause is characterised by a decline in testosterone levels, the male hormone crucial for libido, energy, and overall vitality. Unlike menopause, which is marked by the clear cessation of menstrual cycles, andropause lacks a definitive marker, making it less recognized and often overlooked. The condition typically begins in middle age like 48 and becomes more pronounced as men reach their 60s and 70s, with testosterone levels often falling by up to 35 per cent compared to younger men.

The symptoms can range from diminished sexual desire and energy levels to mood disturbances and difficulty concentrating. These changes often lead to excessive fatigue, a general disinterest in activities once enjoyed, and a significant drop in the overall quality of life.

Despite its prevalence, exact figures on how many men experience it are elusive, partly due to the condition being frequently underreported and misattributed to other health issues.

Differentiating andropause from normal aging can be challenging, as many symptoms overlap. Diagnosis generally occurs after ruling out other conditions and confirming low testosterone levels.

While it can begin at various ages, its effects are usually more noticeable in older men. Unlike menopause, the onset of andropause does not follow a specific timeline, varying widely among individuals.

It is linked to several health concerns, including osteoporosis and cardiovascular issues, as testosterone plays a role in maintaining muscle mass and bone density.

However, these conditions could impact fertility and sexual function, as it reduces hormone level that affects libido and sperm production.

According to experts, the mental and emotional toll of andropause can be profound. Struggles with sexual function could lead to relationship strains and associated mental health issues, including depression.

Addressing these symptoms often involves a combination of lifestyle changes such as improved diet, regular exercise, and moderation in alcohol consumption, as well as medical treatments.

Medical experts emphasised the importance of early diagnosis and treatment. Testosterone replacement therapy (TRT) is one option for managing the symptoms, available in various forms, including tablets, patches, and injections. However, TRT is not without risks. Unregulated testosterone therapy



can exacerbate conditions like prostate cancer or lead to aggressive behavior, making it crucial for treatment to be tailored to each individual's needs and monitored closely for potential side effects.

A medical expert, Toluwanimi Adeyanju explained that unlike menopause in women, which is marked by the clear cessation of menstrual cycles, andropause lacks a definitive onset. This ambiguity, coupled with the gradual decline in testosterone, makes it harder to recognise and diagnose.

"The decline in testosterone doesn't occur as rapidly as the drop in estrogen during menopause, so the symptoms can be less noticeable but no less significant, these symptoms can include decreased lean muscle mass, increased body fat, erectile dysfunction, depression, and fatigue, among others."

Adeyanju emphasized that while not all men with reduced testosterone levels experience these symptoms, those who do often find their daily lives significantly impacted.

One critical area Adeyanju highlighted is mental health. Depression, a common symptom, can deeply affect a man's outlook on life, leading to social withdrawal and strained relationships, particularly when sexual function is compromised.

Additionally, the physical decline associated with andropause can increase the risk of falls and fractures, potentially leading to a loss of independence and the need for assisted care, he noted.

An endocrinologist, Dr Femi Ojo, explained the importance of breaking the silence around andropause.

"Andropause is a natural part of aging, but because the symptoms develop gradually, many men don't recognise them as part of a hormonal change. They may attribute these changes to stress, aging, or other factors, without realising that their testosterone levels might be the underlying cause."

Ojo added that understanding andropause as a normal part

of aging can encourage men to seek treatment and support, helping them maintain their health, vitality, and well-being as they age.

"Breaking the silence around andropause is key; when men understand that what they are experiencing is a normal part of aging, they are more likely to seek treatment and support. By addressing andropause proactively, we can help men maintain their health, vitality, and well-being as they age."

A consultant urologist, Dr Funmilayo Ajayi, told The Guardian that many men experience a significant drop in their quality of life during this phase.

"Men undergoing andropause often report feeling less energetic and more irritable. They may also struggle with sleep disturbances and cognitive issues, such as memory loss or difficulty concentrating."

On the challenges of andropause, the doctor said these symptoms can be particularly challenging for men who are still in their working years or are dealing with other life stressors, such as caring for aging parents or coping with career changes.

She noted that the stigma surrounding male vulnerability often prevents men from seeking help, exacerbating their struggles.

"Men are often reluctant to discuss these issues, even with their doctors, due to societal expectations around masculinity and strength."

A geriatric specialist, Dr Abimbola Olanrewaju, emphasized the need for greater awareness and intervention in addressing andropause.

"We need to raise awareness among both men and health-care providers about the reality. Early diagnosis and intervention can significantly improve quality of life. This might include hormone replacement therapy (HRT), lifestyle modifications like diet and exercise, or counseling to address emotional and psychological symptoms."

However, Olanrewaju cautioned that testosterone replacement therapy should not be viewed as a one-size-fits-all solution.

"It is essential to tailor treatment to each individual's needs and to monitor patients closely for potential side effects, such as an increased risk of cardiovascular disease or prostate issues."

A psychologist, Dr. Sarah Adeyemi, also noted the psychological impact of andropause, emphasizing the need for mental health support.

"The emotional symptoms of andropause, such as mood swings and depression, can be just as debilitating as the physical symptoms. It is crucial that men have access to mental health support during this transition. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and other therapeutic interventions can be incredibly beneficial in helping men cope with these changes."

Given the significant impact andropause can have on men's health, medical experts advised that more needs to be done to bring this issue to the forefront. Public health campaigns, routine screening for testosterone levels in aging men, and open discussions in medical consultations can help demystify andropause and encourage men to seek the help they need.

MPOX: NCDC Confirms 48 Cases Out Of 1134 Suspected Cases

By Paul Adunwoke

ABUJA-BASED medical doctor and Co-Founder, Impact Driven Young Leaders (IDYL) initiative, Dr. Obinna Ebirim, has said governments at all levels must take proactive and coordinated approach to prevent the spread of monkeypox.

According to the doctor, it is important that federal and state governments fund and strengthen their surveillance systems. "There are state governments that are not allocating any fund for surveillance that helps to identify cases. While international partners like World Health Organisation (WHO) have been instrumental in supporting surveillance in some states, this should not substitute for adequate funding and commitment from state governments themselves," he said.

Mpox, also known as monkeypox, is related to smallpox but typically causes milder

symptoms, including fever, headache and body aches. In severe cases, people can develop painful sores and blisters on the face, chest, hands and genitals. Mpox is typically spread via close skin-to-skin contact.

Ebirim said there is need to strengthen screening at the entry and exit points, especially for passengers coming from other countries or who have recently visited places with confirmed cases.

He stated that mpox vaccination programme should be well coordinated, with a clear strategy for distribution and administration of vaccines, particularly in high-risk areas.

"Governments should also ensure that case management protocols are in place and that health facilities are well-equipped to handle potential cases."

Ebirim said it is important to leverage the outbreak response structures established during the COVID-19 pandemic and other recent

• WHO Says Outbreaks In Africa Might Stop In Next Six Months



outbreaks such as cholera and Lassa fever should be key. "These structures have demonstrated the importance of rapid, organised responses, and they should be adapted and strengthened to address the unique challenges posed by monkeypox," he noted.

He said there is need for multi-sectoral collaboration among stakeholders as this is

essential to ensure a robust response and government has a role in coordinating this collaboration. "This collaboration will include sharing data, best practices and resources," the medical doctor pointed out.

Ebirim noted that there is need for regular training and retraining of health workers in infectious prevention and control (IPC) and outbreak

reporting are also essential. "Health workers should be empowered to act swiftly and effectively, using the knowledge and systems developed during previous outbreaks."

He said health workers play an important role in preventing the spread of diseases and control of outbreaks including monkeypox.

"This should start with updating and applying their knowledge of infectious prevention and control (IPC) and outbreak response protocols. Health workers should proactively seek out opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills. This preparation is essential for them to identify potential cases early and respond appropriately."

Ebirim said health workers should also leverage the trust they have built within their communities to disseminate accurate and timely information about monkeypox. Public awareness and educa-

tion are key components of disease prevention and outbreak control, and health workers are uniquely positioned to lead these efforts. "These preventive measures include hygiene practices, safe handling of animals, and the importance of seeking medical care, thereby reducing the risk of transmission at the community level".

He said: "Health workers must engage in disease surveillance, contact tracing and case reporting. They should work closely with national center for disease control and prevention (NCDC) and other related agencies to ensure that suspected cases are quickly identified, reported, and managed. This includes utilizing the outbreak response structures that were established during the COVID-19 pandemic and other recent outbreaks, in which Nigeria showed that it could effectively in mobilising rapid responses."

Broadcast Content Across Border

Compiled by Shaibu Hussein

Angelina Jolie To Be Honoured At TIFF

CEO of the Toronto International Film Festival Cameron Bailey has announced that the festival is honoured to present Angelina Jolie, the multi-hyphenate Academy Award-winning actor, Tony Award-winning producer, writer, director, and humanitarian with the TIFF Tribute Award in Impact Media. Previously bestowed upon such luminaries as Pedro Almodóvar, Mira Nair, and Alanis Obomsawin, the TIFF Tribute Award in Impact Media is presented by Anne-Marie Canning and recognises leadership in creating a union between social impact and cinema. Jolie will be honoured at the 2024 TIFF Tribute Awards on Sunday, September 8, at Fairmont Royal York Hotel and marks the final honoree announcement. She will be honoured alongside Amy Adams, Cate Blanchett, Durga Chew-Bose, David Cronenberg, Clément Ducol and Camille Jharrel Jerome, Mike Leigh, and Zhao Tao, with Sandra Oh serving as the inaugural Honorary Chair of the fundraising gala. “Angelina Jolie is a multifaceted talent who has entertained audiences for decades while consistently using her platform to champion important causes,” said Bailey. “We are honoured to present her with the 2024 TIFF Tribute Award in Impact Media. This award recognizes her exceptional achievements in filmmaking, and her unwavering commitment for positive change, solidifying her status as a veritable humanitarian and global force to be reckoned with.” Jolie returns to the 49th edition of the Toronto International Film Festival, presented by Rogers, following the success of her TIFF 2017 features, *First They Killed My*

Father, which she wrote and directed; and *The Breadwinner*, which she executive produced. Her dedication to social justice is evident through her films *Unbroken* (2014), *In the Land of Blood and Honey* (2011), and her latest project *Without Blood*, which will have its World Premiere on September 8.

Femi Adebajo's Echoes Wins At JOMBA Digital Open Horizons

THE 26th JOMBA! Contemporary Dance Experience, which is currently running in Durban, announced its JOMBA! Digital Open Horizons “pick of the platform” awards for 2024 on Wednesday, August 28. The programme was screened on the festival's YouTube Channel and is available for the remainder of the festival until 8 September. The Digital Open Horizons platform invites digital submissions of original works from new and established dance-makers across Africa. These works, which last three to eight minutes, were reviewed by an independent jury and seven selected for this platform at the festival: *Lacuna* by Louise Coetzer (South Africa, Darkroom Contemporary), *Echoes* by Femi Adebajo (Nigeria). As the *Mountain Stood Still* by Dave Gardner/Jacques Batista (South Africa), *Internal Struggles* by Diana Gaya (Kenya), *Yolk* by Skyla Buchanan (SA/Cyprus), *Moments* by Marcia Mzindle (South Africa) and *Blue Funk* by Louise Coetzer (South Africa, Darkroom Contemporary). The jury selected *Yolk* in first place, *Echoes* in second and *Lacuna* in third as the “picks of the plat-

form”. *Yolk* was selected in first place for its “innovation, beautiful cinematography and interesting settings as well as its subject matter”. Filmed by Beatrice Mariani, and choreographed, directed and edited by Skyla Buchanan a contemporary trained dancer, practitioner and choreographer working with a multidisciplinary approach to performance. *Yolk* is set against the oppressive heat of summer, and explores the link between womanhood and fertility. Adebajo's *Echoes*, performed by Adebajo and Janed Aduayom, was awarded second place. This work was selected for its “interesting pace and rhythm as well as its use of location and space and his creation of tension and suspense.” Adebajo is a creative multidisciplinary artist who focuses on exploring art as a medium of connection to the human mind. *Echoes* provides a creative representation of the concept of pressure and its influence on both the physical bodies and mental states of individuals. It aims to offer a powerful and artistic insight into the human experience, highlighting the effects of pressure and its significance in our lives. In third place was *Lacuna* choreographed and performed by Mthuthuzel November, directed by Louise Coetzer with videography: Oscar O’Ryan, and produced by Darkroom. The festival offers a range of workshops, talks and performances and runs until 8 September. All festival information is available on the festival website: <https://jomba.ukzn.ac.za/>

Tokyo International Film Festival Introduces Women Empowerment Section

THE Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF), to be held from October 28 to November 6, has announced that it will introduce the new Women's Empowerment section at its upcoming 37th edition. TIFF is also excited to reveal that this year's Nippon Cinema Now section will shine a spotlight on the works of director Irie Yu, one of Japan's most genre-diverse creators. In 2021, TIFF became the first Asian film festival to sign with Collectif 50/50, an international organisation promoting gender equality in the film industry, and the festival's new Women's Empowerment section will take TIFF a further step forward on gender issues. Women's Empowerment, co-hosted by the Tokyo Metropolitan government, will highlight films directed by female filmmakers and/or on female-focused films. With this section, TIFF aims to celebrate women's achievements and hopes it will further expand the horizons of future cinema. Andrijana Cvetkovikj, the first Macedonian ambassador to Japan and former jury member of Amazon Prime Video Take One Award at the 34th TIFF in 2021, will serve as the Women's Empowerment senior programmer, selecting seven new films to be showcased as the main feature.



Angelina Jolie

Adrejina

Femi Adebajo



National Theatre refurbished facility

By Gregory Austin Nwakunor

“THIS is beautiful,” the delighted culture activist and former editor of *The Guardian on Sunday* heaved after seeing the work at the National Theatre, now Wole Soyinka Centre for Culture and the Creative Arts, which is already 95 per cent completed.

“The Bankers Committee has really done well for the sector. When we were protesting that the place should not be sold, we knew a restoration of the facility was the best option. If it had been sold to private investors, the whole place would have been balkanised and facility cannibalised,” Anikulapo, an advocate of culture renaissance and strong creative industry, said.

He still remembers gleefully *AjoFest* sponsored by Fred Agbeyegbe, with the late Jide Ogungbade as artistic director; the festival gave a host of Nigerian artistes their break-out. *AjoFest*, which held in 1986, remains one of the biggest celebrations of Nigerian plays the facility has ever hosted.

Sadly, FESTAC '77 seemed to be the most spectacular event held at the place since its opening on September 30, 1976, as the infrastructure kept dilapidating until it became a national ruin and embarrassment.

The elegant structure that was built with an excellent outlook for the creative industries, the contract was signed on April 24, 1973. The main building contractor was a Bulgarian company called TechnoExportStroy. The chief architect was Stefan Kolchev, the same person who designed the Palace of Sports and Culture in Varna, Bulgaria.

A team led by the then Minister of Information, Anthony Enahoro, was said to have visited Europe and the United States to look around and get ideas on what a National Theatre should look like. In 1972, the delegation was said to have visited Bulgaria, and was highly impressed by the Palace of Sports and Culture (completed in 1968) in Varna, a coastal city like Lagos, and decided to build a similar structure in Nigeria.

Its design was based on a Bulgarian sports centre. It consists a main auditorium, which could seat 5,000, a large Conference/Banquet Hall; 2 Cinema/film Halls, Exhibitions Halls, and a variety of other rooms. The National Theatre also accommodated Radio and Television studios and recording facilities. The Theatre car parks had space for 5,000 cars. There was a Police Station to ensure a high level of security and a clinic, which had a former minister and senator of the Federal Republic as the resident doctor.

The whole building was embellished throughout with Nigerian art works that included those of some Nigeria's foremost visual artists including Erhabor Emopkae, Yusuf Grillo, Lamidi Fakeye and Bruce Onabrakpeya. These transformed an architectural masterpiece into a museum and art gallery.

Visible from the Second Mainland Bridge, popularly called Eko Bridge, which connects Lagos Island and the mainland, the National Theatre is an iconic modern structure, which rises up to seven storeys, more than 31 meters into the sky.

Chairman, Editorial Board of *The Nation* Newspapers, Dr Sam Omatseye, reminiscing during a recent tour of the facility after years of rot and ruin, said: “Nigerians called the design ‘Fila Gowon’, because its shape was like a General’s cap.”

After General Yakubu Gowon was overthrown on July 29, 1975, it was later known as ‘Fila Murtala’ (after General Murtala Muhammed, who took over from Gowon).

The National Theatre received diverse entertainers, artists and actors who flocked the edifice regularly to showcase

Four Years After, Bankers’ Committee Completes Restoration Of National Theatre, Set For Unveiling

This was about a national monument that had been left abandoned, and we thought anything and everything that needed to be done should be done to restore this to its glory.

We were shocked at the scale of the work that needed to be done, but we were also impressed by the possibility that it represented. As you’ve seen, this is one of the largest-scale projects of this type anywhere on the continent. The standard to which it has been restored is global.

their works and talents. It became a go-to theatre hub for stakeholders in the creative industry, especially American music artistes such as Shalamar, Skypop, among others.

The trajectory of the facility changed because of lack of maintenance and other factors that are often ascribed as ‘Nigerian’.

“Not sure how to run the National Theatre as a theatre, the Ministry of Culture and Social Welfare - between 1976 and 1990 - moved in and used it as an administrative office block. At one point, the office of the minister, Mamman Anka, was actually in the building! The movement through the building of large numbers of people who had no sense of the cultural and historical significance of the place soon took its toll on the fabric,” said former Managing Director, Prof Ahmed Yerima in his lecture: ‘The Nigerian National Theatre At Iganmu: The Legacy of A Festival, A Challenge to the Future.’

“By 1991, there had been no routine maintenance of the building by the Bulgarians responsible or anyone else and it gradually ceased to function. The roof of the main auditorium was the first to crack: water fell into the hall, and began to destroy the stage, the seats, the lighting and amplifica-

tion system, and priceless art works,” Yerima added.

“Soon the crack on the auditorium roof spread to the other wings. The floor of the National Theatre became saturated, and a safety hazard. To prevent anyone being electrocuted, the mains supply lines were severed. Soon the central air-conditioning failed. This meant that the building - designed to operate in a temperate climate - became unbearable hot.

“It was described as an ‘oven’, and there were no possibilities for adaptation: openings could not be made to allow for cross ventilation. The ‘architectural masterpiece’, the ‘major legacy of Festac 77’, was gradually becoming a structural nightmare, a millstone around the necks of theatre lovers.”

To save the National Theatre, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Social Welfare established the National Theatre and the National Troupe of Nigeria as separate parastatals. They were allocated separate budgets and charged to run the National Theatre as a semiprofessional state outfit. A management team of five was appointed, led by Jimmy Atte, a senior television producer, who became the first independent General Manager.

Yerima, however, pointed out that the movement of the nation’s capital from Lagos to Abuja meant that the attention of the government shifted. “Because of this, funds voted for maintenance of and for activities at the National Theatre were drastically reduced.”

Decades later, the monument witnessed noticeable deterioration and a sorry state.

In 1999, when he came back as civilian leader, Obasanjo, who opened the facility, found the situation, had deteriorated very seriously. “In anger, he adopted a ‘privatisation’ policy and put the National Theatre at the top of then ‘for sale’ list - followed by Tafawa Balewa Square, and the International Trade Fair Complex. To manage the sell-off, Obasanjo set up the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE).

The idea of sale prompted furious protests from artists’ community to save the place in 2001. This long, enduring protest, which lasted for two decades, was galvanised after the September Arts Stampede of Committee for Relevant Arts (CORA), which held at the National Theatre field with Coalition of Nigerian Artists (CONA) in the forefront.

After 20 years of battle with stakeholders in the creative economy, the Federal Government handed over the theatre complex, alongside the 44 acres of barely developed land, to the Bankers’ Committee in July 2020 for renovation and recreating of the complex into a job and wealth creation ven-

ture for the creative industry and related industries.

Assuring the public of the sincerity of purpose of the Bankers' Committee and the CBN on delivering that work would commence in early 2021 and would be completed and commissioned in November 2022 by President Muhammadu Buhari.

Last Wednesday, August 28, 2024, the Bankers' Committee announced the completion of the restoration and upgrading of facilities at the National Theatre. The renovation works cover different spaces, including the 5,000-seater main bowl, which is now 4600, over 3,000-seater banquet hall, two exhibition halls, three cinema halls, VIP spaces, actors' changing rooms, industrial kitchen, over 300 new toilet cubicles, clinic, fire station, lobbies within the four National Theatre entrances and extensive roof repairs.

Speaking during a tour of the monument, Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of Sterling Bank Group representing Bankers' Committee, Mr. Abubakar Suleiman, disclosed, "when we approached government for this opportunity, we had no idea how we were going to make money. It wasn't about making money. This was about a national monument that had been left abandoned, and we thought anything and everything that needed to be done should be done to restore this to its glory.

"We were shocked at the scale of the work that needed to be done, but we were also impressed by the possibility that it represented. As you've seen, this is one of the largest-scale projects of this type anywhere on the continent. The standard to which it has been restored is global," he added. "The standard to which this edifice has been restored is world class."

For him, the renovation of National Theatre by the Bankers' Committee showcases what is possible with the power of patriotism and collective responsibility on the part of the private sector in partnering with the Federal and Lagos State governments, "to reignite hope and revive some of our national monuments and assets."

Suleiman, who spoke while touring the complex with editors of national newspapers, said: "The National Theatre, which represents one of our highest points in terms of ambition, was in the state of disrepair. We are committed to bring it back to world-class standards. This would arguably be one of the most complex and most successful projects of that nature. This is putting culture back on the map in a big way.

"It's not just the theatre; this is one of the biggest and most complex event centres you can have in this country. We will bring it to the public very soon."

The bank chief explained that the interest of the Bankers' Committee was not about making money but to salvage a national monument that had been in a state of disrepair for decades.

On how the facility would be maintained after the completion of the ongoing renovation, restoration and refurbishment, Suleiman said it would not be managed by either government or the Bankers' Committee.

The banker assured fellow Nigerians that it would be managed professionally. He affirmed that such an option was considered in the process and was not an afterthought.

"We imagined what it would be like to manage a project like this and we have lined up partners that will ensure this is run to an international standard," Suleiman said.

Also speaking during the tour, Managing Director, Lotus Bank Ltd., Mrs Kafilat Araoye, who equally represented the Bankers' Committee, described "the renovation of the National Theatre as a rebirth of a National Treasure and a restoration of our Culture and Heritage. We are very excited about the completion of the renovation and upgrade of facilities of the National Theatre, we are indeed very proud of the work we have done here."

The facilities were upgraded to match with the best standards of theatre and performance in the world. The upgrading includes the replacement of the entire Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system, upgrade of the fire safety standards, power, replacement of the water supply and sewage systems, upgrading of interior design with the installations of Audio Video Lighting (AVL), world stage engineering system, 17 passenger lifts, solar power, new furniture for spaces and restoration of artworks including those on the internal wall panels and the building façade. External works supporting the National Theatre were also carried out in the refurbishment of the three entrance gatehouses, constructions of four themed landscapes, car park block (250 cars), the ring road, and installation of external street lightings and CCTV cameras.

The architect in charge of the project, Mr. Ade Laoye of ECAD Architects, said, "the project had reached 95 per cent completion. It has been on for four years, it is a national monument and the idea is to restore a national monument."

According to President of National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP), Israel Eboh, protecting the place is the next step. "It would require constant maintenance of the structure and the facilities that have just been installed. It is not just to say we have a world class facility. How well are we going to sustain it, how well are we going to maintain the facility and how well are we going to

engage people who are competent to manage the facility."

Eboh also raised the need for a well-trained, competent person or people to run the venue as a place for creative activities. "These people should be competent enough in terms of programming and not to make it too expensive that it becomes a preserve of just a handful of people. When you talk of a creative facility, it should be accessible."

Speaking with a theatre practitioner, who chose to remain anonymous, he said, "maintenance is key; so that we don't go back to zero level again."

He advised the Bankers' Committee to shop for consultants who will manage the facility on consultancy basis. "There is need to have somebody, who has knowledge of theatre facility management. Not those who lack passion or those who believe it is our thing and should be returned to us. The committee should go for those who see theatre as work and should be taken seriously. The management of National Theatre, when handed over to government, should not be for political thugs and ballot snatchers. It must be for serious minded facility managers. MUSON Centre has remained relevant for over 40 years because it has been run strictly as business," he canvassed.

On stakeholders having access to the National Theatre, Ayodeji Ewenla, a theatre practitioner, said, "the facility is better than alternative ones that sprung up when the place went down; so, it should not charge less than what others are. But definitely not more."

According to the Artistic Director of Arojah Royal Theatre, Abuja, Jerry Adesewo, "the place should be made affordable to practitioners. This is a national monument different from an event centre that the money expended has to be made back."



Cuban President, Diaz-Canel Confers National Medal On Soyinka

ON August 23, in faraway Havana, Cuba, the venerable Nigerian writer and winner of Nobel Prize in Literature, Prof. Wole Soyinka, received at Casa de las Americas, the Haydee Santamaria Medal, awarded by Miguel Diaz-Canel, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and President of the Republic, on behalf of Cuba and at the proposal of the Minister of Culture.

As reported by the Presidency on X, Jorge Fornet, director of

the Centre for Literary Research of Casa de las Americas, in his remarks of praise, said, "awarding Soyinka the medal that bears the name of that extraordinary woman is an act of justice that honors us."

After the ceremony, Diaz-Canel held a meeting with Soyinka, where he thanked him for his visit in such a complex moment for Cuba.

"It is the visit of a brother who has always been fighting for the most just causes," the president noted.

The Haydee Santamaria Medal is conferred on national and foreign citizens and groups, who, over the years, have shared the main objectives of the Casa: the enrichment, defense and integration of the genuine cultures of our region and the entire South.

This event also celebrates Soyinka's 90th birthday and the 60th anniversary of his first visit to Cuba, where he has returned on several occasions.

The Nobel Laureate in Literature, who during the meeting, had stated that "Cuba is also my home", equally referred to the strong ties that unite the island and Africa.

He was also awarded Cuba's Union of Writers and Artists's international prize. The 63rd anniversary of the union coincided with presentation of organisation's Dulce María Loynaz International Prize to the Nigerian poet, Soyinka, who, on receiving the prize from the president of Uneac, Marta

Bonet, expressed his happiness and also his heart at being back in the bosom of a creative family.

The Nobel Laureate confessed to having had great political and cultural adventures in Cuba, recognising the indispensable role played by the Antillean nation in the liberation of the African continent, something that, according to the critic and essayist, "we must not allow ourselves to forget, because Cuba has shown that both the pen and the weapons of liberation count in achieving the sovereignty and self-determination of our peoples."

Shortly before the award ceremony, theatre critic and theorist Omar Valiño described Soyinka in his eulogy as a 'consistent man', highlighting the sincerity and intelligence of his work, which draws on the ancestral wisdom of Yoruba culture.

The director of the José Martí National Library of Cuba, in a cultural ceremony in front of writers and artists, recalled the words of the Nigerian poet when he said that "as is well known, Cuba is part of the African continent by will, not by chance," so his vision - he said - adjusts a geography beyond the physical space, synthesising the centuries-old relationship between Mother Africa and the Caribbean island.

"His phrase, like no other, sums up the bond of solidarity and detachment that Fidel and the Revolution have maintained for the benefit of the black continent, through a military, medical and educational epic that has gone down in history."

Soyinka's political or civil struggles, which once cost him persecution or imprisonment, are a landmark for present and future generations, so, it is a priceless privilege to have him among Cubans and Africans today.



Soyinka and UNEAC President, Marta Bonet



Soyinka and Cuban President

PMAN: Crisis Deepens As NEC Suspends Neji, Azzay, Ruggedman Over Misconduct

By Daniel Anazia

THE crisis currently rocking the Performing Musicians Employers Association of Nigeria (PMAN) has worsened as the National Executive Council (NEC) of the Association has announced the indefinite suspension of some of its members.

Recall that the NEC had, in a statement issued on Thursday, halted suspension of the of association's President, Mr Pretty Okafor, who the National Working Committee (NWC) had earlier suspended over alleged financial misconduct among other offences, and directed that status quo be maintained over the suspension.

In a statement, it directed the NWC to "maintain the status quo regarding the suspension of Okafor and the Chapter governors/sole administrators. No further actions should be taken by the

NWC concerning these suspensions until a full hearing is conducted."

The NWC had last week, suspended Okafor over alleged financial misconduct, among other offences, and appointed Sunny Neji, who is the first vice president, to assume the role of Acting President.

But the NEC would later set up a five-member National Disciplinary Committee (NDC) to investigate Okafor's suspension and the allegations leveled against him.

In the statement on Thursday, NEC said findings by the NDC revealed that members of NWC had "attempted to undermine the association's integrity."

According to the statement, Sunny Neji, Zaaki Azzay (2nd Vice President), Michael 'Ruggedman' Stephen (National Ex-Officio) and JFO Baba Ojonorgua (National Treasurer) have been suspended after being "found guilty of

misconduct."

The NEC also said it has relieved the General Secretary, Boniface Itodo; and the Assistant General Secretary, Faga Bem Paul; of their duties with immediate effect. The Association commended Okafor for demonstrating "exceptional leadership" and his "ability to manage the crisis effectively."

"The NDC's report shed light on several misconducts by NWC members, including the unauthorised suspension of President Okafor and other chapter governors who opposed their actions."

"A significant allegation surfaced when a State Chapter Governor confronted NWC

members over receiving payments of approximately N30 million each. This claim was initially denied by the NWC members, but the NDC obtained a payment schedule titled 'NWC PAYMENT

ALLOWANCE dated 3rd June, 2022', which corroborated the allegation."



With Billiki Music Video, Lee Brown Beams Searchlight On Child Abuse In Africa

By Somtochukwu Egwuatu

RENOWNED Jazz, Blues and Folk music artiste, Justina Lee Brown, has released a poignant new music video for her latest single, *Billiki*.

The video, which premiered on July 27, 2024, brings to life the haunting narrative of the song, capturing the essence of Brown's powerful message on child insecurity and abuse in Nigeria and across Africa.

Billiki is a stirring ballad that intertwines personal pain with a broader social commentary. The video visually amplifies the song's emotional depth, featuring evocative scenes that reflect the tragic story of the eponymous character; a young girl who goes missing while fetching water for her family. Through striking imagery and Brown's soul-stirring performance, the video lays bare the harsh realities faced

by many children in underprivileged communities.

The visual narrative aligns with the song's exploration of serious issues such as child abuse, sexual harassment and violence. Scenes in the video poignantly depict the vulnerability of young girls, drawing a parallel to real-life tragedies like the deaths of Tina and Uwa, whose stories have shocked the nation.

Brown's deep personal connection to the song is evident throughout the video.

Born in the impoverished slum of Ajegunle City, Lagos, and raised by a teenage mother, Brown's own experiences of hardship and abuse inform the raw emotion in 'Billiki'. The video's stark portrayal of these experiences

offers a powerful reflection on her journey from those harrowing beginnings to her current success.

Speaking about the video, Brown said: "The community should be a sanctuary,

but for many, including myself, it was a place of fear and suffering. 'Billiki' is not just a song; it's a narrative born from my reality and the struggles of countless others. This video aims to give a voice to those who have been silenced and to shine a light on the urgent need for change."

The video's cinematic quality and evocative imagery enhance the song's haunting melodies and introspective lyrics. With its combination of striking visuals and emotional storytelling, it invites viewers to confront uncomfortable truths and reflect on the need for greater protection and support for vulnerable children.

Billiki is more than a music video; it is a call to action and a beacon of hope. The remix EP of *Billiki* started streaming on digital platforms from June 19, 2024, continuing Brown's mission to raise awareness and inspire change.



Jaya Releases New Single, *Don't Tell*, Video

By Jeremiah Kehinde

NIGERIAN artiste and songwriter, Jaya is taking the music world by storm with the release of his highly anticipated single and music video, *Don't Tell*.

Released under Disruptive Label and distributed by Dapper Music, this marks a significant milestone in Jaya's burgeoning career, both in Nigeria and internationally.

Jaya introduces his AfroGlobal sound – a dynamic blend of Afrobeat and Dancehall in this captivating undercover love story. The track and its visually stunning video offer an immersive experience, showcasing

Jaya's ability to blend vulnerability with a confident, charis-

matic persona seamlessly. The single's infectious rhythm, relatable lyrics and engaging storyline invite listeners into a world where love is passionate and discreet.

Produced by the powerhouse trio of Ty Jilla, Rob "WhooDat" Jua and Warren Zavala, *Don't Tell*, highlights Jaya's versatility and artistic depth. The music video amplifies the AfroGlobal aesthetic, reinforcing Jaya's role in the global expansion of African music.

Building up to the release of *Don't Tell*, leading independent publishing company, Prescription Songs, in partnership with Disruptive Label Publishing, officially signed Jaya.

This global publishing deal positions him alongside elite artistes such as Doja Cat and Fridayy, underscoring his rapid ascent in the music industry. Jaya has also co-pro-

duced and contributed vocals to a track on rap superstar Da Baby's upcoming album, further demonstrating his multi-talented prowess.

With major labels showing keen interest, Jaya is poised to become one of Nigeria's most prominent global stars. *Don't Tell* is just the beginning of what promises to be a landmark career. *Don't Tell* is available on all major streaming platforms.

David Johnson, professionally known as Jaya, is a singer and songwriter sensation from Nigeria. His music blends Afrobeats, Dancehall, R&B, and Pop, giving it a global appeal.

Inspired by artistes such as Fela Kuti, Wizkid, Drake and Chris Brown, Jaya's diverse style embodies the essence of Africa. His musical journey began as a church drummer, evolving into a talented singer from a young age.



OBIDI: Star Set For The Sky

By Somtochukwu Egwuatu

WHEN he dropped his first single titled 'Love Bonanza' in 2020 during the worldwide lockdown occasioned by Covid-19 pandemic, it took the music industry by storm. Other songs such as 'Ova You', 'Don't Hesitate', 'Finish Me' and 'Hold You Down' followed in succession. That was when, Otubelu Obidi Stanley simply known as Obidi announced his entrance into the scene.

His latest cover of the hit song, 'Ogechi' by Boypee, Brown Joel and Hyce has further confirmed his artistic prowess. "I decided to do a cover of 'Ogechi' because it is one of the biggest songs at the moment, and I was surprised with the kind of attention it has generated on the Social Media space since I posted it," Obidi said in an interview recently at an event in Lagos.

The young artiste took 'Ogechi' to another height in the less than a minute cover like what Davido did to the same song in the 'Ogechi' remix.

He has since caught the attention of a big artiste cum record label owner who has initiated a move to bring him into his music family that boasts of top young stars at the moment. "Because talks are ongoing, it will be unwise at this point to drop his (record label owner) name, but just to confirm the news, yes, we are currently in the middle of negotiations. He loved my 'Love Bonanza' and other of my works, so if eventually we

get down to working together, some new touches would be added to some of my works and then we would be good to go. Am I excited? Yes, I am because it would be the biggest break I have been looking for if this works out for good."

He has a special sentimental attachment to 'Love Bonanza' especially when it was played back to back at an edition of Big Brother Naija reality television show. "Well, I was excited, I was thrilled because the housemates were truly enjoying the song. I thank the organisers of the show and the DJ too for that, because that is the kind of visibility any artiste, especially upcoming ones needed."

His dream is to become one of the biggest music stars in Nigeria. "That is the dream of any artiste, to be among the best, to be in the top league of stars. In fact, that is the dream

of anybody in any endeavour be it in the corporate world, sports or music, so, yes, that is the end game, the target; to be among the best or the best in your field."



Ramsey Nouah Makes Bold Directing In *Tòkunbó*

By Eniola Daniel

IF you're a lover of Nollywood films, you will not be a stranger to the name 'Ramsey Nouah'. With decades of memorable characters under his belt, Nouah has garnered numerous accolades and fans.

This acclaimed actor has decided not once, but thrice, to go behind the scenes to create magic and leave the stage for other actors, with his latest film *Tòkunbó*, as his attempt at a directorial hat-trick.

What makes *Tòkunbó* distinct from his previous films is that it is not a remake of a Nollywood classic. In 2019, Nouah made his directorial debut with *Living in Bondage: Breaking Free*, a remake of the 1992 classic *Living in Bondage*.

After the film's release, the posi-

tive reviews rushed in and then came awards and nominations.

Nouah was not through, so, in 2020, he did it yet again with *Rattlesnake: The Ahanna story*, a remake of the 1995 Nigerian classic action thriller *Rattlesnake*. Like the previous film, this one garnered many awards and nominations including an African Magic Viewers Choice Awards (AMVCA) for best actor for the lead, Stan Nze. To date, it is regarded as one of the best Nigerian films of 2020.

This time, however, Nouah is veering away from the classics that earned him a reputation as a stellar director and telling an original story created by Story Story Hub.

Released on global streaming service, Netflix on August 23, *Tòkunbó* tells the story of an ex-car smuggler who is given three hours to deliver a government official's daughter to her captor or else his family will suffer the consequences.

Nouah is also working with a stellar cast led by Gideon Okeke, who plays the titular protagonist. Other prolific actors including Chidi Mokeme, Funlola Aofiyebi-Raimi, Nobert Young, Majid Michel, Adunni Ade, Ivie Okujaye, Tosin Adeyemi, Stanley 'funnybone' Chibunna, Darasimi Nadi and Aaron Sunday also star in the film.



Brand's Connect Party Lights Up Uyo

THE Connect Party, hosted by "33" Export Lager Beer, held at Uyo, Akwa Ibom, drew a crowd eager to partake in an evening filled with entertainment and the refreshing taste of "33" Export Beer. From the moment guests arrived, the atmosphere was charged with excitement.

The event kicked off with interactive games that not only entertained but also fostered connections among participants. Winners of these games were rewarded with fantastic prizes. One of the major attractions was the much-anticipated raffle draw, which saw numerous guests walk away with exciting gifts. The raffle added an extra layer of thrill to the night, with every ticket holding the potential for a big win.

The highlight of the night was undoubtedly the comedy face-off, which pitted some of the region's top comedians against each other in a duo battle of humor. The crowd was in stitches as the George Talent Team, featuring comedians George Talent and Rufus, went head-to-head with the Amicable Team, composed of comedians Amicable and Majesty to deliver their best jokes, each vying for the top spot.

After a heated competition, an online voting poll was conducted as the audience visited the @33ExportNigeria on Instagram to vote for their deserved team winner on the night. The Amicable Team emerged victorious with 80 per cent of the votes, claiming the grand prize of N400,000 while George Talent Team took second place with 20 per cent, earning a well-deserved N200,000.

Throughout the night, MC Casino, supported by MC Charliebaz, thrilled the audience with a series of hilarious jokes. DJ Cheryl kept the party alive with a mix of tunes that had everyone on their feet, dancing and enjoying the evening. The event also provided a platform for upcoming musicians and comedians in the region to showcase their talents, with performances that added to the vibrant atmosphere and allowed these creatives to connect with new



BBNAIJA S9: Aces, DoubleKay, Radicals, Wannix Handi On The Chopping Block...Who Goes Tomorrow

By Daniel Anazia

AS the ongoing reality TV show, Big Brother Naija (BBNaija) Season 9 dubbed 'No Loose Guard' inch closer to the halfway mark, the dynamics and relationships among the housemates are only getting juicier.

Whether it's playful banter, sneaky shade, sly manipulations or the ever-evolving love connections, the house is filled with all sorts of drama. Every day in the house reveals a new wave of drama and emotional entanglements, as relationships and friendships continue to evolve in surprising ways. The housemates are keeping viewers glued to their TV sets with their romantic tensions and sly manipulations vibes.

Meanwhile, housemates on the chopping block this week include, Aces, DoubleKay, Radicals, and Wannix Handi. They will be facing possible eviction in tomorrow's live eviction show.

On the night, the Radicals had six nominations, a development that shows that are in the bad book of most housemates or they are strong contenders for the N100 million grand prize win. Here is how the nomination went down.

Beta nominated Aces and DoubleKay for the same reasons as HoH Shatoria. Ben mentioned DoubleKay, while Tjay picked Aces. For Chekas it was a fight for the feminine gender. "We have more boys than girls, so we are putting up Aces," Chizoba said firmly. It seems the girls find the Nelita pair (Nelly



and Anita) to be a strong contender.

The Mbadiwe Twins nominated DoubleKay and the Radicals. For Ocee, his issue with DoubleKay on Saturday created an 'atmosphere', while Ozee mentioned that they nominated the Radicals because their altercation with Fairme David on Saturday probably meant that the Radicals would also nominate them.

According to Topher, Aces nominated the Radicals because they have been isolating themselves, while Beta "for the same reason as the last time". One wonders what the reason was last time.

Like guessed, the Radicals went for the Mbadiwe Twins and Wannix Handi. Michky said Wannix Handi are beginning to do

something that irritates him. There is a room drama which he is not letting go anytime soon, following Wannix's spraying of deodorant in the locker area as she try to shade him, claiming the place was smelling after he used the toilet. Fuming over the action, he found a sympathetic ear in Anita.

What started as a small irritation has spiraled into something much bigger, with Michky even citing it as his reason for nominating the twins this week.

As for Fairme David, there is no reason for nominating the Mbadiwe Twins. Though some people might think it's because of the Saturday altercation. "I'm close to them, but not as close as I am to everyone else," he added.

ROSF Honours Onyeka Onwenu With Evening Of Songs

By Tobi Awodipe

THE Rose of Sharon Foundation (ROSF), recently, paid tribute to the late Onyeka Onwenu, popularly known as the 'Elegant Stallion', with a moving 'Evening of Songs'.

Held at the foundation's headquarters in Lagos, the event drew board members of the foundation, of which the late singer was one, friends, widows, staff, family, and well-wishers who gathered to bid her goodbye.

Giving a tribute to the singer who passed on early this month, aged 72, Founder, ROSF, Folorunso Alakija, expressed deep sadness at Onwenu's passing, describing her as a multi-talented individual, singer, songwriter, actress, human rights and social activist, journalist and politician. "I had hoped it would be another 40, 50

years before this would have to be done, but God knows best. We are celebrating the life and times of whom we all fondly knew as the Elegant Stallion; she will be sorely missed," she said.

Alakija said the late Onwenu was also a dedicated philanthropist, strong advocate for women's empowerment, gender equality and protector of women against domestic violence. "She also used her platform to promote children's welfare and healthcare," she added.

Revealing that she met the late Onwenu in the late 80's through a mutual friend before they formally met at her store in Lagos, "She became a customer and a close friend. She loved to look elegant and I am happy to say our friendship grew and spanned over four decades.



TEETH 4 TEETH ... With Justin Akpovi-Esade

That Yoruba Actor's 'Achievement' In Nollywood

RECENTLY, a Nollywood actor in the Yoruba genre, popularly called Jigan Babaoja was angry that someone asked for his achievements in the film industry and this was what he said:

"I'm not a small actor in Nollywood. I have slept with some big actresses in the industry but I won't mention their names."

He continued: "I'm not someone that comes to social media to expose people but I will not tolerate anybody questioning me about my achievements in the movie industry."

And T4T has nothing but accolades to pour on Jigan. He has really and truly achieved a lot in Nollywood. What an Achievement!

Why Is May Edochie Competing Against Self?

IT is high time someone told the estranged wife of Nollywood star, Yul Edochie, May, that she should stop competing against herself thinking she is competing against her husband who appears to have moved on to his second wife, Judy Austen and found comfort there as things look. She should stop listening to the people pushing her to become a circus show on social media because they are

using her. All the single ladies hailing her don't like her; they are out to destroy her permanently. That she has suddenly become an overnight actor and even starred in a movie which her circus handlers are making to look like she has outclassed her husband's feat in Nollywood is an embarrassment. Dear May, live a quiet life, Yul appears to have moved on. Stop allowing some selfish people to use you to make money and also settle some imaginary scores with Yul.

Unending Drama In Mohbad's Family WHEN T4T told you some weeks ago that the last had not been heard about the perennial controversy surrounding the death of Afro pop artiste, Ilerioluwa Aloba, popularly called Mohbad, you may have doubted him. From the ongoing vehement resistance of his 'widow', Wunmi to consent to a paternity test on the son she claimed to have had for him to the battle between Mohbad's father and her over alleged millions and property the artiste left behind, the role of Mohbad and Wunmi's mothers, the bungling of the autopsy exercise, the controversies are just legion.

And the latest was the outburst of Mohbad's mother who is accusing son's 'widow'

of double crossing her to get to Mohbad's property first. "I regret standing by Wunmi because she has betrayed me. She went behind my back to pack all of Mohbad's belongings, and when I confronted her, she rained insults on me", Mohbad's mother reportedly cried out recently in the news.

And T4T is here saying 'ohoyin' (if you are a typical Nigerian, you should understand that). When the 27 year old Mohbad died in September of 2023 in a somewhat controversial manner and was buried and days later exhumed by the police for autopsy and investigation into the cause of his death, several arrests were made including that of Afro pop star, Naira Marley, and his associate, Sam Larry, the nurse and late artiste's friend too. Mohbad's mother decided to pitch camp with Wunmi against Mohbad's father and at a point, even claimed she did not have Mohbad for him. It has been a messy and embarrassing family feud since last year. While Mohbad's father has consistently questioned the paternity of the son Mohbad left behind sired by Wunmi, the artiste's mother had stood by the embattled 'widow' even with her refusal to consent to the DNA test on the child, which to any sane person,

should be a red flag, well, until last week that Wunmi allegedly went behind her back to pack all Mohbad's property, as she claimed.

The battle will be getting more interesting as Wunmi is now going to be facing not only Mohbad's dad, Joseph Aloba, but his now embittered mum who feels betrayed and don't forget that Wunmi's strongest ally, his older sister had since left her camp citing betrayal also. She however still enjoys the backing of two Nollywood actresses, Iyabo Ojo and Tonto Dikeh.

Just sit tight with your popcorn and mineral water, it is going to be a very long series.

What's Wrong In Donating To Bobrisky After Life In Prison?

THERE was an outrage some couple of days ago when controversial cross dresser, Bobrisky, who just finished doing time at the Kirikiri Correctional Centre for abusing the Nigerian naira revealed she, sorry, he, was gifted millions of naira while in prison and on her, sorry again, his release, by fellow celebrities and even a star Super Eagles and Europe based footballer. Several people including VeryDarkBlackMan were disgusted and T4T wondered (still wondering) why?

Lafete

Second EMY Africa Lagos Soiree Holds September 7

By Maria Diamond

If you want something to puff off in Africa, the first place you go to is Nigeria, Latasha Ngwube, EMY Africa's Lagos Soiree (LS) media strategist has said, as she explained the ideology behind the LS initiative and the oncoming second edition set to make another triumphant return to Lagos on Saturday, September 7, 2024.

She said: "The EMY Awards convener, an initiative committed to celebrating African excellence, felt it was time for the whole of Africa to expand but anyone who knows their onions knows that if you want something to puff off in Africa, the first place you go to is Nigeria."

According to her, "Nigeria is a natural first step for them in terms of expanding the brand, creating awareness

and showcasing their work. Lagos is the first stop, which is what gave birth to Lagos Soiree, a night of celebration, glamour, excitement, fashion, music, entertainment, good food, great ambience and networking so that Nigeria who want to be a part of the EMY Awards can be there."

On expectations for LS 2, she said, "we have a bigger mandate. The EMY brand itself has also expanded this year. We

have had the EMY expo earlier on, that is the fashion and retail event, we have had the London Soiree too. So the Lagos Soiree, which is the last stop before they head back to Ghana for the main EMY Awards ceremony October 26, 2024 in Ghana, we have a bigger venue, entertainment, more Ghanaian and Nigeria celebrities coming this year, we have more brands on-board."

Remarking, Founders, EMY Africa, Kojo Soboh, said, "the EMY Africa agenda is to promote African excellence and greatness. The yearly EMY Africa Awards honours men who have demonstrated good values, distinguished themselves in their diverse fields of endeavour and are committed to societal progress. It also gives complementary awards to women who have made an impact in society."

The EMY Africa Awards has in the past nine years elevated countless achievers across local industries, communities, culture, and public service in Africa and beyond by celebrating and spotlighting their inspirational achievements.



Lead consultant, Blanche Aigle Communications Nene Bejide (left); Founder, EMY Africa, Kojo Soboh; Latasha Ngwube and Head of Marketing Mercedes-Benz Nigeria/Weststar Associates Limited Oluwatobi Abimbola.

FashionEVO Partners ACM To Host Fashion Day

By Maria Diamond

TOWARDS spotlighting Nigeria's vibrant and dynamic fashion sector and delivering an unparalleled Fashion Day experience, FashionEVO, a leading platform dedicated to fostering innovation and collaboration in the fashion and creative industries has collaborated with the Africa Creative Market (ACM) to host Fashion Day on September 19, during the ACM 2024 week of activities in Lagos.

FashionEVO has carved out a niche as a vital hub for fashion professionals and creative enthusiasts, offering a space for networking, learning, and showcasing the latest fashion trends. Through its innovative initiatives, FashionEVO is rapidly becoming a cornerstone in the global promotion of African fashion and creative talents.

The curated sessions for FashionEVO's will blend expertise with creativity, featuring renowned experts from the fashion and creative sectors. These specialised sessions will delve into critical topics such as The Future of Fashion in Africa, Innovations in Fashion Technology, Fashion Entrepreneurship, and The Transformative Impact of Social Media on Fashion. Additionally, attendees will benefit from dynamic panel discussions, in-depth masterclasses, and engaging conversations covering Fashion Laws and other crucial elements of the industry. The event will culminate in innovative fashion shows that celebrate creativity and artistry.

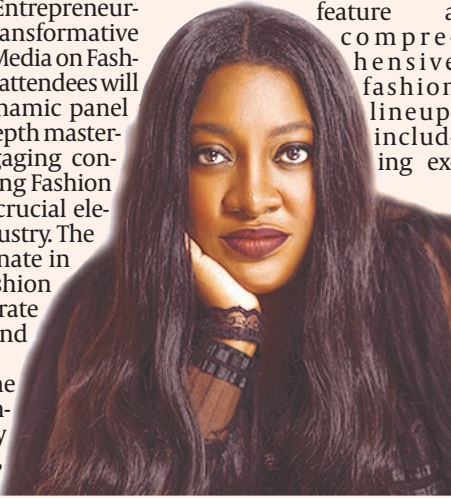
Remarking, the Founder of FashionEvo, Dr. Yetty Ogunnubi, said, "This partner-

ship with ACM marks a significant step forward in highlighting the innovation and creativity thriving in the Nigerian and African fashion industries. In this partnership, FashionEVO will host Fashion Day for the second time at ACM. The event will

feature a comprehensive fashion lineup, including ex-

clusive sessions with key stakeholders, panel discussions, masterclasses, presentations, pop-up shops, fashion competitions, and a spectacular fashion show displaying the work of select designers. We are excited to gather industry leaders and enthusiasts to explore the future of fashion in Africa."

Also speaking, Convener of ACM, Dr. Inya Lawal, "FashionEVO's expertise and innovative approach will undoubtedly enhance our Fashion Day event, providing attendees with invaluable insights and a unique opportunity to learn from the industry's best. The ACM event is known for promoting growth and innovation in Africa's creative sector. This year, the addition of FashionEVO's expert-led masterclasses and sessions will enrich the experience, offering attendees practical knowledge and inspiration to shape the future of African fashion."



Adebule Skill Acquisition Project To Empower 1,000 Lagos West Youths

By Shakirah Adunola

A senator representing Lagos West Senatorial District, Dr Idiat Adebule, has given out 1,000 forms to youths in 28 councils for skills acquisition training. She made this known during Stakeholder's Engagement with her constituents in Ikeja.

The event was witnessed by party leaders and members across the district. According to her, the skills acquisition training would be in five areas namely; Leather work, Confessionary, Fashion Designing, Barbing and Hairdressing. "Our focus is to train 1000 constituent youths in Lagos-West to be proficient in the listed vocational skills before the end of 2024. On completion of the training, the beneficiaries will be supported with starter-packs to make their introduction to the league of employers of labour seamless," she said.



APC GAC member, Chief M.A Taiwo (left); Senator Idiat Adebule; APC Lagos West District Apex Leader Prince Rabiuloluwa and former APC Lagos State Chairman, Otunba Henry Ajomale during Stakeholder's Engagement with her constituent in Ikeja.

Reeling out her activities so far, Senator Adebule stated that 10,000 food packs were distributed throughout the 28 councils as an intervention to cushion the effect of high cost of living for residents of the district.

She said: "I have also ensured continuous engage-

ment with the grassroots through implementation of various social intervention programmes in support of our people at the grassroots. Some of the people centered interventions include: regular distribution of grains and other items, as well as cash gifts during major celebra-

tions such as Christmas, Eid-ul-Adha, and others since December, 2022.

In each of these celebrations between 750 and 1000 bags of rice were distributed to constituents including party members, CDC/CDA's and other stakeholders across the Senatorial District.

ICre8 Conference Unveils Viable Future For Creative Industries

By Sunday Aikulola

NAKESTUDIOS held its inaugural iCre8 conference, recently, with the theme: "Exploring the transformative power of creativity in shaping the future of industries." The conference had industry experts share major insights into the creative industries, its role in the society and how viable means of livelihood can be achieved.

Seasoned professionals from photography, public relations, finance, tech, digital arts and events all graced the occasion offering insights into their creative process, experiences and ideas. Opening the conference, the convener of iCre8 conference, Boluwaji Apanisile, gave a welcome address, which was immediately followed by a keynote speech by Jide Benson, a prolific public relations expert. He quickened the hearts and ears of the attendees with his charge

which paved the way for the sessions to get running.

Apanisile moderated the first session which had Iroko Adesola, Oluwaseun Adetifa, Tolu Olorundnero and Jide Benson give insights into personal branding, public relations, nurturing creative ideas and placing oneself on an evolving platform so as to meet the ever demanding industry.

The experiences and accomplishments of the panelists in the first session were inspiring and educative as attendees got the needed fuel to pursue their creative passion with newfound zeal.

After a successful first session a break followed, which provided an avenue for networking as attendees met with peers, mentors, and industry experts.

The second session moderated by Apanisile took place shortly after and it featured experts who shed lights on tech, finance and digital arts.



Panelists: Tunji Ekeade (left); Gbemiga Agbedejobi; Convener, Boluwaji Apanisile and another panelist, Johnson Owwoeye during the iCre8 conference in Lagos.

Foundation Unveils Programme To Equip Students With Online Safety Skills

By Josephine Amaole

THE NerdzFactory Foundation, in partnership with Access Corporation, has launched the DigiSafe Programme to equip secondary school students with the essential knowledge and skills needed to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

Speaking at the launch, Director of NerdzFactory Foundation, Ade Olowojoba, emphasised the importance of the programme, noting that in today's digital age, it is crucial for young people to be well-informed about online risks.

He expressed optimism that the DigiSafe Programme would leave a lasting impact on students, empowering them to navigate the digital world with confidence and caution.

His words: "This innovative initiative is focused on promoting online safety and digital literacy among secondary school students in Lagos

State and Ilorin, Kwara State.

"As more young people are exposed to the internet, the risks associated with online interactions have become a significant concern for educators and parents alike. Recognising the need for proactive measures, the DigiSafe Programme was developed to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

"The DigiSafe Programme adopts a comprehensive approach, starting with direct engagement with students through school assemblies and interactive sessions. In these sessions, students are educated about various aspects of online safety, including the importance of privacy, the risks of cyberbullying, and how to identify and avoid online scams. The goal is to foster a deep understanding of these issues and to encourage students to adopt safe online practices."



A cross section of students and educators at the Digital-Safety sensitisation session

Monarch Laments Sideline Of Traditional Rulers In Governance



Emir of Lafia, Hon Justice Sidi Bage Muhammad I (left); Obi of Onitsha, His Majesty, Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Ugochukwu Achebe; His Majesty, Ogiame Atuwatse III, Olu of Warri Kingdom; Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) President, Mr. Yakubu Maikyau and Ooni of Ife, His Majesty Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi after a panel of discussion at the NBA conference 2024 with the theme: Pressing Forward in Lagos.

THE Olu of Warri, His Majesty, Ogiame Atuwatse III, has made a compelling case for the constitutional empowerment of Nigeria's traditional justice system.

Speaking during a distinguished panel session, at the 2024 Annual General Conference of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) in Lagos, with the theme 'Pressing Forward', which included other revered monarchs such as Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, the *jájá* II and Ooni of Ife, His Majesty Igwe Nnaemeka Alfred Ugochukwu Achebe, the Obi of Onitsha, and Justice Sidi Bage Muhammad (rtd.), the Emir of Lafia, the Olu of Warri, highlighted the pressing need for an introspective approach to governance that re-embraces traditional institutions.

In his address, Ogiame Atuwatse III articulated the divine symbolism embodied by

traditional rulers, asserting that they are, to an extent, representatives of the divine on earth

He remarked, "God, being a lawgiver, mandates that we, as cultural umpires, reflect His methods of law, codes, and justice. While common law has its merits, I have personally observed inconsistencies that merit closer examination."

Reflecting on Nigeria's journey to independence, the Olu of Warri lamented the gradual sidelining of traditional rulers from the governance process.

"During the Independence era, traditional rulers were at the forefront of the dialogue.

However, post-Independence, politicians commandeered governance, relegating our traditional institutions to the periphery. Over the past 60 years, this has created clogs in the way

society is administered.

It is imperative for Nigeria's leadership to retrace its steps and return to the source—our traditional institutions, which are essential to the establishment of democracy and self-actualization in Nigeria."

Ogiame Atuwatse III underscored the irreplaceable role that traditional rulers play in Nigeria's democratic process, emphasizing their contributions to cultural continuity, conflict mediation, grassroots development, and bridging the gap between the people and the state. He stressed that the exclusion of traditional institutions from the administration of justice leaves a significant void in Nigeria's judiciary.

Addressing the critical issue of judicial delays, the Olu of Warri pointed out the prolonged duration of cases in Nigeria's appellate courts.

One Hell Of A Night! (2) By Segun Durowaiye (08055356855)

Continued from GUARDIAN WEEKEND, August 24-25, 2024.

ON hearing that his wife was pregnant again Kassim was really excited. "Oh, my God, I thank you!" Kassim exclaimed elatedly. "Ah! God, make this a boy this time around!" the fact was that Kassim, who had four girls within 10 years was in dire need of a boy and felt that Tinu's new pregnancy should be a boy. It was a most touching situation because the pregnancy Kassim was excited about wasn't his. Exactly eight months later Tinu was delivered of a baby. Surprisingly, it was a baby boy! Kassim was extremely happy. He thanked God for answering his prayers. Eight days later they did the christening ceremony of the new baby. It was a big party they had. Kassim spent nothing less than N500,000 for the ceremony. The little baby boy was very handsome and looked exactly like Banjo, the military officer, since it was his baby. But this fact was unknown to Kassim, who had not seen Banjo before in his life. The baby boy was named Okanlawon. This name literally means a break from having many daughters. As the boy grew older, he began to look more like Banjo. The resemblance was just too much! Kassim all along thought Okanlawon was his own blood - he loved the little boy with his whole heart. When the boy was a year old Kassim threw a fantastic birthday party for him. Tinu all the while kept the secret to herself and whenever Kassim went on business and leisure trips out of the country he took Okanla along at times. Kassim and his 'sweet little pet' were inseparable - it was a frenzied and highly enthusiastic love. Tinu, at times, took Okanla to Banjo, his biological father, whenever Kassim was not around. Banjo was full of great love for the little boy, particularly since the boy looked like him.

Trouble started rearing its ugly head five years later when Banjo began to worry Tinu that he needed to have his son, Okanla. That

eventful day, Tinu was on her way back from Okanla's school, where she had gone to pick him. She decided to branch at Banjo's office, and a hot conversation ensued:

"Tinu," Banjo began, "I'd love to have my son back. I want him back at all cost!"

"What are you saying?" she replied.

"Do you know that I'm a legally married woman?" she protested, "the boy is his life!"

"I don't care or give a damn whose ox is gored. I want to my son," Banjo stressed sarcastically.

"Banjo darling," Tinu said, "you must understand something, there's no way you can have that child unless we kill Kassim or he dies of natural cause."

"Then what are we waiting for? His death means nothing to me; all I know is that I want my son back," Banjo said.

"Come closer," Tinu said: "This is how we would do it," she whispered into his right ear. That fateful day, Tinu and Banjo reached a conclusion that they had to poison Kassim and kill him secretly. That chilly night when Kassim got home, Tinu prepared his meal and sprinkled a poisonous chemical into his food. Alas, Kassim unsuspectingly ate the meal, but halfway while eating he developed stomach upset.

"Phew!" he sputtered, "Tinu, come here quickly! I'm not feeling fine! God!"

"What's the matter, darling," she said as she came running, instantly Kassim summoned courage and staggered towards the phone. He was about dialing but fell down. Tinu made a false pretence to help him in his trouble.

"Oh my God!" she said, what's wrong with the food?"

To be continued

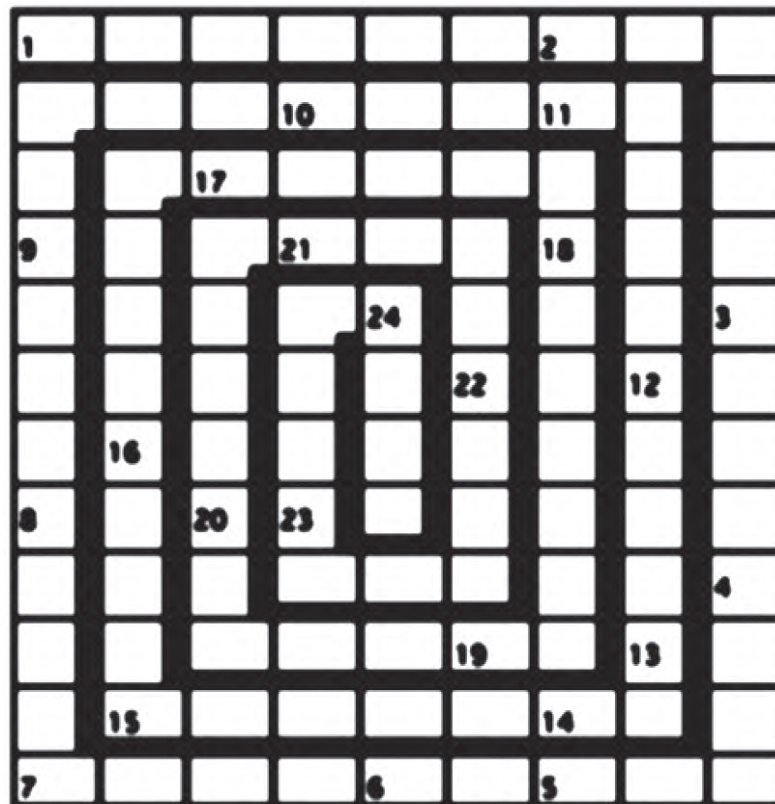
Interested sponsor/sponsors for this SHORT STORY column should please contact: 08023015115 or 08055356855.

Overlapping Word Game

with OLULANA KAYODE 08023183727 olulana3@yahoo.com

Solution

- 1 Ajimobi
- 2 Ibrahim
- 3 Mantu
- 4 Upgrade
- 5 Devil
- 6 Village
- 7 Ageless
- 8 Essay
- 9 Yerima
- 10 Awka
- 11 Alhaja
- 12 Asaba
- 13 Aba
- 14 Alhaji
- 15 Ikeja
- 16 Albino
- 17 Orange
- 18 Examiner
- 19 Revisit
- 20 Iterate
- 21 Teach
- 22 Hesitate
- 23 Teased
- 24 Eden



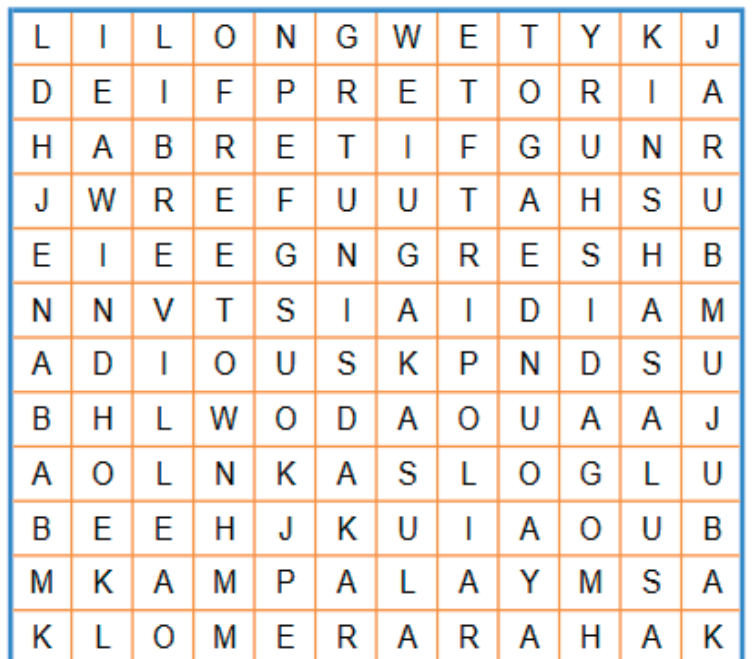
Overlapping Word Game

- 1 Dimeji —, House of Reps. Ex. Speaker, (7).
- 2 Hard to understand, (9).
- 3 Make somebody laugh, (6).
- 4 Flippancy, (6).
- 5 Adamawa state capital city, (4).
- 6 The commercial capital city of Nigeria, (5).
- 7 Town in Delta State, (6).
- 8 Multitude, (6).
- 9 Difficult, (7).
- 10 Unusable, (7).
- 11 Instruction period, (6).
- 12 Small lump, (6).
- 13 Jump forcefully, (4).
- 14 Statement expressing remorse, (7).
- 15 Move in spiral, (6).
- 16 Extreme, (8).
- 17 Spoiling flaw, (7).
- 18 Ike—, Super Eagles' Ex Goalkeeper, (8).
- 19 Official enforcing sport's rules, (6).
- 20 Small northern weasel, (6).
- 21 Bring something to bear, (5).
- 22 Shake uncontrollably, (7).
- 23 Follow, (5).
- 24 Oil-rich town in Akwa Ibom State, (4).

Word Search

African Capital Cities-2

- Dakar
- Windhoek
- Freetown
- Harare
- Lilongwe
- Mogadishu
- Lome
- Tripoli
- Yaounde
- Tunis
- Libreville
- Pretoria
- Kampala
- Bujumbura
- Lusaka
- Kinshasa
- Mbabane
- Dar-Es-Salam



(c) Olukayode Olulana

Foundation's Scholarship To Public Servants Hits N3.5b

By Sulaimon Salau

NO fewer than 32 public servants across Africa with a demonstrated passion for transformation have benefited from the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation's Scholarship scheme to the tune of £2,000,000 (about N3.564 billion).

For this year, the African philanthropic organisation, as part of its commitment to transforming public service delivery across the continent, has announced Siaka Salami as the 2024 AIG Scholar.

Co-founder and Executive Vice Chair of the Aig-

Imoukhuede Foundation, Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede, said: "The Nigerian public sector is at a critical juncture where the need for transformation is not just a matter of urgency but of survival. At the Foundation, we believe that high-performing public servants are the cornerstone of this transformation.

"By investing in exceptional public servants like Salami, we are ensuring that the future leaders of the public sector are equipped with world-class training that will enable them to deliver innovative and impactful solutions to the challenges the country is facing."



Managing Partner, ECAD Architects Limited, Mr. Ade Laoye (left); Managing Director, Lotus Bank Limited/Bankers' Committee Representative, Mrs. Kafilat Araoye; Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Sterling Bank Limited/Bankers' Committee Representative, Mr. Abubakar Suleiman and Chief Executive Officer, SANEF Creatives Limited, Mrs. Ronke Kuye during an exclusive tour of the newly renovated National Theatre held in Lagos... on Wednesday.

Oyetola, Sarumi, Others To Attend SCAN Dockworkers' Day 2024

By Sulaimon Salau

TO continue placing issues affecting the Nigerian dockworker on the front burner, the Shipping Correspondents' Association of Nigeria (SCAN) is set for the second edition of the SCAN Dockworkers' Day.

With the theme, "Dockworkers: Key to Unlocking Nigeria's Blue Economy", the event organised in collaboration with the Maritime Workers' Union of Nigeria (MWUN) focuses on the need to properly position through capacity building the dockworkers, who are integral to terminal cargo handling job.

The event is largely an early-warner to draw the attention of stakeholders, especially the government, terminal operators and the dockworkers themselves, to the imperative

of capacity building germane to the increasing expectations from the sector in the light of a dynamic operating environment.

It is billed for Thursday, September 12, 2024 at the Rockview Hotel, Apapa, Lagos, and will be attended by the Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega Oyetola as Special Guest, and former Managing Director of the Nigerian Ports Authority, Chief Adebayo Sarumi, as chairman of occasion.

Special guests include the Executive Secretary/Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Shippers' Council, Barr. Pius Akutah; Director-General, Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Dr. Dayo Mobereola, and Managing Director of NPA, Dr. Abubakar Dantsoho.

'ICT Skills Critical To Unlocking Opportunities, Innovation'

By Gbenga Salau

Lagos State Commissioner for Wealth Creation and Employment, Akinyemi Ajigbotafe, has said that Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills are critical to unlocking opportunities, create jobs as well as promote innovation as the world is an era where technological proficiency can open doors to opportunities, enhance employability and drive inno-

vation in every sector.

Speaking at a press briefing to announce a free specialised ICT training for 200 youths in Lagos, Ajigbotafe, said that the four-month specialised Information Communication Technology (ICT) programme is tailored towards meeting international and industrial demands, stating that access to technology and the skills to navigate it are not just advantageous, but also essential.

Geometric Power Laments Gas Shortage Hampering Its Operation

By Sulaimon Salau

GEOMETRIC Power has decried the acute shortage of natural gas supply to its 188-megawatt (MW) plant in the Osioma Industrial Estate in Aba, Abia State, saying it is affecting the state's economic growth.

The Managing Director of Aba Power, Ugo Opiegebe, in a statement, said: "Due to the grave shortage of gas, we have been constrained to import 25MW from the Niger Delta Power Holding Company (NDPHC) at a huge cost, which is to ensure that our

customers have supplies, no matter the cost to us.

"It is a supreme irony that though we are ready to generate 141MW from our three General Electric (GE) turbines and provide uninterrupted, quality and affordable electricity to nine of the 17 local councils in Abia State that we service and export some 50MW potential excess power to the national grid to make power more available to other places in Nigeria, we are importing electricity because of the grave gas constraints."

Why Stakeholders Should Create Inclusive Financial Ecosystem

By Sulaimon Salau

PRESIDENT Bola Tinubu and stakeholders in the financial sector have stressed the need for an improved system that would further encourage financial inclusion across African countries.

They spoke at a reception hosted by FIC Professionals Network Plc to celebrate the emergence of Prof. Pius Deji Olanrewaju as the 23rd President/Chairman of Council, Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria, (CIBN).

Speaking at the luncheon, Tinubu assured that his administration was committed to ensuring greater financial inclusion, recognising its potential to unlock economic

opportunities, reduce poverty, and promote sustainable growth.

Tinubu, represented by the Technical Adviser on Financial Inclusion, Dr Nurudeen Abubakar Zauro, expressed commitment to expand financial services to underserved populations, low-income individuals, rural communities, and small businesses.

He also emphasised the importance of collective efforts from financial institutions, governments, and stakeholders.

The president said: "When we came on board, the first thing we did was to partner with FIC Professionals Network to stage a workshop to inspire stakeholders who we believe know

better and have all the experience that is needed for us to do the right thing. It shows that the administration is, indeed, determined to do everything possible to provide access to financial services, especially in our journey to growing a \$1 trillion economy.

"There's a need for us to strengthen that partnership. So, I am quite happy that the certification programme of CIBN is a very important one, and now I can tell you that we are doing everything possible to see how we can personalise and, of course, continue to partner and collaborate with FIC, CIBN and all other stakeholders."

Also commenting, the

Group Managing Director of United Bank for Africa (UBA), Oliver Alawuba, who claimed a staggering 80 per cent of Africans remain outside the formal financial system, lacking access to essential financial services.

Alawuba stressed the need for more to be done to address financial exclusion.

"More than 80 per cent of Africans are outside the financial system. It's good to see that the agency system is coming onboard, but we need to do more because there are millions of people who have not tested any financial services," the UBA boss stated.

Olam Agri Steps Up CSR In Kano, Jigawa

By Sulaimon Salau

OLAM Agri has expanded its initiatives to support the country's rural Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) policy with the commissioning of safe water project in Kano and Jigawa states.

The project, according to the company, is in advancement of its broader Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability (CR&S) strategy, with a budget of N6.5b.

Speaking on the new project, the Managing Director of

Olam Agri in Nigeria, Anil Nair, highlighted the company's long-standing commitment to socio-economic development in Nigeria, where it has operated for over 34 years.

To ensure the project's sustainability, he said the local community members have been trained as Local Area Mechanics (LAMs) to maintain the water facilities.

The project involves constructing three new hand pump boreholes, rehabilitating seven existing ones, and one solar-

powered borehole. "This initiative aims to provide clean, drinkable water to farming communities, thereby enhancing food security, boosting agricultural productivity, and reducing health issues like waterborne diseases.

"The project is delivered in partnership with the Tulsichanrai Foundation, a partner to UNICEF, under Olam Agri's "Seeds for the Future" programme.

It is billed to provide safe

water to 15 communities, benefiting approximately 34,150 residents and 1,684 farmers across Jigawa, Kano, Nasarawa, Benue, and Plateau states, which are key regions for wheat, sesame, and rice production.

Olam Agri's Global CR&S had last year, conducted a food security baseline survey in Nigeria's sourcing regions, which revealed a severe lack of access to clean drinking water, particularly in the north.

NIPCO, NGML To Crash Energy Costs For Industries, Float Lekki Gas Project

By Sulaimon Salau

INDUSTRIES in the Lekki Free Trade Zone area in Lagos will begin to enjoy reduced energy costs, as NIPCO Gas in partnership with NNPC Gas Marketing Limited (NGML) commissioned the Lekki Gas Distribution Project for supply and distribution of natural gas in the Lekki area.

The infrastructure developed by NGML-NIPCO Gas JV has a capacity of over 100 mmscfd. The city gate station

constructed by NGML-NIPCO Gas JV has a present capacity to flow five mmscfd to 25 mmscfd of gas further extendable to over 100 mmscfd. Lekki Free Zone is having gas-based power plant of 24 MW capacity.

Speaking at the commissioning, Managing Director, NIPCO Gas Limited, Nagendra Verma, said the milestone marks a significant step towards unlocking and harnessing the nation's abundant natural gas while boosting the economic development of Nigeria.

While acknowledging the efforts of the Group Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC), Mele Kyari, the NIPCO Gas boss said: "The supply of piped natural gas by NGML-

NIPCO JV will certainly help in development of Lekki Free Zone and Free Zone Enterprise licensed by NEPZA (FZE) in an exponential manner.

"This is also going to boost the industrialisation and employment opportunities in Lekki area which in turn will boost the economy of the country," Verma stated.

He said NIPCO Gas believes that the collaboration between NGML and NIPCO Gas would attract industries to set up their facilities in the Lekki Free Zone due to advantages like proximity to the sea-port, export promotion zone advantages, improved road connectivity-hence providing better logistics for movement of raw materials or finished products among others.

From The Rector

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

Cultivating A Life Style Better Than Religiousness

By Stephen Wolemonwu

RELIGIOUSNESS is not a guarantee for righteousness. There are several faces and shapes of religion; to certain degree religion has done some good to humanity and in some cases has done severe harm to mankind too. This is so, because religion gives no one monopoly of right to style and interpretation. Across the world, there are nearly over 4,000 recognised faith. Research has shown that 75 percent of the world population subscribe and follow ardently one of the five main world religions, which include: Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. These religions in most cases affects their relationship, communion and behaviour, especially with one another that sometime some of the adherents lose their humanity.

Christianity as classified as one of the world religion has in it so many factions, denominations, interpretation, sects and beliefs; this is so because Christianity was supposed to be a pattern of life rather than a belief system. Fortunately, Jesus Christ our Saviour, Lord and King did not come as a messenger or prophet of a new religion, but came to redeem mankind from sin and point him to a higher life of fulfillment of his true humanity. This has being corrupted over the years to the extent that many who claim to be Christians are today guilty of the true essence of faith and relationship with God through Christ.

The Book Of Colossians

There is no strong debate or disagreement on the authorship of the epistle to the Colossians as written by Apostle Paul. Many scholars agree that this letter was written by Paul around A.D 62 during his imprisonment in Rome (Acts 27-28) alongside with the letters to Philemon and the Ephesians with Tychicus, accompanied by Onesimus (Colossians 4:7; Philemon 1:10-12).

Tychicus was a coworker of Paul who would have been able to help the Colossian believers understand and apply the apostle's teachings in the letter.

The letter was said to have been written to address a Christological heresy threatening the Church at the time and to help the church to avoid undermining their new identity as believers in Christ redemptive work (1:2,28).

Paul also encouraged these believers to fight against sin, pursue holiness and live as distinctively Christian households hence the main theme of the book could be: "Christ is Lord over all of creation, including the invisible realm. He has redeemed his people,

Colossians 3:12-25: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. 13. Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 14. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 15. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. 18. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. 19. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. 20. Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. 21. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. 22. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God. 23. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men. 24. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. 25. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons."

enabling them to participate in his death, resurrection and fullness."

The report that the Church was under attack by false teachers was likely to have been reported by Epaphras, who was likely the leader of the church at Colossae and a convert of Paul's from his more than two-year ministry in Ephesus.

Epaphras had come to Rome in part to serve Paul during his imprisonment (Philemon 1:23) and also to confide in him regarding the dangerous teachings the Colossians were hearing. So, Paul sent this letter. The Chapter 3 was an important part of this letter.

The problem that this letter deals with points us to Jesus' warning about the religious sect of his day; people most times uphold belief system; reverse their religious symbols and fanatically defend and pursue their tenants of religion at the expense of relationship between God and Man,, and Man and Man. Man's greatest desire and craving has always been to gain salvation, ultimate peace, and fulfilment. Many times man claim right based on the satisfaction that he is pleasing his

master or object of worship; Christianity does not only points us to God, but ultimately shows us our indebtedness to God and Man; in this, the law and the prophets are summarised:

I. That you love the Lord your God with all your heart and might.

II. That you love your neighbour as yourself

Except Your Righteousness Exceed That Of The Scribes And Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-36, 5:20)

Expectation for living right from others is easy to demand, but living right is a choice. Many times people betray their very demand because 'those who live by the dictates of the flesh cannot please God.'

Paul in writing to the Galatians 5:16

s a i d :
"Wa l k

in the spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.' The Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes were religious sects condemned by Christ for their choice of religious practices over love. They held unto religious practices over humanity and good human relationship. These could be likened to the religious leaders of our time.

Lifestyle Christ Disapproved

1. They broke God's law and taught others to do so (Matthew 5:19). Many times the leaders' sin becomes the followers' defense. When leaders do wrong and defend same it becomes a way of life for those who honour them.

2. They kept animosity, anger and bitterness against others, yet came to the sanctuary with their gifts to show reverence and devotion (Matthew 5:21-28). When people do not place value on their relationship with others and do certain religious acts to gain inner peace it undermines the fact that God is love and in Him there is no guile (cf 1John 4:20).

3. They had religion without spirituality: a deep and sincere connection of heart with God (John 4:23).

4. They were faultfinders in the house of God (Matthew 9:11; 33-34). Be careful whenever you only see the sins of others and see nothing good in what others are doing. Watch it! It only shows how shallow your relationship with God is; for God is love.

5. They plotted evil and hatched plans to destroy and ruin those better than them (Matthew 12:14-15).

6. They knew how to limit the liberty and freedom of others (Matthew 12:15-16). Watch it, anything that takes away your right to good, will and enslaves you can ruin you. Religion can make you to have poor judgment of true liberty, but spirituality can always enhance your freedom and help you promote the peace and freedom of others (Galatians 5:1).

7. They set traps for others to be entrapped (Matthew 16:1, 4, 6). Setting standards and enacting laws just to get people into trouble, limitations and fears is not the true spirit of Christ redemptive grace.

8. They had a wrong conception of spirituality and right teaching of the law (Matthew 16:6-7). Many times Jesus said: "From the beginning it was not so."

9. They loved high position and places in the house of God — Notice me! Without God's spirit inside of them (Matthew 23:2).

10. They had God on their lips, but not in their lives (Matthew 23:14).

11. In their preaching they made converts to their misconception about God and made them twice sons of hell (Matthew 23:15). They took dry sinners and made them wet sinners

12. They gave undue regards to object rather than true faith (Matthew 23:16-22).

13. They were more of good teachers than living by example. They taught only for academic exercise rather than practical life of good human relationship (Matthew 23:23-24; In 1John 4:7-14). The Bible made us to understand that the greatest and most important part of the law is Love (1John 4:17-21).

14. They were concerned about outward appearance and ceremonial cleanliness rather than inner purity (Matthew



The Rector, Venerable Stephen Wolemonwu

Martins Enjoins Church, Parents To Monitor Youth Against Drugs, Pornography

By Isaac Taiwo

THE Archbishop, Metropolitan See of Lagos, The Most Revd Alfred Adewale Martins, has called on the Church and parents to ensure strict surveillance on youths with a view to protecting them from the use of hard drugs and taking to pornography.

He made the call at the end of a two-day convention organised by Lagos Archdiocesan Catholic Men Organisation, Nigeria (LACMON) with the topic: "Overcoming Drug and Pornography Addiction in family Life" while the theme was: "The Family: The Vocation and Path to Love of God." The

event took place at St. Gregory College, Obalende, Lagos.

Martins lamented the high number of people obviously addicted to the two evils of drug and pornography addictions and consequently commended LACMON for coming up with the initiative to create awareness.

He further remarked that a lot of victims of the destructive habits are not aware of the grave consequences of indulging in them and warned against giving too much money to the children, which he noted is capable of luring them into the practice through procurement of smart phones and internet.

"The bottom line is for parents to live by example because if they, too, are indulging in the bad habits, it is only logical to admit that their wards will follow their footsteps," he said.

LACMON President, Kingsley Ekwem, called on Nigerians not to stigmatise the victims of drug abuse and those involved in pornography, but to encourage them to leave the practice for the betterment of their future.

He also encouraged victims who have been struggling to forsake the habits to be decisive and put their trust in God who will give them every enablement to drop the habits.

Signs Of His Coming Are Everywhere

2Thessalonians 2:3-4: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. 4: Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."

SIGNS are warnings that alert people to be prepared for any future event. It could be something good or bad, but the essence of the warning signal is to properly inform those concerned, so that, they will not be taken unawares.

The rapture of the saints signifying the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is going to be the greatest event in human history. It shall be a time everyone under heaven will know if his or her sojourn on this earth is successful or not. It will be a time of stock taking, giving account of how one lived his or life on earth.

Our purpose on earth is to attain perfection, while preparing for eternal life with our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord shall return and only sinless people will meet him in the air. The warning signals are to alert everyone to be prepared for his return – the rapture of the saints. Currently, the signs of his second coming are evident everywhere, hence Matthew 24:4-13 says: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, take heed that no man deceive you. 5: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 6: And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7: For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes,

in diverse places. 8: All these are the beginning of sorrows. 9: Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10: And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11: And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12: And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13: But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

There is no gainsaying that these signs are already manifesting in different parts of the world. Today, the killing of innocent people in the name of terrorism is on the increase, banditry, religious bigotry are common everywhere. There is no continent in the world that you will not hear of wars. Many nations and tribes, kingdoms are rising against one another. The world as of today is awash with false prophets presenting themselves as gods and preaching heresies. This, however, is not yet the end of the world, but the beginning of sorrow.

The situation presents two sides of a coin: that is sorrow and happiness. The world is full of evil, but the word of God is there for you to make a choice and avoid evil. The people who will choose evil will have sorrow when the trumpet will sound, they will be left out. Today, those who have chosen to follow Christ may be suffering in this evil world, but they will surely be happy at the end when they will be taken by rapture.

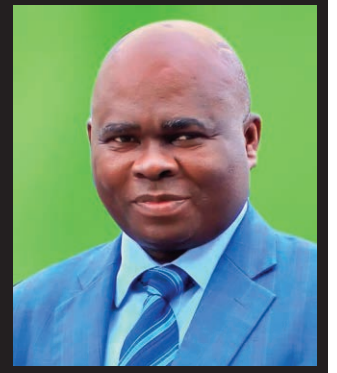
The Bible advises us to endure till the end. The end will come when there is the falling away as

Living Waters

By Pastor Lazarus Muoka

Founder/General Overseer
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For more messages and testimonies visit: www.tlccrm.org 08056889396



stated in the lead scripture. Falling away or religious apostasy is the act of the professed Christians deliberately rejecting the revealed truth in relation to:

i. The Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ
ii. Redemption through His atoning and redeeming sacrifice (1Jn.4:1-3).

Apostasy differs from error concerning truth, which may be as a result of ignorance (Acts 19:1-6) or heresy that could be due to deceit of the Satan (2 Tim.2:25-26) both of these can be found among the people of true faith. It is unfortunate that apostate departs from the faith, but not from the outward profession of Christianity. When you begin to witness all these, the end will come in a twinkling of an eye. To check all these, there is the need to continually preach the sound gospel at all times. Christians should not rest at this time. We should be up and doing in preaching the gospel. It is through this that the problem of falling away could be countered.

Currently, it is necessary to note that no one knows when the trumpet will sound, but it must surely sound. Christ is coming back for his people; he has gone to prepare a place for them in heaven. That is why Apostle Paul in 1Thessalonians 4:13-18 said: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14: For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15: For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord that we

which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16: For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. 17: Then, we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18: Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The second coming of the Lord is to rapture the saints. It will enable both the dead and living saints to meet with the Lord in the air. We are looking forward to meeting once more our beloved dead saints and to part no more with them. The warning signals are necessary so that Christians will miss the rapture of the saints.

It must be noted that no one will remain in the grave for eternity; all, both the saints and the wicked will partake in the resurrection. The resurrection of the saints will take place first, then after a thousand years the wicked will rise, but into death. As a matter of emphasis, the Bible in 1Corinthians 15:51-54 says: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. 52: In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53: For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54: So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'"

Testimony Of The Lord's Doing

Psalm 126:1-2: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream, then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing." It was like a dream to Mr Ajikawo, who with joy and gladness mounted the podium to testify of his miraculous release from prison by the God of Chosen.

'You Are Discharged And Acquitted!'

His Testimony:

My name is Ajikawo Olawale. I have come to glorify the name of the Lord for delivering me from prison. I have been in prison since January, 2024. I owed someone #80,000, but when I could not pay back, the person sent me to Kirikiri Prisons, though I would have come out before now, court was not sitting. All the adjournments given to me were not honoured because court was not sitting. About a month or two ago,

the Lord's Chosen Prison Ministry visited the prison to introduce a programme to the inmates and after that they began to come every week with edible items (food) to refresh us. We were always very happy to see them because each time they come there would be food and other refreshments for us.

Other churches' prison ministries have been coming, but Chosen Prison Ministry would always introduce Jesus Christ to us and some of us would accept him and sur-

render our lives to Christ. Two weeks ago, I met two of their leaders and told them that I would appear in court the next week, they prayed with me and in the night that preceded the Monday I was to appear in court, I had a dream, that was the first time I would have a dream since I was imprisoned. I dreamt, I was helplessly swimming in a river; although I was not drowning, I was crying and asking for help. The river became turbulent and suddenly a whale emerged. At the back of the whale was an inscription: "The God Of Chosen Appeared." Immediately I read it, I landed on safe ground, the fish disappeared and I woke up. At day break, I began to

wonder what that could be, as I prepared for court. However, entering the Black Maria to court I muttered: "this is the last time I would enter this vehicle."

In the vehicle, I kept saying in my subconscious: 'The God Of Chosen Appeared,' till we got to court, where we were locked in the court-cell as prisons officials usually do. But when they began to call inmates for trial I was not called. Then I said, God of Chosen, let my court sit today and as the magistrate sets her eyes on me, let her release me. I was still saying the prayer when I heard my name mentioned. I was then taken into the courtroom.

Entering the dock, the mag-

istrate looked at me and asked: "Baba, are you still there?" I replied, 'yes my lord!' He then said: "appearances." And a prosecutor stood up for me, I had no lawyer. The Prosecutor, however, said, 'my lord, we are pleading for one month adjournment.' As soon as I heard that, on impulse, I shouted, 'the God of Chosen appear.' Then the magistrate dropped the biro he was holding and took another and began to write on a paper. After about three to five minutes, he stopped writing and said: "By the power conferred on me as the magistrate of this court, you are hereby discharged and acquitted."

God of Chosen is very great. May His name be glorified in Jesus' name... I pray for the G.O. and all Chosen members, may they make heaven in Jesus' name... amen!



Bro Tony & Sis. Chika Eberechukwu shared their testimony after 19-years yoke of barrenness was broken



Cross section of participants at Owerri Crusade in April, 2024.

Return To God, Renew Your Life (1)

Springs Of Wisdom

By Pastor
W. F. Kumuyi



JUST when you think your life is settled and you have either no need or hope of something new; that is when God shows up as the great disrupter. The result in such instances always leaves you a person better hitherto the case. This was what He did to Jacob whose name was later changed by God to Israel. Jacob had an encounter and interaction with the Lord at the city of Bethel that resulted in a new spiritual experience and personal relationship with Him. But with the passage of time, Jacob strayed far away from the experience at Bethel and God had to call him to retrace his steps and return. "And God said unto Jacob, arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother," (Genesis 35:1). Likewise, the Lord calls all believers who have gone far away from their initial consecration to return to Him.

For God's word to prosper in our lives, family and ministry, we must ask Him to always help us remember our first encounter with Him and first love, which we might have forgotten. Moreover, we must pray for God's to have His desire and demands inscribed upon our hearts at all times, so that we can serve Him acceptably and be a blessing to multitudes of people. For this privilege not to be taken away from us, we must return to the Lord and renew our lives and ministry at our Bethel, the place where we first met Him.

"And God said unto Jacob, arise, go up to Bethel. . . make there an altar unto (Me)." The Lord gave Jacob an express command of what to do. This is edifying. As we hear or read the word of God and have it expounded to us, we must each seek to know and receive the specific instruction the Lord is communicating to us.

- He gives us the Divine Call to return to the God of Bethel. God made it very clear that He is "the God of Bethel." He instructed Jacob to "return" to Bethel, where he had a personal encounter

with Him and received the same promise He had given to Abraham and Isaac. Also, the Lord assured him of divine provision and protection. "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest. . . until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." That was the importance of Bethel for Jacob. For us today, the divine call to return is not just a physical journey to return to Bethel. It is to "return unto the Lord," the God of Bethel, and love Him with all our heart, soul and mind. For that to be possible, our heart must be sanctified and cleave to the Lord all the days of our lives.

- He hands us a direct commandment to remember Him as the God of all blessings. "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God." As God called Jacob back to Bethel, He wanted him to "remember" what he was before Bethel, what he became at Bethel, and what happened after Bethel. He was also to remember that

everything he had was from the God of Bethel. Similarly, we must always have and bring to mind what we were before our first encounter with the Lord, what we became at salvation and the uncountable things He has done after we were saved.

God had something against Jacob for settling down in Shechem and not going all the way to Bethel, where He wanted him to reside. God has "somewhat against" those who have left their Bethel and are not at the place of total surrender and explicit obedience to Him. He is not pleased with those who have "left (their) first love" for other encounters and encumbrances and have allowed their first devotion, consecration and vow, when they met Christ, to fade away. The Lord wants such people to "remember therefore from whence (they have) fallen, and repent" and come back wholeheartedly to where He wants them to be spiritually.

- He demands a definite commitment from us to remain with God as true believers. The condition for God's continued presence with us is that we remain committed to, and abiding in Him. Jacob must have been asking himself where is the "power (that he had) with God" and with men, and the prevailing influence he had when God spoke to him. The Lord wants us to reflect and find out if we have declined from the peak we attained in our relationship with Him and return, renew our lives and remain with Him.

- **Further reading (King James Version):** Genesis 35:1. Genesis 31:13; 28:11-16; Deuteronomy 30:2,6; Deuteronomy 8:18; Genesis 32:9,10; Revelation 2:4,5; Genesis 31:3,13; 32:27,28,30; John 15:1,4,5,7.

RESTORATION HOUR

By Abel Ukachi Amadi

Text: Matthew 5:14-16

Key verse: Matthew 5:14: "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden," (NKJV).

WE live in a broken world, but Christians are the hope to the hurting and tough world. Believers are the hope to the hopeless in this world because the world system has dashed the hope of the people living in the society. Some people due to their hopelessness or depression for whatever personal problems they are going through often end up in some kind of addiction to comfort themselves, but these addictions cannot satisfy their longing. But in Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we have a hope that is above and

beyond anything or anyone on this earth.

It is higher and more powerful. God is above and beyond our troubles. And we can have His peace and His hope to such a degree that we cannot only live in it, but overflow with it. Jesus said in John 14:27 that my peace I give to you and not as the world gives. The peace that the world gives is temporal, but the peace of God abides forever. Christ brings hope to our hopelessness. The jailer asked life's greatest question in Acts 16:30, when he asked: "What shall I do to be saved." He said

Light to a Broken World (4)

this, when he saw that all the doors of the prison were opened and everyone's chain were loosed, despite the tight security mounted at the prison where Paul and Silas were imprisoned.

The jailer came to the understanding that there is much more in Jesus Christ than there is in the world. He was convicted that he needs the saviour because he saw his hopelessness and sought for salvation. He was going to commit suicide, thinking all hope is gone and there is no future for him, but Paul said to him, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved (Acts 16:31). Have you come to a crossroad and you think all hope is lost? Hear what God Has to tell you: "He

loves you, He cares about you, He has a purpose for you and you can be forgiven of your sins and have the hope of eternal life in Heaven." The best life worth living is a life in Christ.

Now, what does Paul mean to "believe?" It simply means to "trust" or "put your faith in God." You get in an airplane by faith. When you get in an airplane, you do not check the gas to see if there is enough in the tank. You do not kick the tires and shake the wings. You do not interview the pilot to ensure security. You just relax and trust that the airplane will take you safely to your destination. The song writer says: "Trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus." Then someone says:

"Have faith in God. Trust Jesus to save you." Ephesians 2:8-9 says: "By grace you have been saved, through faith."

The thief on the cross was out there hung on a cross for his crimes, but when he turned to Jesus and said: "Remember me when You enter Your kingdom." Jesus said: "Today you will be with Me in paradise." It is very simple, just believe in the finished work of Christ on the cross and you will be saved. You do not have to work so hard for it or be so religious. No! The Bible said in John 3:16 that whosoever believeth in Him shall never perish, but have everlasting life.

Today's nugget: Christ brings hope to our hopelessness.
Prayer: Jesus I give my life to



Amadi

you today. Prayer lines: 08033299824. E-mail: amadi-abelukachi@gmail.com. Rev. Abel Ukachi Amadi, General Superintendent, Assemblies of God Nigeria

Introduction

IN a magazine interview, a woman was told: "You are lucky, your husband loves you." She replied: "It is not a matter of luck, but of hard work. I have put in everything I could to make my marriage to work." Nothing worthwhile is obtained without an effort. Good marriage is not an exceptional. Until you work, nothing works for you; until you move, nothing moves for you. Something does not come out of nothing. If you do nothing, you will get nothing.

We have all read romantic novels and watched Nollywood love films where a couple fell in love and married and lived happily ever after. In real life situation, such does not exist. A marriage counsellor said that marriage is an empty box; it is what the couple put into it that they will get. It is a fertile soil; it is what you sow that you will reap (Gal 6:7). In a Facebook comment, someone said that the best thing a wife can give her husband is peace. Another person reacting to that statement said: "That is if the man wants peace." In other words, if her husband wants "katakata" (trouble) she will give him "katakata." Such a lady needs to understand that marriage is an empty box or a fertile ground, which whatever a man puts in it, is what he will get. If he sows peace, he reaps peace; if he sows trouble, he reaps trouble; if he sows love, he reaps love; if he sows resentment he reaps resentment; if he sows honour, he reaps honour; if he sows dishonour, he reaps dishonour.

How To Make Your Marriage Work

- Understand The Purpose Of Marriage

Making Your Marriage Work

It is said that when purpose is not understood abuse becomes inevitable. We were teaching marriage relationship in Lafia, Nasarawa State, where two female students asked, "suppose one decides to marry just to have fun and not to have children? Also, some think that marriage is just to offer them opportunity to be free with the opposite sex." Yes marriage can lead to those issues (fun and freedom to live with the opposite sex).

Biblical Purposes For Marriage

- **Companionship (Gen 2:18)**

Man was not created a lone-ranger; an island to himself. God, at creation, saw that it is not good for man to be alone; he needs a companion. However, those who have no need of a female companion should not go about looking for one. It was Gbile Akani that said that until the Lord tells you that it is not good for you to remain alone do not go about looking for a companion. You are a second year student whose school fees, books and other necessities are provided for by your parents. Because the Scripture said that it is not good for a man to be alone, you set your eyes on your female course mate. Be careful. Until you are established, do not think of establishing a home.

For those who are married, your attention is first and foremost to your spouse, not your parents, siblings, colleagues or even your career.

To leave your spouse alone, at home, and go to work and return late to face other things without still being available to them defeats the purpose of marriage and will ultimately destroy the marriage itself; for when friends are not talking, they drift apart.

- **Assistance (Gen 2:18b)**

God did not just create a companion for the man. He made one who was a suitable assistant. A helpmeet not help mate. Husband and wife are not mates. Mate suggests a position of equality and competition. Hence we say, 'our classmates.' These are fellow students in the same class with us, taught the same subjects by the same teachers and compete for position in the same examinations. This cannot be the case in marriage. Marriage creates room for co-operation and complement and not competition. The man is the head of the family even of his wife (Eph. 5:22). God made him a ruler over his wife (Gen 3:16). This negates the concept of "Head-neck"/ "Chairman, Co-chairman:" the man is the head and the woman is the neck. As the neck, the woman carries the man and can turn him to whichever direction she wills. And as co-chairman two of them are equal; no one is above the other. The concept of co-chairman is popular in Nigeria where no tribe or religion wants to be second to the other. Therefore, in giving appointment where the two major re-

ligions — Islam and Christianity — are involved, you appoint them, chairman/co-chairman; secretary/co-secretary since nobody will like to serve under another from a different faith. Such is abnormal in a marriage relationship.

In every organisation, someone must be the head. Take government, in a democratic state for example, though the legislature has the right to make laws, the president, as head of government, can veto the laws made by the legislature. In the home, the right of veto belongs to the man. The concept of co-chairman means that the wife shares the power of veto with the husband. The man can veto the decision of the woman and vice versa. A case where the man vetoes the decision of the woman and the woman vetoes the decision of the man will give room to anarchy.

However, the man rules in love and not as a dictator. The Biblical injunction to Christian husbands is to love their wives just as Christ loved the church to the extent of giving His life for her. As one who loves his wife in Jesus Christ's way, the christian husband can do anything to please the wife not minding his position as the head. Christ did the same when he stooped low and washed His disciples' feet (John 13; 4-15), which was a duty of a slave. In the same vein, Paul asked the husbands to submit to their wives just as they expect their wives to submit to them (Eph 5:21).

- **Dr. Emeka-Charles Amaefule is the Nat'l Director, Christ Ambassadors Students Outreach (CASOR), Assemblies of God, Nigeria.**

Revival And Reformation

What Makes God Awesome (6)

LAST week, we cited Zechariah 9:11-12, and said, a covenant reveals the awesomeness of God. The blood of the covenant under reference in Zechariah 9:11 was the blood of God's covenant made with Abraham (Gen. 15:1-10), which is in force as long as God lives. If the blood of the Old Covenant was powerful enough to deliver the children of Israel, much more the blood of Jesus is even more powerful to save and deliver those under the New Covenant, (Hebrews 9:13-14 NKJV).

Dr. Adetokunbo Illesanmi makes a good distinction between a covenant and a blessing. "A covenant is a sacred agreement between God and people, while a blessing is a promise of God to reward people who obey certain conditions. Covenants are often accompanied by oaths, signs and ceremonies, defining obligations and commitments... When people accept the terms of a covenant and obey God's law, they receive the blessings associated with that covenant."

In my view, the New Covenant is a capstone of all Biblical covenants because all covenants are consummated in Christ. Jesus as the mediator of the New Covenant has brought us unquantifiable blessings and benefits. One, the new Covenant was established on better promises. "That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance



By Austen C. Ukachi

God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant," (Hebrews 9:15 NLT). Two, the New Covenant was established on a better hope. "For the law never made anything perfect. But now we have confidence in a better hope, through which we draw near to God," (Hebrews 7:19 NLT). Thirdly, the New Covenant created a new and living way through the veil that is his flesh.

Fourthly, in the New Covenant, God qualifies us (Col 1:12). It is no longer a case of what we do (under the law covenant) or who we were related to (under the Abrahamic covenant), but who we trust, our faith in Christ Jesus. Five, in the New Covenant, we have the forgiveness of sins. Our sins are not merely covered by the blood of bulls and goats; they are paid for and taken away by the Lamb of

God (John 1:29). At the cross, justice was satisfied. His forgiveness is eternal and complete.

Six, in the New Covenant, we get to know what is freely given to us. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God," (1 Corinthians 2:12 NKJV).

Seven, we have unimpeded access into the Father's presence. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father," (Ephesians 2:18 NKJV). Because of Jesus, the door to the throne room is always open (Heb. 4:16). We can approach him with freedom and confidence (Eph 3:12). Eight, in the New Covenant, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), who empowers us for service (Acts 1:8). Nine, in the New Covenant, we are all made royal priests unto God. Priesthood is no longer for a select few (1 Peter 2:9).

Ten, we are predestined, called, justified and glorified through Christ (Romans 8:30). We are seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph 2:6).

In summary, certain words describe our covenant blessings with God. Predestined (Romans 8:30); regenerated (John 1:12); adopted (Gal. 4:5-6); and glorified (Rom. 8:19-21). Redeemed (Ephesians 1:7-8) and sanctified, Hebrews 2:11, among others.

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Let Us Pray (31)

Answered Prayers (Cont'd)

JESUS, with His soul sorrowful to the point of death, prayed three times that His cup of suffering might pass, but He was nevertheless submissive to God's will (Mat 26:38-39, 42, 45). Both the boldness of the petition to alter God's will and the submission to this "hard" path of suffering are significant.

The scriptures say Jesus Christ's prayer was "heard" (Heb 5:7) "who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear" (Heb 5:7) "vehement cries and tears."

These descriptive words are unparalleled anywhere in the NT in terms of their intensity. They probably refer to Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane when His prayers were so intense that He sweats drops of blood (cf. Mat 26:31-46; Luke 22:39-44). Jesus Christ's prayer was "heard" not in the sense that God removed all that was involved in His experience of

Biblical Womanhood

By Emeritus Prof. Mercy Olumide



death, but in the sense that He received God's grace and help to undergo His appointed suffering.

There will be times when we too face trials and our fervent prayers seem to go unanswered. In such times, we must remember that Jesus was tested in the same way and that God will give us sufficient grace to undergo what He allows for our lives (see Mat 26:39).

Paul asked three times for deliverance from his "thorn in the flesh." God's answer to Paul directed him to find comfort in God's sufficient grace. In addition, God declared that His power is best seen in Paul's weakness (2 Cor. 12:8-9). God gave him the problem to hinder his pride. Ironically, Paul claimed that God gave the problem, yet he called it a messenger of Satan. Paul learned that petitions are sometimes denied in light of an eventual greater good: God's power displayed in Paul's humility.

Faith is a condition for answered petitions (Mark 11:24). Two extremes must be

avoided concerning faith.

• With Jesus' example in mind we must not think that faith will always cause our wishes to be granted.

• We must not go through the motions of prayer without faith. Believers do not receive what they pray for because they pray from selfish motives (James 4:2-3). Prayers are also hindered by corrupted character (James 4:7) or injured relationships (Mat 5:23-24; 1 Pet 3:7).

Every Prayer Is Answered If prayer is of such prime importance why do we pray so little?

One reason is lack of discipline. Prayer is not planned. It is fitted in around other things. Build other things around your prayer time rather than building your prayers time around other things.

For some people another reason may be that they doubt if anything happens as a result of prayer.

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Ukporhe Launches Marriage Planning, Healing Book For All

By Isaac Taiwo

THE Senior Pastor, The Remnant Christian Network, Lagos Centre, Austin Ukporhe, has urged the singles, married, those traumatised as a result of past experiences and have vowed never to marry again, as well as those enduring their marriages to look up to God, saying God instituted marriage to be enjoyed and that marriage is for matured and responsible adults.

Ukporhe gave the admonition at the launch of his book titled: "The Field Of Boaz: A Tale Of A Broken Past, Redemption And Discovering God's Will For Marriage" at the Forge, Ojodu, Lagos.

Endorsed by the former General Overseer, Foursquare Gospel Church, Nigeria, Rev. Felix Meduoye and his wife, the book was forwarded by Setman, Christian Network Global, Makurdi, Benue State. "I have one book I have full regard for in terms of its originality, history and authenticity, which is the Bible. I align my life story with Ruth who went to the field of Boaz and it is a blessing to

me," the author said.

Ukporhe threw pride and self-esteem overboard, and unveiled his past before he had an encounter with the Lord and advised those whose marriages are facing the storm of life to relax and trust God for His divine intervention.

He noted that marriage failure and broken homes are as a result of loss of values, lack of understanding of the meaning of marriage, lack of parental care and holding back in the area of disciplining the children among others.

He counselled couples to have friends they can share their problems in the home, develop the spirit of accountability, while enjoining Church leaders to establish post-marriage counseling units in their churches.

He advised intending couples to hold growing in love higher than falling in love, urging parents to be very close to their children and to begin from age three to make them know the sensitive parts of their body and never to allow anybody to touch these parts.

Lagos Mainland Diocese Enjoins Christians To Eschew Malice, Envy

By Opeyemi Babalola

THE Anglican Diocese of Lagos Mainland has enjoined Christians to eschew malice and envy, warning that nurturing such emotions could hinder the effectiveness of prayers. The Bishop, Diocese of Ifo, Reverend Nathaniel Ogundipe, said this at the rededication programme of St Jude Cathedral Church, Ebute Meta, last week.

In his sermon, the Bishop noted that the cathedral was built for the purpose of serving God and seeking for his intervention in face of plethora of challenges before humanity.

He said: "We must leave behind malice and hypocrisy as these are hindrances to prayers. For our prayers to be accepted, we must come to God with pure and clean minds. When you come to God in this cathedral, you must put off your old self, which has been corrupted and put on new self that embraces peace and love."

The Love Arena With Bishop Charles Ighele

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IN my article in this column sometime ago, I wrote about how I was blindly in love. After about three days of my being sacked and consequent depression, my eyes opened to the fact that I was an idiot. The signals that this girl will never make a good wife were many, but I ignored them.

Che! It was much later I realised if she had not sacked me, I would have ended up marrying her and would have been one of the miserable husbands on earth. I would not have also fulfilled my God ordained destiny. I am still very grateful to God, today, that even while I was yet a sinner, He put insurmountable road blocks on my path without, which I would have walked like a 'nama' (cow) to the slaughter.

From my years of being a marriage and family counsellor, I have found out that the following are among the steps that people take to rescue their loved ones who are blindly in love.

• Some approach the matter like Samson's father and mother as can be seen in Judges 14:15&16. All they

Rescuing Your Loved One Who Is Blindly In Love

could say as stated in Judges 14:3 was: "Is there no other woman in the whole of Israel that you can pick to be a wife, apart from this pagan Philistine?" Samson, seeing that his parents were very soft on him took advantage of their softness and replied, "Get her for me; for she pleases me well"

• Another approach families use to rescue their loved ones who are blindly in love is to shout, scream and threaten that they will not attend the wedding. The way some blind lovers respond to this tactics is to abscond.

• A third approach some

family members use is to go and threaten the lady or man their loved one is blindly in love with, with words such as, "leave my son alone" or "leave my daughter alone." A young man got angry with his mother and loved ones for going to harass his "innocent" girl. A woman whose son was blindly in love used this third approach some weeks ago in Ughelli, Delta State, Nigeria. She went to tell the girl her son was blindly in love with to leave her son alone. A fight ensued and the mother of the girl was accidentally stabbed and she died.

What Then Should Be Done To A Blind, Deaf And Mad Lover?

Parents of such a person and loved ones should individually or collectively put such a serious matter into deep and constant prayer and fasting without tormenting the blind lover with quarrelsome words such as: "We are praying and fasting for you. You will never marry him/her." Pray and fast secretly, but once within respectable intervals, you sit the blind lover down and begin to paint the picture of how the marriage is likely to be and likely to end. Make the person know that you love him/her and you hate to see him/her in a marriage that will be filled with sorrow.

I pray that your children's marriages will bring joy to your life. Love you.

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SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

ACCORDING to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), studies have shown that GDP can be increased by as much as 35% if level playing fields are created for both men and women in labour force participation. Women constitute half of Nigeria's population, and thus, a critical mass in the potential labour force of the country.

In an increasingly dynamic world that we live in today, it is necessary that women be well integrated into the labour force so that the country can reap the full economic benefits deliverable from women due to their enormous contributions to economies.

By Taiwo Ricketts & Fatai Tijani Alabi

Educated and informed women can drive prosperity and innovation just as they can help to improve the quality of the society. For this reason, they are needed in every sphere of the economy if Nigeria is to achieve greatness. Therefore, having qualified women in the workforce would definitely translate to higher standards, hence more aggregate output.

The Guardian is showcasing some selected female professionals who occupy the front row based on depth of their knowledge in their chosen fields and who have distinguished themselves in a string of notable ways in the course of their careers.



Bola Matel-Okoh
Founder, BMO Advisory Services



Adekemi Olurin-Alegbeleye
Managing Director, DENTSU X



Amara Obrifor
National Sales Director, GB Foods Nigeria



Ejiro Ogunbanjo



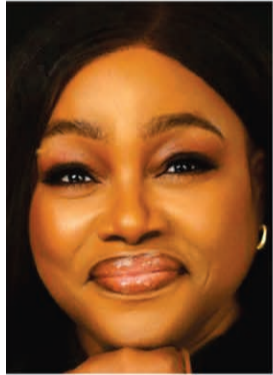
Folake Elias-Adebawale
Partner, Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie



Ore Atinmo
Marketing Director, GB Foods Nigeria



Funmi Osineye
Business & Marketing Mgr. Nestle Professional in Nig.



Jumoke Lambo
Managing Partner Designate, Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie



Kemi Longe
FMCG Marketing Leader



Yinka Edu
Partner, Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie



Marian Ogaziechi
Managing Director, Dentsu Agyle Nigeria



Ozofu Ogiemudia
Dep. Managing Partner Designate, Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie



Pharma. Adetutu Afolabi
CEO, Wellness Healthcare Group



Oluseyi Layade
Chief Operating Officer, Leo Burnett Lagos

FUNMI OSINEYE: BUILDING STRONG CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS AND SIGNIFICANTLY DRIVING SALES AT NESTLE PROFESSIONAL



Osineye

A multifaceted marketing and commercial expert with over 20 years of experience in marketing, category management, sales, channel development and business management within multinational industries, Mrs Funmi Osineye is a quintessential professional that has been performing wonders as the Business and Marketing Manager for Nestle Professionals in Nigeria, a subsidiary of Nestle Plc.

An MBA in Marketing Management holder, Osineye had always been intrigued by how brands connect with people and influence their decisions from a young age. Also, she had always enjoyed seeing brand advertisements for products like Treetop, Planta Margarine, OMO detergent and ST soap. Having then discovered that she had a talent for understanding consumer behaviour and crafting messages that resonate with various audiences, she consequently decided to go into the marketing profession. And it is to further hone her skills in the profession that she proceeded to

the Lagos State University to obtain an MBA in Marketing Management.

Osineye who joined Nestle Nigeria Plc as a Key Account Manager in 2003 has since then held various senior management roles in sales, channel and trade management, brand management, HORECA and marketing management. No doubt, she has a deep understanding of the fast moving consumer goods sector, having successfully nurtured and grown global brands like Maggi, Milo and Nescafe across Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

As the Business Manager for Nestle Professional, the out-of-home food sector for the company, Osineye is charged with the responsibility of driving growth and profitability for it by developing and executing strategic plans for the sector. She identifies market opportunities and consumer trends to enhance presence in restaurants, hotels, cafes, offices, catering companies, and other food service providers.

Asked about those that have been most influential in shaping her, she replied that two people stand out. Said she: "My father made a huge influence on my life. He taught me the importance of hard work, integrity and perseverance. Professionally one of my senior managers, Mrs Iquo Ukoh, played a pivotal role in my career development. She mentored me, challenged me to think strategically and encouraged me to push beyond my comfort zone. Her guidance has been instrumental in shaping my

leadership skills and career trajectory."

One of her significant achievements in the firm, she says was leading the launch of Maggi Jollof Seasoning which tapped into the one-pot-trend, party and catering needs of their food service clients. She was equally the one that introduced the Business of Food Series, a platform that engages key opinion leaders like chefs, caterers, hotel managers and others in the food industry, helping to build strong relationships, network and loyalty.

As the head of the firm's out-of-home sector, Osineye is focused on team development in her division so that members can all be motivated in order to have a positive work environment. And to keep the team's morale high, she makes sure that small wins are celebrated, while encouraging flexible working hours.

She believes girl-child education is fundamental to building a prosperous, equitable and stable society adding that educating girls has a transformative impacts on communities, promoting gender equality, improving health outcomes and fostering social stability.

And to aspire female professionals, she counselled them to be confident, proactive and resilient. She stressed: "While the journey may be challenging, with determination, continuous learning, and a strong support network, you can achieve your goals and make a meaningful impact."

KEMI LONGE: DRIVING PROFITABLE GROWTH THROUGH STRATEGIC MARKETING INITIATIVES FOR FMCG FIRMS.



Longe

A seasoned marketing professional and commercial leader with over a decade-and-half of experience working in various capacities across leading multinational fast moving consumer goods, FMCG firms, Kemi Longe stands out as a professional in end-to-end commercial planning, driving marketing teams and fostering cross-functional collaboration to achieve brand building and business goals. Her last role was as the Head of Marketing for PZ Cussons, a role through which she drove revenue growth through strategic marketing initiatives whilst also engendering a culture of innovation.

Longe whose academic foundation was a degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Lagos transitioned into Marketing when after her youth service; she joined a gadget store as a front desk sales representative. This experience introduced her to the dynamics of consumer interaction and helped in

developing her selling and people skills. She proceeded to Unilever from there where she held various positions, including Field Sales Manager, Channel Manager, and Modern Trade Business Development Manager.

From Unilever, Longe moved to GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Plc where she served in roles such as Shopper Marketing Manager for East & West Africa. There, she led the development and execution of innovative campaigns and regional marketing strategies that significantly enhanced market share, brand equity and revenue growth. It was from there that she moved to PZ Cussons where she took on several marketing roles before exiting as the Head of Marketing. It is on record that as the head of marketing, she drove profitable growth through strategic marketing initiatives, innovation management and revenue growth strategies.

According to her, the decision to venture into marketing after her engineering degree was driven by her desire to combine her analytical thinking with creative problem-solving. She enthused: "Marketing allows me to tap into my analytical, strategic and creative sides. This blend of challenge and opportunity is what excites me about the profession"

She pointed out that in her marketing journey, several

experiences were unforgettable. However, she recounted two of these: "One standout experience was leading the portfolio transformation of brands at PZ Cussons. By implementing demand generation and brand-building strategies, we achieved a significant shift in portfolio contribution and enhanced equity of key brands. Witnessing a brand like Premier Cool take off, gain brand love, increase market share significantly and surpass multiple internal commercial KPIs was very fulfilling."

"Another memorable experience was at Unilever, where I led a channel development project. This initiative involved extensive market analysis and strategic planning to identify the right partners who could drive availability and execute brilliantly to drive shopper offtake. The success of this project not only led to a significant increase in sales but also positioned our brands as leaders within their respective categories in the channel", she noted.

And to aspiring female professionals: "Believe in your capabilities, stay committed to your goals, and never stop learning. Be self-aware and recognize areas where you can improve. Continuous self-development is key to staying relevant and effective in your field".

SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

Through BMO Advisory Services, We Provide Leadership Development For Executive Women - Bola Matel-Okoh, Founder BMO Advisory Services.



Bola Matel-Okoh

ADMITTED to the Nigerian Bar in 1990, and New York State Bar in 1999, Mrs. Bola Matel-Okoh has over the years sustained a formidable legal career, specializing in admiralty law, immigration law, and insurance class action litigation. She began her legal journey as a legal assistant at United Commercial Bank in Lagos but transitioned to practicing law in USA.

However, Matel-Okoh, the founder of BMO Advisory Services took a break from active law practice later and decided to enroll at the Weichert School of Real Estate in the USA. The knowledge gained was what enabled her to expand into Real estate business by founding Havilah Ventures Ltd afterwards.

Matel-Okoh who likes to describe herself as a pastor by calling, a lawyer by training, a banker by default, a podcaster by design and the excellent life coach that became a member of the Wema Bank board in 2015, says this is a role that has enabled her to exhibit her skills in corporate governance, risk management and advanced strategic planning. In fact, as one who believes in consistent development of oneself, she had had to enroll at some globally renowned institutions like IMD in Switzerland, INSEAD in France, and Harvard Business School, USA to receive training in management so as to be able to function properly in her role as a director of the bank.

On people that have been influential in shaping her life and career, she stated: "Many individuals have influenced me in one way or another, but my parents are definitely at the top of the list. They provided the right balance of life and discipline as well as taught me the values of loyalty, hard work, integrity, faith and generosity which have shaped me into who I am today. Even at the mature age of 54, my dad continues to be a big influence in my life and is wholly invested in everything I do. My late mom was the epitome of love and compassion and had a deep sense of empathy for everyone. Her

qualities which I constantly seek to emulate, have been instrumental in enhancing my sensitivity to the needs of those I coach".

"On a professional level", she continued, "Mrs. Ibukun Awosika stands out as a profound source of inspiration. I call her, "my fountain of unlimited resources" because of her remarkable authenticity and adeptness at balancing numerous roles and responsibilities. Her example has provided me with an invaluable framework, particularly in my passion for coaching executive women and my day-to-day responsibilities, whether in my role as a non-executive director at Wema Bank, other boards I sit on, or achieving work-life balance".

Matel-Okoh would not forget in a hurry the day she was called to the New York Bar. She said it was indelible because before she enrolled, she had been told that it was the hardest to pass, but she passed it at one sitting. Apart from this, getting certified as an executive coach at the Gemstone Leadership Institute in the US was another indelible landmark for her because of the commitment it took to get it done at 52 years of age.

Explaining what her company-BMO Advisory Services does, she said it is an umbrella that houses her coaching and leadership services. "At its core is the Women's Lifestyle HUB, a mentorship and community-based platform designed to offer top, vibrant female executives the opportunity to attain personal and professional excellence as well

as build relationships that will boost their careers and capacity as leaders. Everyone at WLH is a confident, positive, emotionally intelligent, interpersonally skilled and sociable stable leader".

She informed that they recently completed the 5th cohort of their six-week leadership induction series at the Women's Lifestyle Hub with 18 women. Also, at BMO Advisory Services, she noted that it was always a thing of immense pride and joy seeing the transformative impact of their coaching programme.

Concerning her future aspirations, she declared: "My future aspirations is to impact as many people as I can positively creating a legacy that will continue to speak for generations to come. I also still aspire to pursue my master's degree." For aspiring female professionals, she advised them to approach their careers with deliberate intentionality, authenticity, and unrelenting consistency. Besides, she told them: "Build enriching relationships through genuine networking, maintain a clear vision to guide your actions, and commit to continuous self-development to sustain your competitive edge and resilience. These will set you apart from the rest".

Matel-Okoh has been recognized as a Super Achiever and honoured as Peak Performing Woman of the Year 2023. She is also listed among Leading Ladies Africa's 100 Most Inspiring Women 2024 and ABCD Africa's 100 Most Impactful Voices 2024.

EJIRO OGUNBANJO, A LEADER MAKING GREAT IMPACT IN THE HR PROFESSION IN NIGERIA.

SHE has a track record of impactful human resources practices that have brought tangible results to the organizations she has worked for. Her holistic, integrated approach as a human resources practitioner allows her to champion solutions to address both employees' and employers' challenges from all angles. She is a commercial-oriented human resources practitioner, certified coach and scrum master with core expertise in strategy, business and people management, as well as an in-depth understanding of the technology industry. The person we speak of is Mrs. Ejiro Ogunbanjo, the current Group Head of Human Resources at one of Nigeria's leading Banks.

She said: "I work with business leaders and organizations to co-create and implement solutions that drive employee ownership and business performance, while leveraging coaching skills to facilitate a more effective engagement with stakeholders. Over the last 15 years, I have added value in various capacities including leading internal HR and consulting teams across multiple sectors to achieve measurable outcomes such as increased employee engagement and top talent retention, increased revenue and PBT; and creating people systems which led to several HR and business accolades including 3 time winners of the Hofstede Culture Award for Diversity and Inclusion and the NECA Employer Excellence Award for the Banking and Financial Services Industry. I also serve as an advisor to Founders/CEOs on business strategy, products, technology, people management, funding, scaling and other potential cogs in the wheel of growing a business"

Ejiro who has a first degree in Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management and Master's in Managerial Psychology in

addition to a Senior Professional in Human Resources International certification from the HR Certification Institute also sat on the advisory board of a tech academy with a focus on developing tech talent. Additionally, just last year, she was made one of the inaugural mentors for the Women in Tech - Nigeria Chapter "Mentor Me Programme". For those who may not know, the Women in Tech Programme is the world's leading organization for inclusion, diversity and equity in STEAM with over 200,000 members across 6 continents.

The indefatigable professional HR Practitioner who is a member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria and a certified professional coach; was recognized as one of the top 100 Career Women in Africa a few months ago. The compilation which featured women from 16 countries and 5 African regions - recognizes the outstanding achievements of women who have made remarkable impact in their industries.

Explaining why she went into the human resources profession, she says her dad Rev. Oritsenye Enemigin greatly influenced her decision. According to her: "I recall growing up and wondering why people were always in our house. Everyone wanted my dad to meet their new baby, their about-to-be wedded spouse, wanted some advice or the other

and our house was a revolving door of people who would come looking downcast sometimes but always left with a smile. I recall following him to work when I was younger and I could see the admiration and deep respect people had for him, and the thought of being able to impact lives as he did started to appeal to me. It was then I started nursing the idea of becoming a "Personnel Manager" as the profession was called then".

Continuing further, she asserted: "When I got into the university years later to study Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management, I was one of the 3 people in a class of about 30 who deliberately applied to the university to study Human Resource Management. It has always been HR for me and though I have constantly received excellent feedback on my contribution to business strategy, products, sales, and business development, harnessing human potential in a way that delivers a win-win for both employees and the business will always be my passion"

Expatiating on the role of HR in any business and society, she posited: "People know a lot about the role HR plays for employees and organizations, but I also believe that HR plays a very important role in the community/society. When HR co-creates a work environment that enables performance,

employee compensation and standard of living improves. This will have a positive impact on the quality of life in families and communities. There are also a lot of people whose life trajectory has changed, thanks to HR interventions. They have improved public speaking, poise and general life skills beyond the workplace, thanks to development interventions implemented at their various organizations and those skills are still earning them an income long after the job may have ended. HR professionals have the potential to impact individuals, companies and the larger society, and it is a privilege to be part of this esteemed profession".

Ejiro who has considered writing a book on her experiences as an HR professional leading a diverse, multi-cultural and multi-generational team in a patriarchal and turbulent environment such as Nigeria says there is a lot that HR people advocate for on behalf of employees that they would never know because they only get to see the ones that were approved. Similarly, she hinted that there are a lot of times HR deescalates issues that can impact business performance by advocating with employees on behalf of the organization when issues arise. Finding the balance between employee and organizational interests, she pointed out, is where a number of HR people struggle; adding that she has learnt to tackle it by relying on the grace of God, empathy, stakeholder management, technical expertise, knowing and understanding the business of her organization, as well as, knowing and understanding the key issues impacting the workforce at any given time.

On her critical success factors, she mentioned her faith in God, the support of her family, especially her husband and a growth mindset constantly focused on impact and making a difference.



Ejiro Ogunbanjo

SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

At Leo Burnett, I Am Committed To Driving Growth, Innovation, And Excellence

- Oluseyi Layade, Chief Operating Officer

A woman whose drive for results has earned her notable appointments, her career accomplishments can be inspiring. With a degree in Banking and Finance, she has surprisingly thrived in the advertising world and it is a wonder how she rose so rapidly in the profession to the position she holds today. Oluseyi Layade, the Chief Operating Officer of Leo Burnett Lagos who started her career in the industry 16 years ago is quick to ascribe it to her willingness to seize opportunities head-on and courage. Above all, she is grateful to God for His guidance in her professional journey.

IN addition to her leadership position in the firm where she works, she is also the Chairman of the Women in Advertising, a role she has dedicated to inspiring women to be their best in their chosen fields. Added to this, she takes pride in mentoring many young women, providing guidance and support to help them achieve their goals.

Can we have an insight into your background?

My career has been marked by success in leading culturally diverse cross-functional teams, driving growth ambitions for companies, and delivering groundbreaking campaigns with exceptional professionals.

Throughout my journey, I have honed my skills in collaboration, working to provide win-win solutions for multiple stakeholders. I thrive in making a positive impact on and off the job, and I am passionate about empowering others to do the same.

As the Chairman of Women in Advertising, I am dedicated to inspiring women to be the best in their chosen fields. I take pride in mentoring many young women, providing guidance and support to help them achieve their goals.

As COO of Leo Burnett Lagos, I am committed to leveraging my expertise to drive growth, innovation, and excellence in our agency. With my experience and passion for collaboration, I am confident that I am making a meaningful impact on our team and contributing to the success of our clients.

Can you take us through your career trajectory?

My journey in advertising began in 2000 with an internship at Lowe Lintas, where I got a taste of the industry. After completing my degree in Banking and Finance, and the compulsory National Youth Service Corps in 2006, I returned to advertising in 2008, this time joining 141 Worldwide, a Prima-Garnet Ogilvy Group company. After almost a decade, I grew from a fresh face to a middle management leader, and then got a unique opportunity to join SPV, the project office that led the consortium for OMNICOM after they won the MTN account. This was a pioneering move in the Nigerian advertising industry, and I was thrilled to be part of it.

As Head of Operations at the SPV, I was tasked with integrating and collaborating with existing agency competitors to drive integration, efficiency, effectiveness, and value for the 7-agency consortium and the leading telco brand in Nigeria. It was an incredible experience working with top professionals as colleagues and clients.

After three exciting years at SPV, I received a referral to join Ogilvy Nigeria as Group Head of Client Service and Innovation. During my two-year tenure, I delivered on the innovation mandate by leading my team with strategic initiatives that grew the company's revenue by over 300% and expanded operations beyond core advertising into public relations and experiential marketing.

In 2022, I received another referral to join Insight Publicis, Nigeria's number one advertising agency. After a series of meetings with the legendary Baale Jimi Awosika, I was inspired to join the team as Account Management Director in 2023. Later that year, I received a board promotion and moved within the group to lead Leo Burnett Lagos as Chief Operating Officer under the leadership of Dr. Tayo Oyedeji as Group CEO.

Today, I'm Chief Leo at Leo Burnett Lagos, crafting humankind strategies for many brands in Nigeria.

From your career trajectory, it's obvious you have risen very fast in the industry, what can you attribute as the reasons for this?

As I reflect on my career trajectory, I'm humbled by the realization that my rise in the industry is attributed to a combination of factors. I am grateful to God for guidance in my journey, which has taught me to

live each day with purpose and intention. I've learned to approach every opportunity with a sense of responsibility, striving to do the best in every moment.

My courage and willingness to seize opportunities head-on have also been instructive. I'm driven by a set of principles that guide my actions and decisions, which I've codified using the initials of my name: SEYI. *These principles are:*

S: Simple and Strong-willed - I believe that simplicity is key to effective communication and problem-solving. I thrive in breaking down complex issues into their most basic forms, and I'm unwavering in my commitment to achieving desired outcomes.

E: Empathy - I believe that understanding and acknowledging others' perspectives is crucial in building strong relationships and achieving positive results. I strive to adopt broader perspectives, considering multiple scenarios and viewpoints, and championing empathy in my interactions.

Y: Yielding - When faced with opposing opinions or perspectives, I'm willing to yield to superior reasoning, recognizing that sometimes the best approach is to adapt and evolve.

I: Impact - My goal is to make a positive impact in every aspect of my life and work. I consciously strive to create value and leave a lasting legacy in many of my interactions.

These principles continuously help me drive growth.

Who and who have been most influential in shaping your life and career?

Many advertising leaders have shaped my career and I will mention them. From Lowe Lintas - Ms. Olorin Creative at the most admired time and I always saw her on the creative

floor. I was amazed at how an elderly woman would carry herself so graciously. There was Mr. Hycent Nwabuisi who was my first boss as he was Head of Client Service at the time, I liked the fact that he seemed to be enjoying his job because they discussed many grand plans for Nigerian Breweries (Star) that seemed unbelievable to me and my young mind at the time.

Moving on to 141 Worldwide, I met Mr. Lolu Akinwunmi who was the Group CEO. As Group CEO all the staff across the group had intranet banter with him, he was friends with many of us on Facebook, he was and I believe still is an absolutely generous man. He created a system in my view where staff welfare was at the forefront of everything else. So, doing the best for the organization and the clients will come naturally.

Mrs. Bunmi Oke was a true inspiration as a woman leader, she led with so much dignity and was positivity. She would find a positive name for every pitch exercise and that really inspired me.

Mr. Soji Odedina, SOJ, Mr. Steve Babaeko, Steko, Sule Momoh, Suls, were brilliant leaders who pushed us to do the best we were ever capable of doing and would make it seem like fun.

You couldn't have those kinds of bosses and not be great in life. Then there was Mr. Akuwudike, Oga John, as we call him. Only the best was good enough. Many more colleagues in 141 inspired me.

In SPV- Saidat Lawal Mohammed was unbelievably simple. I thought I was a guru in simplifying complex situations but I hadn't met Saidat. Once I did, I marveled at how much grace a human being will demonstrate in the face of every and any situation. Managing the SPV's operations under her leadership was remarkable.

Today, my Group CEO Dr. Tayo Oyedeji inspires me. With him, it doesn't matter if you are new to a field, it can be learned. He inspires continuous learning and improvement.

Baale Jimi Awosika- Just by watching the relationship between the Vice Chairman and the Chairman, I feel like I owe them some drops of my sweat (lol). And of course, Mr. Biodun Shobanjo- I had only read about him in newspapers before I started working for him. Hearing inspiring stories and lessons directly from him especially at board meetings just makes me know that the only way to thrive in this profession is to be great at what you do. He once told a story about how he wanted to make a presentation to a client in Jos or so and all commercial flights were fully booked. My Chairman rented a private jet for the presentation. What other inspiration does anyone need to be great in this life?

How has the company been faring since you became its COO?

The company continues to have meaningful progress. Every team that has worked in Leo Burnett from inception has progressively added to the bricks of success and excellence that define Leo Burnett Lagos. Today, Leo Burnett is one of the companies in Nigeria that people are happy to work in, happy at work and look forward to coming to work. We are a connected community with shared vision and value having fun doing excellent work for our clients, partners and ourselves.

What advice do you have for aspiring female professionals?

My advice for professionals in general is to understand and know that Nigeria's success story cannot be complete without everyone's collective input. As marketing communication professionals, we have major platforms that we can use to inspire culture shaping initiatives. We have all it takes to shape the future of our country positively through our profession. We should be bold about positive initiatives, be forthright and be positive change ambassadors at every stage of career development. We should believe in this profession and uphold its tents with Dignity and Pride.



Oluseyi Layade

UUBO HAS ENABLED ME TO TRAVEL WIDELY AND MEET FASCINATING PROFESSIONALS

-YINKA EDU, PARTNER, UDO UDOMA AND BELO- OSAGIE.

BORN to Elder Simeon Moronfolu Olakunri, SAN, and Chief Mrs Olutoyin Olakunri, Africa's first female chartered accountant, Yinka Edu hails from a family of very successful professional parents, so it should not surprise anyone that she turned out successful in her professional calling too.

Today, Yinka is a Partner in the highly-rated and top-flight law firm, Udo Udoma and Belo-Osagie. She specializes in finance law, having entered the profession when specialization was becoming increasingly important. She has the record of being the first Nigerian lawyer to be ranked Tier 1 in Chambers and Partners, an international legal directory for fintech work, a growing practice area. She was equally named by African Shapers as one of the 60 African Women Experts in Fintech. Additionally, she was named Market Leader and Women Leader by IFLR 1000 and ranked Tier 1 in banking and finance, capital markets, and corporate/commercial practices. She also happened to be the first Chairman of the Capital Market Solicitors Association of Nigeria.

Married to a lawyer like her, Yinka joined Udo Udoma and Belo-Osagie in the late 1990's after she had qualified as a barrister in the UK and being called to the Bar of England and Wales. But since she could not practice law in Nigeria without having attended the Nigerian Law School, she also had to attend this training institution before she could join UUBO. Explaining her reason for going into the legal profession, she said: "My father, Elder S.M. Olakunri, SAN, is a distinguished lawyer, and former Chairman of the Body of Benchers. He epitomizes a 'lawyers' lawyer' taking the profession and its ethics very seriously. His dedication was so profound that he would type his documents when handling particularly confidential matters. This passion and respect for the profession greatly influenced me. Although I initially pursued a law degree to please him, I soon discovered that I was drawn to the problem-solving aspects of the field".

Aside from her father, she says her late mother was another great influence on her life and career. "My mother, the late Chief Mrs. Toyin Olakunri was an incredible role model professionally and as a mother. She balanced her career and raised seven biological

children and many more non-biological ones. As the first female chartered accountant in Africa, she was a banker, industrialist, and boardroom expert. Despite her many roles, she never missed an important event and was always available for advice. Her ability to manage everything inspired me greatly and continues to do so. It keeps me from feeling overwhelmed or sorry for myself as I see how my mother and other pioneering professional women made it work", she stressed.

Edu also recognizes her husband as someone that has been of significant influence on her. As a fellow lawyer and litigator, her husband, she says, understands her work and brings a complementary skillset and valuable perspectives.

She revealed that she has had a varied and exciting career at UUBO as she has had the opportunity to travel widely for work and meet fascinating professionals worldwide. She added that her professional life in the firm made her to be involved in significant transactions for well-known companies.

Speaking about her experiences on the job, she noted that there have been many memorable ones. She enthused: "one that stands out was when as a relatively young lawyer, I was asked to present some unique features we had introduced into the structure of the Total Merger to the senior management of SEC. At that time, such matters were assessed by a large panel of about twenty people across various departments. Although nervous, I was proud to present and secure approval for a new feature I had helped create".

She contends that every law firm worth its salt must innovate and be ready to embrace new ideas because standing still means going backwards. Thus, she has been open to exploring budding practice areas for UUBO even as she is always ready to integrate technology and learn from the younger generations.

In line with this, she has consequently led the firm's initiative to support startups and SMES through U-Law. This dedicated legal support service provides tailored advice and tech-based solutions to growth businesses. One of such products is the Compliance Calculator, a tech-based tool that allows MSMEs to assess their compliance with basic legal requirements without needing a lawyer.

And to aspiring female professionals, she proffered this counsel: "I genuinely believe you can have it all-though not all at once. You can effectively juggle these aspects of life by recognizing that there are different times and seasons- times to focus on family, work, or personal well-being. It's also important to be kind to yourself. If balancing priorities becomes too challenging, it's okay to consider scaling back".

MY GOAL IS TO ALWAYS GIVE MY BEST AND BE A GREAT AMBASSADOR OF UUBO

- OZOFU OGIEMUDIA, DEPUTY MANAGING PARTNER DESIGNATE, UDO UDOMA AND BELO-OSAGIE.

AN alumnus of Queen's College, Yaba, Lagos, the University of Ibadan and University College, London, Ozofu Ogiemudia has spent her entire working career with the law firm of Udo Udoma and Belo-Osagie. Starting as an intern in 2002, she later got employed as an associate in 2004, rising through the ranks to become a Partner in 2014, and come January next year, she will be making history as the first Deputy Managing Partner of the firm.

Born to Prof Bamidele and Mrs Ajike Sanni who are both retired academics at the University of Benin, Ozofu never wanted to study Law initially. It was her parents that subtly nudged her out of the thought to pursue fashion design after a law degree.

Commencing the Law School in July 2002, Ozofu was fortunate to get an internship at UUBO. This opened her eyes for another aspect of the law that she was not much exposed to in the university- corporate law. She became aware that she could practice law and not have to go to court which suited her very well since she was not keen on being a litigator. When she joined the firm eventually in 2004, she didn't waste time in going for her Master's degree in corporate and securities law. This was at University College, London and to cap it, and expose her to the practical side, UUBO arranged for her to spend three months with the Law firm of Denton Wilde Sapte, now Dentons, in London, where she spent time with the trade finance and corporate finance teams.

Ogiemudia who has been active in the Nigerian Bar Association Section on Business Law since 2016 had her first shot at contributing to the Nigerian legislative process when Mr. Olu Akpata chaired the section. Since then, she had various opportunities from subsequent chairmen of the section to contribute in various ways to enhance the section as well as Nigeria's legal and regulatory system. She says: "I got the chance of a lifetime to chair the technical advisory committee that advised the 8th Nigerian Senate and drafted what eventually became the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020, and the road that led to this began with a call to serve with the NBASBL.

In July 2024, following the NBASBL's nomination process for the executive committee members that will lead the section from August 2024-August 2026, I emerged as the next chairperson. This is a huge responsibility and I look forward to doing my best to advance the objectives and causes of the NBASBL, leveraging on the wealth of intellectual and other resources within the NBASBL, the NBA as a whole and other partner organizations".

Ogiemudia declared that her expectation

s after law school have been met because she wanted to work in one of the best law firms and become an expert in the areas of law she chooses to specialize in and this has been realized. She maintained that as a commercial lawyer she has enjoyed the work that went into helping companies capitalize, restructure, or merge adding that it has always been rewarding.

On those who shaped her life and career, she pointed out that her parents were the ones who primarily shaped her values and ethos while the leading of the holy spirit and the teachings of the bible took over ever since she got born again in her teenage years. Her husband, family and friends have also played varying roles in influencing her life, she says.

From the point of view of career, she acknowledges that she was fortunate to have a host of role models at UUBO who helped in shaping her. She mentioned the founding partners, Senator Udoma Udo Udoma and Dr. Myma Belo-Osagie in this regards. According to her, Senator Udoma's life in public service influenced her interest in legislative advocacy, while she sees Dr Belo-Osagie as a female amazon in the Nigerian corporate legal scene whose life proved that it was possible to succeed in a career, and at the same time, raise a family and build the right support system to make it possible.

"Most impactful in my career has been UUBO's current Senior Partner, Dan Agbor, who gave me the chance to intern with the firm in 2002, took me under his wing, and taught me how to be a good lawyer and trusted adviser to my clients. Our current Managing Partner, Aniekan Ukpanah, and Managing Partner designate, Jumoke Lambo, are models who lead gently and with compassion," she says.

Recounting her unforgettable experiences in the profession, she stated: "One of my most memorable moments was on August 2020 when I received an SMS informing me that former President Buhari had signed the CAMA 2020 into law. It was surreal. I will never forget the journey that began in May 2017 when our committee was inaugurated, and culminated in submitting our reports and the draft bill in February 2018. This was followed by more than two years and a change of government, during which it seemed that our work would not be actualized."

Saying that her goal is to always give her best and be a great ambassador of UUBO and the Nigerian legal profession, she implored aspiring female lawyers to aspire to get into one of the best firms in their areas of interest where they can learn and build expertise, and be ready to work very hard. Furthermore, she urged them to believe in themselves and aim for the best.



UUBO HAS ALLOWED ME TO GROW PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY

— FOLAKE ELIAS-ADEBOWALE, PARTNER,
UDO UDOMA & BELO-OSAGIE



Folake Elias-Adebawale

BORN to lawyer parents and having older siblings as lawyers, no one should then wonder why Folake Elias-Adebawale turned out to be a lawyer too. In fact, the family's involvement in diverse legal functions on the bench, incorporate, administrative, government, international and private practice as well as academics and authorship is legendary and was more than enough to incentivise her to go into the profession as well. Coupled with this was her deep fascination for the power of language and how it can creatively impact outcomes.

Thus Folake, who took her O'Level, A'Level and S'Level exams in Felixstowe College, Suffolk, England not only went ahead to obtain a Bachelor in Jurisprudence from Oxford University, London, but also a Master in International Business Transactions, International Trade, Foreign Relations Law and Evidence from the University College, London before returning to Nigeria to attend the Nigerian Law School and got called to the Nigerian Bar. In 1996, she joined Udo Udoma and Belo-Osagie Law Firm, a firm where she has remained since.

Today, she is a Partner in this top law firm, a role she had assumed since 2007. At present she is current co-Head of Mergers and Acquisitions as well as the Head of the private equity, venture capital and oil and gas teams. She says: "Outside oil and gas, my specialisations are sector-agnostic. I get to advise across diverse industries and sectors on domestic and cross-border matters including equity and asset investments, acquisitions, divestment, restructuring and on a range of compliance matters. I have been privileged to advice local and foreign investors and other stakeholders on transactions in the financial services, fast-moving consumer goods, food and beverages including breweries, industrials, oil and gas, renewables, fintech, agriculture and agribusiness, health, pharmaceuticals, real estate, construction and entertainment sectors among others."

"My grand plan was to stay in private practice for no more than a year before exploring options in DFI, finance or impact investing. Life however happened and I found that I enjoyed private practice. Senator Udoma's founding philosophy of fostering a meritocratic culture of excellence at UUBO has helped it achieve unparalleled gender parity. This appealed to me and aligned with my learning and career ambitions, even as my husband and I were growing a young family. It is still a great place to work-it's probably why we have so many lifers."

"I have had opportunities to work on significant transactions and provide

strategic advice to a fantastic plethora of local and international clients, and with every assignment, I learn something new. The journey has been both challenging and rewarding but has allowed me to grow professionally and personally. 28 years later, having never left after my first year of corporate and commercial practice at UUBO, I can safely say that my original plan has completely derailed".

On the people that have been most influential in shaping her life and career, she says her family comes first because they shaped her values, conscience and ambitions. According to her, her father, Prof Taslim Olawale Elias of blessed memory, was a man of unparalleled productivity, unwavering principles and unmatched work ethic and he taught his children to disregard limitations and prejudices even as he instilled in them the belief that they could achieve anything. Coupled with this, were her mother and her grandmother who imbued her with values of female independence, self-sufficiency and compassion. In addition, she stated that her husband has been very supportive and invaluable in helping to maintain a balanced perspective in everything she does.

"My daughters teach me resilience, humility and the importance of dreaming big. I am committed to these values which have led me to wonderful mentoring opportunities. I have also been fortunate to meet individuals whose intellect, far-sightedness, empathy and ethics have profoundly impacted my core values, life experiences, outlook and aspirations".

Nostalgic about her parents and grateful to them, she is ever proud and happy with what the Saile Foundation setup by her brother, Gbolahan and his wife Aramide Elias is doing to honour them. She revealed that the foundation hosts the annual Taslim Olawale Elias football tournament and literary competition amongst Lagos Island children.

Asked of the most memorable experiences that she had in the profession, Elias-Adebawale was quick to point out that there is no one favourite experience. She is however grateful for the many memorable transactions that she'd been part of. Said she: "The thrill of navigating and resolving issues to meet the unique challenges and objectives of each deal never gets old of me. I suspect I'm a bit addicted to the roller-coaster adventure of every deal-every "ride" is unforgettable".

Continuing she noted: "A great privilege of my career has been the recognition of my practice in independent legal rankings such as Chambers Global, Chambers Fintech, The Legal 500, The International Financial Law Review and Lexology/Who's Who Legal and ranked as an IFLR 1000 Woman Leader, an honour for women lawyers distinguished by their expertise, experience, and leadership in complex deals, is truly a remarkable recognition".

Offering words of advice to aspiring female lawyers, she counselled them to be ready to work hard and continually upskill while seizing every opportunity to distinguish themselves "Confidence is paramount", she maintained. "Accept that you deserve a seat at the table, earn it, and then own it. Allow yourself grace, but also hold yourself accountable for your mistakes and learn from your failures. Embrace your strengths and vulnerabilities, they keep you grounded. Tackle challenges with resilience. Actively listen and cultivate empathy. Pace yourself to maintain balance and avoid burnout. Prioritize your health and above all, your faith".

I HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN DEVELOPING NEW PRACTICE AREAS AT UUBO

- Jumoke Lambo, Managing Partner
Designate, UDO UDOMA & BELO-OSAGIE



Jumoke Lambo

Mrs. Jumoke Lambo, the incoming Managing Partner of Udo Udoma and Belo-Osagie, one of the foremost law firms in Nigeria today, studied Law at University of Bristol, UK. She had earlier gained her O'Level and A'Level certificates at Elerslie Girls School, in the same UK. After bagging her law degree, she returned to Nigeria to attend the Nigerian Law School and was called to the Bar in 1989. She subsequently did her NYSC at Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie and got retained after her service year in 1990, meaning that as at today, she has spent over 35 years in the firm.

Lambo who became a Partner in 2000 disclosed that she decided on reading law because of her passion for justice, equity and fairness in the society. As someone that believes in ensuring everyone has access to justice, and is treated with dignity, with their fundamental rights respected, protected and preserved, she is thus obsessed with law. Apart from this, Mr. Femi Okunnu, SAN, her uncle, was a great influence on her. She reminisced that her discussions with him in her childhood days always centered on current events and this greatly fueled her desire to pursue a career in the profession.

Lambo who has had a distinguishable career at UUBO revealed that her areas of specialization include telecommunications, media and technology, data protection, commercial aviation law, employment law including corporate immigration and business establishment advisory, mergers and acquisitions with a focus on due diligence compliance and general corporate advisory. In 2010, she was seconded to Etisalat Nigeria as head of legal directorate where she was tasked with restructuring the unit. Similarly, she was seconded to Union Bank in 2014 to restructure their legal unit. Additionally, she oversees Alsec Nominees Ltd, the company secretarial arm of the firm which provides company secretarial and corporate compliance services for over 300 companies across almost every sector of the Nigerian economy.

She returns all glory to God for her accomplishments so far in life. Aside from God, she says she owes a great deal to her parents, Mr. Abdul Karim Ohimai Amu, OFR and Mrs. Morayo Yeside Amu and Mr. Femi Okunnu, SAN, who mentored and nurtured her. According to her, there are numerous others who she cannot mention individually

but that she remains grateful to all. She said that her aspirations when she left Law School was to reach the pinnacle of her career no matter where life takes her adding that it is gratifying that her prayers have been answered by the almighty.

Recalling some significant experiences in her over 35 years professional career, she offered: "One standout moment was when the firm was engaged by the Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Bureau for Public Enterprises to work with an international consortium of experts to review the Nigerian telecommunications framework. This project was life-transforming for me, sparking my interest in telecommunications and technology. I'm particularly grateful for this work because its benefits continue to drive advancements in the sector, contributing about 15% to Nigeria's GDP."

She continued; "The secondments to Etisalat Nigeria and Union Bank were also pivotal assignments. These opportunities exposed me to new experiences and broadened my perspectives, significantly impacting how I engage with in-house counsel. They also inspired me to adopt new practices to enhance the firm's efficiency, many of which we have implemented over the years."

Lambo who has been instrumental in developing new practice at UUBO such as the data protection practice, and expanding other practice areas to merge them or broaden the range of services provided to clients also handles the pastoral care of all employees. This involves counselling employees and being a supportive listener to address their concerns. This, she says, is because the firm is deeply committed to her employees' well-being as well as their mental, physical and emotional health, thus ensuring a safe and supportive workplace for everyone.

Speaking on the challenges she'd had in her career, she had this to say: "Challenges often arise from the work clients refer to us and on a personal level. These challenges are what make the practice of law so exciting to me. No two matters are ever the same, regardless of how similar the facts may be. Each case has its unique characteristics, making the task enjoyable as we strive to find solutions that work for our clients. Balancing work and personal life also presented its challenges. I remember working on a project in Abuja while needing to be home every evening for family commitments. For two weeks, I took the first flight to Abuja and returned on the last flight each day. Despite the demanding schedule, the work proceeded smoothly, and my family was not neglected".

As she is on the cusp of becoming the Managing Partner of UUBO, Lambo is eagerly looking forward to an exciting tenure of growth and expansion. On the other hand, she aims to increase efforts at giving back to society and nurturing the next generation of young professionals. And to aspiring female professionals, she has these words of advice: "Dream big and strive to achieve your dreams. While there will be obstacles along the way, the only thing that can stop you is yourself. Surround yourself with women who have walked the path you aspire to take and seek mentorship from them".

A lover of children and youth she contends that she would have been working with children and youth or become a Human Resources professional if she had not gone into the law profession. In fact, even though she turned out to be a lawyer, she is currently involved with organizations supporting young women, providing them with the tools to succeed in their careers and become well-rounded individuals.

“Pharmacy Has Satisfied My Passion For Helping Others”

– Pharm. Adetutu Afolabi, CEO, Wellness Healthcare Group

It is natural to fall ill, but what is important and overriding is to get treatment for the illness. For many in Nigeria however, access to quality healthcare remains a problem. This is where an organization like Wellness Healthcare Group comes in. The group with its flagship, Wellness HMO has been leading the charge to make healthcare accessible to all, offering comprehensive services at various levels to meet the diverse needs of communities. Its goal is simple yet ambitious: to become a household name synonymous with quality, accessible and holistic healthcare.

Behind this top notch and highly customer-centric organization is a quiet and unobtrusive, but result oriented and workaholic professional, Pharmacist Adetutu Afolabi. A woman of diligence and great compassion, Pharm Afolabi studied Pharmacy at the Olabisi Onabanjo University. However, though she had been deeply committed to caring for those around her and ensuring their well-being from a young age, it is interesting to know that it was her father that ultimately convinced her to go for a career in the medical sciences.

Said she, “Life guides us towards unexpected paths often revealing new opportunities where we least expect them. My educational journey is a testament to the twists and turns that can lead to unexpected blessings. As a young student, my heart was set on medicine, mainly due to my father's belief in my natural ability to care for others. However, as fate would have it, my path took a different turn. Before my JAMB results were announced, I enrolled in a polytechnic programme to study accountancy. I thrived in this field, quickly passing several professional courses under the Accounting Technician Scheme. I found satisfaction in numbers and finance believing it to be my destined career path”.

Looking back, she is grateful for her father's wisdom and guidance because pharmacy has satisfied her passion for helping others and allowing her to blend her analytical skills with the desire to make a difference in people's lives. According to her, it was a decision that has blessed her in countless ways transforming a path she never

intended to take in a lifelong calling.

Born to successful entrepreneur parents who taught her the values of diligence, dedication and honesty; values which have been the guiding principles of her life till today, Afolabi began her career after the mandatory National Youth Service Corps at Raola Pharmacy. There, she worked as a superintendent pharmacist before moving over to GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals where she spent four years as a Business Development Executive. During her time there, she honed her skills in sales and marketing and developed a keen interest in agile processes which she sees as essential for operational effectiveness and efficiency.

The experiences garnered from these two firms, GlaxoSmithKline especially, were what paved the way for her entrepreneurial journey. “Accountability, dedication and goal achievement became my second nature as an employee. Working alongside exceptional managers, I was encouraged to grow personally and professionally”.

“Work can often feel like a high-stakes competition. However, my experience was quite the opposite, thanks to the camaraderie bosses at GlaxoSmithKline. We were a close-knit team, free of unhealthy competition and genuinely cared for one another, which made work not just a job but a joy. Our relationships transcended professional boundaries and our respect for each other was the foundation of our success. At GlaxoSmithKline, I marketed antidepressants and became known for my knowledge of depression and psychosomatic ailments. I recall a doctor once asking if I was a psychiatric pharmacist, impressed by the depth of my understanding. This acknowledgement validated my efforts and fueled my passion for making a difference in patients' lives through informed and compassionate care,” she stated.

No wonder her company Wellness HMO, a health insurance organization is committed to providing comprehensive health for its enrollees and strives to make healthcare more affordable and accessible ensuring that everyone can receive the medical care that they deserve regardless of their economic status. The firm's insurance plans are tailored to providing maximum benefits, offering individuals and families peace of mind and financial security.

“Our network of community pharmacies is pivotal in promoting health and wellness across the regions we serve. By ensuring that our communities have access to essential pharmaceutical care and products, we are helping to create safer, healthier environments. Our pharmacists are committed to providing expert advice and personalized care, ensuring everyone is well catered for”.

Recognizing the importance of mental and emotional health, the company has in place the Employee Assistance Programme which supports mental wellness and promotes emotional resilience while focusing on developing leadership capabilities for firms. And to continuously enhance access to wellness, the company always ensures it develops and improves its health tech products. These innovative solutions, according to Afolabi is to make healthcare more efficient and user-friendly. By integrating technology into healthcare, it believes it will break down barriers and bring quality care to everyone.

The Wellness Healthcare Group's founder is however grateful to parents, family, friends, colleagues and bosses for the various roles played in her growth and development. She also recognized the profound impact of her spouse on her life saying that through him she has come to realize that marriage can be both a game-changer and a deal-breaker.



Pharm. Adetutu Afolabi

Trailblazing Professional Transcending Boundaries: The Inspiring Journey of Oreoluwa Atinmo, Marketing Director, GB Foods PLC

OREOLUWA Atinmo, is one trailblazing professional who managed to cross two careers of different spectrums, making a remarkable transition from the precise science of engineering to the highly dynamic world of marketing. And being the go getter that she is, Atinmo beat the odds to attain the highly daunting role of Marketing Director at GB Foods, a multinational conglomerate in the FMCG industry.

Atinmo started her career as an engineer at Heineken in Nigerian Breweries before making a bold move into marketing. She credits her undergraduate degree in Electrical Electronic Engineering and a Masters degree in Engineering for laying the foundation for her analytical skills. However, her vision for business leadership prompted her to prepare ahead for the leap of faith and pursue a passionate career in marketing.

In this interview with Fatai Tijani-Alabi, Atinmo shares her journey, challenges, successes, and valuable advice for aspiring female professionals.

HER educational background includes a first-class degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering from the University of Nottingham and a master's in petroleum engineering from Imperial College London. She began her professional journey as a Sub-Sea Engineer Intern at Shell Nigeria and later contributed to BP's Gulf of Mexico oil spill response before joining Heineken.

Oreoluwa faced significant challenges transitioning from engineering to marketing. According to her, she had to adapt to a more subjective and nuanced field, where opinions and consumer behavior play a crucial role. Reflecting on the transition, she noted the challenges of adapting to a more subjective discipline where success is determined by consumer resonance rather than technical precision.

“Marketing isn't black or white like engineering,” Atinmo explains. “As an engineer, it's clear-cut—either the machine is running, or it's not. In marketing, your success depends on how well you connect with your consumers. You may think you're communicating effectively, but if it doesn't resonate with your audience, it won't translate into sales or conversions.”

Atinmo credits her family for instilling strong values and hard work. Her career growth has been significantly influenced by her husband, two inspiring bosses, and her mentors.

As Marketing Director at GB Foods, Atinmo oversees a diverse product portfolio, including Gino Tomato Paste, Bama mayonnaise, Gino herbs, spices, and Gino Max seasoning cubes. Her focus is on expanding regional presence, driving product innovation, and increasing marketing activations to meet evolving consumer needs. “We continually innovate for our consumers, we are very confident in our unique recipes.”

For aspiring professionals, Atinmo offers valuable advice: maintain professionalism, stand for something, and most importantly, put God first.

Oreoluwa Atinmo's journey is a powerful testament to determination, hard work, and resilience. Her successful transition from engineering to marketing serves as an inspiration, empowering others to pursue their passions and achieve greatness.



Oreoluwa Atinmo

SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

I AM MOTIVATED BY OUR MISSION TO DELIVER DELICIOUS AND NUTRITIOUS PRODUCTS TO NIGERIAN HOUSEHOLDS

-AMARA OBRIFOR, NATIONAL SALES DIRECTOR, GB FOODS NIGERIA

When Amara Obrifor graduated with a degree in Biochemistry, her sights were set on working in the Quality Assurance Department of any firm. In fact, when she applied to Procter & Gamble Nigeria back then, it was for a job in their Quality Assurance Department, but things took a different turn as her interviewers felt she will be more suited for the sales department. Though, she didn't like the idea of sales as she had no knowledge of what it entails, but she was talked into it by the firm's then Director of Sales. That step has turned out to be divinely crafted, for Amara has since then been excelling in the sales field, becoming an enigma. Today, she is the National Sales Director of GB Foods Nigeria, a multinational company with headquarters in Barcelona, Spain.

Can you share a bit about your early career and what inspired you to enter the field of sales?

At the outset of my career, my future direction was not entirely clear. My high school education exposed me to a range of subjects, but it was my passion for the sciences and analytical thinking that guided my decision to pursue a degree in Biochemistry at the prestigious University of Benin.

During my undergraduate studies, a pivotal experience came from my industrial training at Seven-Up Bottling Company. This period was instrumental in sparking my interest in the corporate world. Although my initial inclination was toward a career in quality assurance, where I felt my academic background would be most applicable, my career path took an unexpected turn.

After completing my NYSC, I applied to Procter & Gamble Nigeria. Despite my initial goal of joining the quality assurance department, I was informed during the interview process that there were no current openings in that area. However, the directors, impressed by my test results, suggested that my skills and potential would be well-suited to a role in sales.

Although I had no prior experience in sales and was initially reluctant, a conversation with the sales director provided new insights. His practical approach and persuasive argument about the opportunities within sales were compelling. I realized that effective salesmanship involves the same persuasive skills I had observed in our discussion.

Embracing this opportunity, I excelled in my role, achieving significant results in my first year and earning a promotion to head a region by the following year. Nearly two decades later, my career has been deeply rooted in sales and commercial roles, which continue to invigorate me with new challenges and opportunities.

This journey has reinforced the value of adaptability and openness to new possibilities in career development.

Can we have insights into your background?

I am currently the National Sales Director at GB Foods Nigeria, a prominent global food company headquartered in Barcelona, Spain. In this role, I lead a team of 700 sales professionals, ensuring the execution of effective route-to-market strategies and seamless sales operations. Our objective is to deliver high-quality products efficiently to retail outlets and ultimately to the end consumer.

My career began as a Key Account Manager at Procter & Gamble Nigeria, where I managed key accounts in Eastern Nigeria. I then advanced to the role of Regional Sales Manager, overseeing operations across various regions of the country. Following this, I was entrusted with the responsibility for National Corporate Market Strategy & Planning for Nigeria and subsequently promoted to lead that department.

I later transitioned to the pharmaceutical industry as the Pharmacy Channel Lead for Sub-Saharan Africa with AstraZeneca. This experience further refined my strategic and leadership capabilities. I joined GB Foods as the Business Development Director before being appointed to my current role as National Sales Director.

What were the challenges you've had in the profession and how have you managed to tackle them?

As the National Sales Director at GB Foods Nigeria, I encounter a range of challenges daily. These range from designing plans to company's objectives, developing strategic relationships with clients/customers, and ensuring



AMARA OBRIFOR

profitable growth of the business.

Sales is a demanding profession, often requiring extensive travel and a high level of skill in selling and negotiation. The nature of the role demands a delicate balance of strategic vision, operational efficiency, and result-driven leadership. To effectively manage these challenges, I focus on several key strategies:

Communication: I emphasize the importance of strong communication by holding regular virtual meetings with my team. This ensures alignment and engagement, and I conduct frequent performance reviews to keep everyone on track and adjust our strategies as needed.

Client Management: Given the dynamic nature of the role, I prioritize maintaining flexibility with client interactions. I ensure availability and responsiveness while upholding professional boundaries and integrity.

Support Systems: My professional approach is bolstered by a robust support network, particularly my spouse, whose encouragement has been pivotal in my career. His unwavering support, embodied in his mantra "Go for it!", coupled with my dedication to balancing Faith, Family, and Career, empowers me to handle professional demands effectively.

Additionally, I focus on providing constructive feedback, celebrating team achievements, and creating opportunities for professional growth. Through these practices and support systems, I manage to balance the complex demands of my role while striving for excellence in all aspects of my life.

Who and who have been most influential on your life and career?

Throughout my career, I have been fortunate to be influenced by numerous managers, mentors, sponsors and inspirational figures, each contributing valuable lessons in

both personal and professional realms. However, two individuals have been particularly pivotal in shaping my career.

The first is my initial manager in the corporate world. She was a tremendous source of inspiration and played a crucial role in encouraging me to take on new challenges. Her support in overcoming impostor syndrome and her ability to recognize and celebrate my achievements were instrumental to my growth. Her consistent affirmation and encouragement, encapsulated in her words, "You did it! I'm proud of you and I knew you could do it," have had a lasting impact on my confidence and professional development.

The second influential figure is my current manager, from whom I continue to learn and grow. He has extended the opportunities and support to keep making progress. His leadership and insights have significantly enriched my understanding and approach to various aspects of my role.

Both individuals have profoundly shaped my career trajectory and have been invaluable in my journey toward excellence.

You have led the Sales Business for different companies in African emerging markets. How do the business environments and challenges differ between these countries, and how do you tailor your strategies accordingly?

Throughout my career, I have led Commercial operations in various emerging markets across Sub-Saharan Africa, managing large and diverse teams. Each market presents its own unique set of challenges and opportunities, driven by distinctive cultural nuances and differing business environments.

This diversity requires a high degree of adaptability and flexibility in tailoring strategies to meet the specific needs of each market. Challenges such as communication gaps, varying working styles, and differing expectations from teams can arise. To address these, it is crucial to develop a deep understanding of each market's dynamics, business drivers, and cultural context. By leveraging this insight, I craft market-specific solutions that align with local conditions, ultimately driving success and fostering growth in these diverse regions.

What are the challenges that are being encountered in the sales of the products and how have you been surmounting them?

One of the significant challenges we face is the high inflationary environment and its impact on consumer purchasing power. In response, implementing strategic innovations that afford consumers quality with affordability is key. The goal is to maintain the high standards of products while ensuring they remain accessible to consumers.

Each day, I am motivated by our mission to deliver delicious and nutritious products to Nigerian households. I am particularly excited about our commitment to celebrating local flavors, which not only enhances the culinary experience but also resonates deeply with consumers, transforming mealtimes and fostering a connection to local delicacies.

This is the strong sense of purpose and dedication that drives my work. I approach every challenge with the commitment to make a meaningful impact, ensuring our products contribute positively to our customers' lives.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind in the corporate world and within the communities you serve, and what advice would you give to aspiring female professionals aiming to achieve a similar impact?

The Legacy of consistently delivering strong value to the industries I play in and consequently significant value for shareholders, whilst touching the lives of people positively every day. I would love to inspire other female professionals to embrace the challenges and responsibilities of managing bigger portfolios and to raise their hands with confidence and yet the humility to keep learning, unlearning, and re-learning every day. My advice will be that they trust God, be authentic with their leadership style, expand their comfort zones, learn new things, and stay relevant in their industry. They'll need to cooperate with integrity and demonstrate a high level of ownership.



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SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

We Are Redefining The Advertising Landscape With Our Tools And Innovative Solutions

- Marian Ogaziechi, CEO, Dentsu Agyle Nigeria.

A professional with a can-do spirit who has mastered the art of collaborating with cross-functional teams to provide exceptional results, Marian Ogaziechi, the Managing Director of Dentsu Agyle Nigeria is a study in resilience and determination. With about two decades of experience in marketing communications and having led several initiatives in content production, media sales, brand management, media buying, trading and investment management, she has over the years risen to become an expert in providing solutions to meet client's objectives.

With a deep understanding of market dynamics which has seen her lead Dentsu Agyle to indomitable heights, she takes pride in improving efficiency, and thus, clients' bottom-line in terms of returns on investment. Always brimming with ideas, she aims to use her company to redefine the advertising landscape in the next few years with media innovative real time solutions that drive efficiency and clients' profitability, and this, she intends to do by the use of technology.

Can we have an insight into your background?

I am Marian Ogaziechi, a seasoned integrated marketing specialist with about two decades years' experience in the marketing communications, where I have led initiatives in content production, media sales, brand management, media buying, trading and investment management. Currently, I am the managing director of Dentsu Agyle Nigeria, where I drive media innovations, exploring untapped and unconventional media offering and providing marketing communication solutions to meet our client's objectives.

I hold a degree in theatre and communications art from the University of Jos and I have also attended several leadership and executive programs at the London and Lagos Business Schools. Professionally, I am passionate about driving efficiency and improving clients ROI, which has been my guiding principle as a media innovations expert.

Apart from empowering my team, I am passionate about women and special needs children and through my NGO, We Smile Empowerment Foundation, I advocate for women empowerment and capacity development for special need children.

I am also passionate about mentoring young girls and that passion has given rise to Doyenne Circle, where I mentor young women through storytelling, drama and performing arts.

You are an integrated marketing communications professional, what informed your choice of this profession?

I figured that focusing on Integrated marketing communications will enable me to express my passion in driving business outcomes that are measurable.

I have spent 10 years of my career focusing on delivering client ROI and driving efficiency for multinational and fortune 500 companies at Dentsu. I have always enjoyed creative problem-solving and strategic thinking, which are essential skills in integrated marketing. This profession allows me to leverage these strengths to develop innovative solutions for clients.

Can you take us through your career trajectory?

The first half of my career has spanned across content production, media sales, BTL and brand management in the media and entertainment sector; while in the past ten years I have majored in strategic media buying, trading, investment management and media innovations enabled by Tech.

With a deep understanding of market dynamics, I am passionate about driving efficiency and improving clients' ROI which has seen me lead transnational commercial teams across different business verticals for Fortune 500 companies operating in SSA and Large nationals operating in the following sectors: FMCGs, Brewed Beverage, Financial, Fintech, Tech, Oil and Gas Telecommunication, Alcoholic beverages and SCDs and Dairy.

As I progressed in my career, I took on leadership roles, including my current position as Managing Director of Dentsu Agyle Nigeria. In this role, I am responsible for driving media efficiencies and leading a talented team to deliver innovative marketing solutions.

Who and who have been most influential on your life and career?

Throughout my life and career, several individuals have been incredibly influential. Firstly, my parents instilled in me valuable lessons like resilience, perseverance, hard work and self-motivation, which have been foundational to my growth.

Professionally, I was fortunate enough to have a mentor early in my career who guided me through the complexities of the industry. The insights and encouragement helped me develop confidence and strategic thinking skills.

Additionally, my growth in the marketing communications sector, was greatly influenced by my boss - Mr. Emeka Okeke,

group CEO Mediafuse-Denstu Nigeria who recognized my potential and encouraged me to pursue leadership opportunities. The belief in my abilities was instrumental in my career advancement. Till date, I draw inspiration from my boss whose belief in my abilities and continuous mentorship continues to shape my approach to challenges and opportunities in my professional life and providing career advancement.

Can you recall some memorable experiences that you have had in your professional journey?

I will say I do not have one memorable experience as I have had lots of career highlights and memories to cherish for a very long time. Every time we have won a commercial led pitch is memorable, and the best times are when we win global pitches. All global pitches are always quite complex projects that require coordinating efforts across multiple teams, and as the commercial lead, I am responsible for developing cohesive commercial strategies that align with the client's and the company's vision.

What are the challenges you have faced and how have you managed to tackle them?

Life itself has both dark and bright sides, hence challenges are a huge part of life and living. I lost my father early as a teenager, and that experience taught me to accept challenges just like I accept wins and learnt perseverance. Challenges are part of life, so I ensure to learn from whatever obstacles I am facing to ensure it does not happen a second time. I have also learnt to be flexible and communicate proactively to avoid unpleasant surprises which has helped me manage most situations.

You are the Managing Director for Denstu Agyle, what does the company do and how has it been faring?

We are a part of the Media fuse Dentsu holding company in Nigeria; Denstu Agyle is a full-service marketing communications company specialized in media investment management and media innovations enable by Tech. The media investment arm offer media buying services across all media touch points with a goal to ensure we are the most efficient in the market leveraging our group - Denstu Nigeria buying clout and tech to drive optimization and productivity across all media touch points. While our media innovative services include smart productions, original content creation & monetization, influencer marketing and PR all enabled by Tech to drive the right ROI. We are about the only agency offering these services in one and we are excited to be

setting the pace for others to follow.

QUE: What are your plans for the company going forward?

ANS: Our plans are quite ambitious, and I will say watch out and see how we redefine the landscape with our tools, and media innovative real time solutions to drive advertising efficiency and ROI enabled by Tech.

What advice do you have for aspiring female professionals?

Firstly, I will say, come with a value-based mindset as no one will hand you anything for just being a woman. You can achieve that by continuous learning and reinventing yourself, build a strong value-based network and get the right mentorship that aligns with your values, offers valuable insights and advice. Their experience can help you navigate your career path more effectively. Be open to new opportunities, even if they seem challenging and unfamiliar. Based on experience, these experiences can lead to unexpected growth and career advancement. Stay resilient and adaptable. The ability to bounce back from challenges and adjust to changing circumstances is key to long-term success. Lastly, be focused on your goals even when distractions come.

The need to mentor young and aspiring female professionals gave birth to Dentsu Agyle's Women Leading Change (WLC) Master Class and Symposium. This holds annually to commemorate the International Women's Day and is essentially a platform that is used to educate, inspire and prepare young women for leadership.



Marian Ogaziechi

SPECIAL REPORT ON NIGERIA'S EXCEPTIONAL AND MOST VALUE-ADDING FEMALE PROFESSIONALS

"I Have Continually Developed Innovative Strategies to Maintain Competitiveness And Profitability for Dentsu X"

– Adekemi Olurin-Alegbeleye, Managing Director, Dentsu X

With a degree in accountancy, one would have expected Mrs Adekemi Olurin-Alegbeleye to be in any financial institution or in the finance department of any firm. In truth, she was recruited into the finance department of Troyka Group, but that same year, she transitioned into the media department in the group and has since never looked back again. With her track record in the industry today, she is definitely a marketing communication guru. She currently heads the integrated marketing agency known as Dentsu X, which is a part of the Dentsu Group, a Tokyo-born multinational. In this capacity, she has been leading the firm to deliver excellent results and profitability.

Can we have an insight into your background?

INTERESTINGLY, I studied Accounting at the Lagos State University, popularly known as LASU. While in school, I enjoyed subjects like maths, further maths and did my ACCA exams. My analytical nature drives me to ensure things add up and make sense. Although I initially aspired to follow in my father's footsteps and pursue a career in medicine, unfortunately my discomfort with blood didn't quite let that work out.

You studied Accounting in the university, what informed your choice of the marketing communications profession?

I would say marketing communications discovered me when I was least expecting it. In 2009, I joined Starcom Media Perspective as a finance executive focusing on what I did best. That same year, my boss encouraged me to join the media team to assist with a major campaign launch, and from that day on, everything changed.

Can you take us through your career trajectory?

I began my journey as a marketing intern at an IT consultancy after completing my NYSC. Although I didn't realize it at that time, it was my first experience in marketing. After a lengthy and unproductive job search following my relocation to Nigeria in 2008, I was fortunate to join the Troyka Group as a management trainee. This marked the beginning of a year-long immersion in the advertising industry collaborating with agency partners, media owners, production houses, printing companies, and of course, the brands themselves.

Once the training programme concluded, I started as a finance executive and later transitioned to the media department where I worked closely with the research, monitoring and planning teams. I enjoyed the creativity, data analysis and strategic aspects of the business, along with a passion for client servicing and interacting with people. I quickly climbed the ranks and mastered the essential tools of the trade. By my fourth year, I was leading a team that worked with global and in-market brands, and I participated in numerous pitches that significantly boosted my professional growth.

After more than six years at Starcom MP, I moved on to Media fuse Dentsu where I honed my skills and began mentoring younger colleagues through training programs. I also took part in various industry initiatives, stepping out of my comfort zone to achieve numerous milestones. Today, I lead a talented and driven team that consistently delivers exceptional results.

Who and who have been most influential on your life and career?

I have been influenced by several individuals throughout my personal life and career. My late uncle, General Tunji Olurin, played a pivotal role during my secondary school years. I spent much of my youth living with him, where I learned valuable lessons in contentment, simplicity and the importance of using one's power to positively impact others' lives.

Another significant influence in my life is Mrs Biodun Olujimi, my aunt, who has made remarkable contributions to our nation as a senator, the first female deputy governor of her state, and a women's leader. I admire her audacity, strength and the confidence she exudes as a woman succeeding in a male-dominated field. Her achievements have had a lasting impact on my work ethic and ambition.

My career journey would be incomplete without mentioning Mr Emeka Okeke, who introduced me to media world. Under his leadership, I have achieved significant milestones.

Can you recall some memorable experiences that you've had in your professional journey?

Many memorable experiences come to mind, with the most significant being the wins I've achieved over the years. These include securing major client accounts, receiving awards and recognitions for outstanding work, and most importantly witnessing my clients succeed in their own businesses.

What are the challenges you've faced and how have you managed to tackle them?

Every day on the job presents opportunities to learn how to work smarter and more efficiently. I've gained valuable insights from various experiences that have enhanced my professional skills. For instance, learning from past mistakes in hiring unsuitable candidates has made me more intentional on the qualities I seek in potential employees. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, I successfully navigated challenges by transforming dentsu X from a traditional media agency into one with expanded capabilities allowing us to provide a more comprehensive offering to our clients and ensuring business profitability.

You are the CEO of Dentsu X, what does the company do and how has it been faring?

Dentsu X is a fully integrated marketing agency and a part of the Dentsu Group providing through-the-line advertising services to clients across various industries. Since starting operations in 2019, we have evolved from offering core media services to expanding our offerings to include Creative, Performance, Social,

Customer Experience Management (CXM), Experiential, Public Relations, Content, Production, Influencer Marketing, eCommerce and more. We collaborate with our clients across these diverse work streams.

Our agency has received numerous awards and recognitions within the advertising industry and has initiated various CSR projects to give back to society. We proudly serve key clients in sectors such as luxury goods, alcoholic beverages, beauty & fragrance, power generation, automotive, pharmaceuticals, medical, banking, food and entertainment, managing their portfolios in Nigeria and six other African countries.

To maintain our competitive edge, we continually train and equip our team, leveraging the dentsu global platform.

What have been the challenges in managing the company and how were these surmounted?

I view challenges as opportunities for growth, a mindset I've embraced throughout my career. For example, despite the economic difficulties in Nigeria, including clients cutting marketing budgets or leaving the country due to a tough business climate, I've continually developed innovative strategies to maintain competitiveness and profitability for Dentsu X.

What are your plans for the company going forward?

Our immediate plans involve enhancing our services by leveraging technology and data to elevate consumer experiences beyond mere exposure. As a Tokyo-born company, we are well-positioned to expand Japanese brands in Nigeria and demonstrate our expertise in consumer insights to provide tailored, effective solutions.

You have grown to become a success in marketing communications and brand management, what would you say is the secret of your success?

I began my career as a management trainee in the marketing communication industry, which provided me with a strong foundation and a comprehensive understanding of the business. My eagerness to expand my knowledge has allowed me to develop skills beyond my initial expertise. My meticulous attention to detail has frequently proven invaluable, and my unwavering passion for the job drives me to deliver excellent results.

What advice do you have for aspiring female professionals?

My advice would be to fully embrace the journey and focus on developing transferable skills that may prove valuable in the future. They need to build lasting relationships along the way, as these connections could become valuable referrals when it is most need. Lastly, approach every task with diligence because building a meaningful career requires more than just showing up; it demands commitment and excellence.

In what ways would you say you have added value to Dentsu X.

Growing the Dentsu X brand in Nigeria has been the most valuable learning experience of my career. Successfully converting Japanese clients in Nigeria has been particularly rewarding. By showcasing and delivering the dX value proposition, my team and I have developed case studies with impressive results from our work in Nigeria, which have been used as templates in other African markets. My analytical skills combined with my marketing communication expertise and the training invested in me by Dentsu have enabled me to contribute significantly to the growth of the brands as a valuable part of the Dentsu Group.



Adekemi Olurin-Alegbeleye



THE GUARDIAN SPECIAL FOCUS ON MOST IMPACTFUL, RELIABLE AND INNOVATIVE PAYMENT GATEWAYS IN NIGERIA

CORALPAY TECHNOLOGY NIGERIA LIMITED: Impacting Nigerian Financial Industry Through Cutting Edge Technology, Innovative and Reliable Payment Services

ONE of the payment gateways in Nigeria that has distinguished itself not only in the provision of reliable payment services but also a platform creating positive impact and value addition to the businesses and lives of its customers in the country is CoralPay Technology Nigeria Limited. Indeed CoralPay has carved a niche for itself through professional and innovative payment solutions in the nation's digital economy.

Established in 2005, the company was licensed as a Payment Switching Company in 2018, and today CoralPay has become one of the leading Payment Switching and processing companies in Nigeria.

Based on its Vision, "To become the gold standard for payment and processing in Africa" and the Mission "To provide secure and reliable payment services and solutions to consumers, merchants and institution of all sizes" CoralPay has continued to leverage on its professional and extensive experience in the Nigerian digital payment space to offer a broad range of market-proven technology platforms. In achieving its vision, CoralPay is focusing on excellent innovations and strategic partnership with commitment to building a customer-centric company that fosters a team of seasoned professionals and exceptional technocrats.

As a one-stop-shop payment solutions company, CoralPay parades a vast range of payment services including C'Gate USSD, Pay-With-Bank-Transfer Card Issuing and Acquiring, as well as transaction processing NQR and CoralPay Payment Gateway - a bundled web payment solutions that combines these channels. Furthermore, CoralPay's Instant Pay Solutions enables interbank transfers while its VAS API Integrated Service provides robust Billers Aggregation platform for bill payments. Similarly, the company also offers bulk payment solution called Fast channel for one-to-many payment.

To sustain its leadership position and create more impact in the Nigerian Payment Industry, the company's innovative USSD payment solution leverages Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) for payments on various platforms, including hardware and soft POS, Mobile Apps, e-commerce websites, chatbots and USSD menus. This secure and convenient system allows users to pay for goods and services using a unique code.

In addition, C'Gate USSD also facilitates agency banking cashout, merchant collections, charity donations, religious body collections, C'Gate wallet funding, and payments for services like gaming, lottery, schools and government collections.

More so, by aggregating various banks' USSD shortcodes CoralPay empowers merchants to accept payments from customers across different banks, and ensures payment reliability for merchants, eliminating the risk of lost sales due to card downtime.

Undoubtedly, CoralPay is a major player in the Nigeria's Payment Industry and is at the forefront of driving the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) financial inclusion and Cashless Policy through the C'Gate USSD offline straight dial payment solution. In truth, this solution helps to eliminate the need for a smartphone or internet connection to offer payment services to merchants and customers in remote areas. By simply having a GSM connection and feature phone, customers can dial the merchant's unique USSD code to make payments. Indeed, CoralPay is a trusted, reliable and innovative partner in Nigeria's payment ecosystem, and is committed to providing seamless and reliable payment solutions that empower its numerous customers across the country and beyond.

Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that since the regulatory environment for Financial Technology (Fintech) in Nigeria is constantly evolving, CoralPay always stays informed about regulations and ensures compliance to

avoid unnecessary disruptions. Thus, as a leader in the payment processing space, the company maintains robust security systems and stays ahead of evolving cyber threats.

As a CBN approved Tier-One Switching and Payment Processing Company - a Payment solutions service provider cum Payment terminal service provider, CoralPay is also a non-Bank Acquirer, and a Third-Party Processor for Master Card and Visa.

CoralPay is ISO 27001, ISO 22301, ISO 20000, PCIDSS, PCI-PIN and NDPR certified and compliant, ensuring the highest security standard for clients and other stakeholders. Essentially, the company implements robust security measures that meet the highest international standards, including those outlined by the CBN which include regular penetration testing, vulnerability assessments, data encryption, amongst others, to safeguard sensitive information of clients.

In closing, in order to maintain its leadership position and surpass customers' expectations, CoralPay has put in place sound management team, seasoned professionals, cutting edge technology and up-to-date security measures to drive the CBN's financial inclusion and cashless policies in the Nigerian digital economy.



From Overwhelmed to Empowered: Executive Women Find Their Voice in the Women's Lifestyle Hub

In a world that demands so much from women leaders, finding a space for personal and professional growth can feel like an impossible dream. But for a growing number of executive women in Nigeria, that dream is becoming a reality.

When Bola Matel-Okoh, fondly called Coach BMO, transitioned from a distinguished 30-year legal career to executive coaching, she brought a unique perspective: the unwavering determination of a legal advocate, now channeled towards empowering women leaders across Nigeria and North America.

"I've always believed in fighting for what's right," Matel-Okoh shares. "Now, my mission is to equip women with the tools to champion their own success."

This passion led her to create the Women's Lifestyle Hub (WLH), a haven where executive women like Florence Olabisi Kayode, a banker, wife and mother of 3 lovely children, find their voice and balance.

My coaching experience with Coach BMO has been amazing, interesting and relaxing.

Every session was awesome as I was literally looking forward to them," she said.

"but what stood out for me the most was where she taught me, that we don't just work hard, but we work hard and play even harder. I would like to play even harder and I'm on that journey already.

Florence's story isn't unique. The Women's Lifestyle Hub (WLH), a premier mentorship and community platform, is transforming the leadership journeys of executive women across the country.

"WLH's unique blend of one-to-one coaching, intensive leadership training, and ongoing mentorship, guided by business luminaries like Ibukun Awosika and Yewande Zacheaus, equips women with the tools to navigate complex power dynamics, cultivate emotional intelligence, and master the elusive work-life balance.

it's not just about skills," explains Emilia Daniel, a recent graduate of WLH's 6-Week Leadership Induction Program.

It's about finding your voice, a community of supportive women, and your confidence.

WLH gave me the courage to step into my full potential.

The results speak for themselves. WLH members report increased confidence, improved decision-making skills, and a stronger sense of purpose to succeed in their careers and businesses. They're breaking glass ceilings, launching successful ventures, and inspiring the next generation of women leaders.

"If you're ready to transform your leadership journey, the Women's Lifestyle Hub is waiting."

Visit bolamatelokoh.com/6wlip/ to learn more about the 6-Week Leadership Induction Program and the Women's Lifestyle Hub Membership Program.

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Spotlight

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By Christian Okpara

Fencing Can Win Medals For Nigeria At 2028 Olympics, Says Samuel

FENCING is one of the fastest growing sports in the country. The sport, which narrowly failed to qualify for the Paris 2024 Olympics, losing in the final qualifying hurdle to African giants, Egypt and Tunisia, has been on a grassroots development programme that has seen it producing talented young fencers in recent years.

Now, having gotten so close to making it to the last Olympic Games, the Nigeria Fencing Federation (NFF) has started a programme that would ensure that it doesn't miss the cut at the next Games in Los Angeles in 2028.

At a parley with media executives in Lagos, president of the Fencing Federation, Adeyinka Samuel, said that the federation aims to make the sport popular and get as many people as people interested in it. That way, he added, the body will have enough talents to build into world class fencers.

He said part of the development programme is to ensure that fencers attend as many championships as possible, both home and abroad, adding that the essence is to make the athletes be abreast of every new innovation in the sport.

"As a federation, we have four cardinal objectives. Our objective is to host as many championships as possible because it will help us get as many Nigerians as people into the game. Travelling for these competitions in Europe or any other foreign country requires a lot of money and when we bring such events to Nigeria, our budget is lower and we have more Nigerians participating.

"Hosting these competitions also motivates people to partner with us, and it also helps us to create awareness within the sport when top fencers do their thing in Nigeria.

"The second arm is to develop elite fencers to world-class athletes and we have a programme that we are following to develop athletes for the sport.

"Currently, we are training about 10 coaches in a high breed programme with a company based in Europe. They are doing online training in the initial stage.

The

second phase is physical when the trainers will come in to help us develop as many coaches as possible, including officials, referees and all of that because we want to have our people certified to officiate in competitions.

"The third arm of it is that we know that the grassroots is where the talent is and we have been working with SUBEB in a programme where we go into less privileged communities to unearth talents. We have gone to at least nine local councils, Shomolu, Mushin, Lagos Island and different other places, where we have set up our hubs to train as many as 200 children for the sport."

Samuel said that the plan is to identify talented children and then enrol them in some private schools that are in partnership with the federation for further training and education on scholarship.

He said: "Apart from training them to be good sportsmen and women, we also look at how to make their lives better. So far, we have sponsored 10 students on this programme since 2017. These are male and female students because we believe in equal opportunities.

"The first set graduated last June with excellent results from Noble House College, Abeokuta. They did six years there on full scholarship.

"Two of them, Wisdom and Temilade competed at the African Championships in 2022, where Nigeria won 12 medals in all and finished third behind Egypt and Tunisia. South Africa was fourth. These two children won four medals between them, two gold, one silver and one bronze. They came through this programme. They had never been part of fencing until we brought them into this programme.

"Wisdom and Temilade were discovered through our development programme; they came from our Shomolu hub. We work through SUBEB because the athletes must meet a certain academic standard. Wisdom is likely to go to the World Championship in Saudi Arabia this year.

"These are some of the athletes we want to highlight in terms of how they have really come a long way. Their story is incredible. We also have a general programme where we go to schools and just create awareness, to create interest in the sport."

The NFF boss disclosed that the federation has a state of the art facility in Lekki, Lagos, where it trains fencers and hold most of its activities.

"We have four athletes doing fantastically well. We have a lot more, but I will just talk about these four. One of our athletes, Nkosi Brou, was at the Olympics qualifiers, where he finished in the quarterfinals. He fenced against the guys that won medals at the Olympics and they barely beat him. It was such a close fight.

"What is really more interesting is that all these guys are in their late 20s and early 30s, but our kid is barely 16. His record is incredible and he has gone to several competitions and is currently ranked 37th in the world. That is super interesting because it means the future is bright.

"At the start of the season, we draw up programmes for our athletes. We just finished drawing up a programme for Brou and he has about nine competitions coming up within three months, starting from September to January. That is the sort of level that he is in.

"We also have a 16-year-old lady called Somto Eribene, who is ranked 67th in the world. She is doing incredibly well. She actually finished in the semifinals in the Olympics qualifiers. She couldn't make the Olympics because it is zonal qualifiers and only one person qualifies from Africa in her class. She has a line of competitions she will attend this season and we are very certain that between these four athletes, we will have at least two in the Olympics in 2028."

Samuel said that Nigeria has never been represented in fencing at the Olympics, although a Nigerian once qualified for the Games but did not participate because of some extraneous issues.

He explained that Nigeria is ready to host as many championships as possible because it helps the athletes to get enough points to rise in the world rankings.

"The World Cup is not like the football world cup. It is a prestige event where the winner gets points in it. There are different weapons, foil and epee. We will host a male junior epee championship which is for ages 21 below.

"When we hosted the African Championship, we hosted all weapons, male and female, as well as senior and junior. Now, we are taking all the necessary steps to host an impressive World Cup because we have all that it takes to host it.

"The budget we have to host it is already being prepared and because it is a point awarding championship, so many people are gearing up to come to the World Cup in Nigeria."

"The NFF has hosted three international tournaments since 2018, two African championships and one World Championship and those are major achievement. As a result of such tournaments, we are now the leading sub-Saharan African country in hosting fencing championships," he said.

He said hosting these championships ensures that Nigerian athletes have the opportunity to test their talents against the best from across the world without leaving the country.

"The best fencing countries in Africa, Egypt and Tunisia, medalled at the Olympics... Egypt a got bronze medal and Tunisia got silver. They are not just some of the best in Africa, but they are also among the best in the world.

"You can see how far we have come. It is interesting that apart from the top countries in Africa, Nigeria is the only country in Africa hosting major international competitions. Right now, between now and December 2026, we will host the World Cup, which is open to all the 155 nations fencing nations.

"Nigeria is the only country in sub-Saharan Africa with the right to host the World Cup. The others are Egypt and Tunisia. We are hosting a senior African championship in June/July next year. The date has not been fixed. It is most likely to be in June," he said.

Samuel said that hosting the World Cup ensures that the country's fencers get required competition and experience at less cost than it would be when they travel overseas for such opportunities.

He also said that hosting the World Cup successfully gives the country opportunity to



Samuel



Brou

retain the staging right, adding that Nigeria is also at the forefront of the Commonwealth Fencing Championship in 2026.

"Fencing was removed from the Commonwealth Games several years ago because the entries from countries were not enough as stipulated by the rules. As a result, there has been a lot of effort to get it back into the games.

"There is a high likelihood that after this Commonwealth Championship, we will get enough countries to get it back into the games. So, for us it is a major tournament because we are talking about 500 to 800 athletes coming to Nigeria.

"What is even more impressive is that it has never been hosted in Africa and Nigeria will be the first African country to host the Commonwealth Championship, which is a great achievement."

Samuel regrets that many Nigerians don't know what fencing could do for the country in terms of creating good image and available medals at major championships.

He explained: "In fencing, the minimum medals available is 34. There are men and women categories as well as three weapons for each, which comes with three medals per category. The Olympics is slightly different because it awards only three medals in each category, while others award four. This is because in other championships, the beaten semifinalists share the bronze medals, while at the Olympics the beaten semifinalists fight for one bronze medal."

He said that the fencing federation considers several factors before recruiting young talents into its programme. These include family background and experience.

"When a kid has not eaten, you cannot teach him anything. So, we first feed them before we start training them... we also get their parents to see the bigger picture.

"We try to put them in boarding school because it removes them from their environment. They mix with the right kids, which brings out the best in them. One of the schools in Rainbow College."

The Fencing Federation president said that the programmes are currently concentrated in Lagos, adding, however, that the body is trying to spread its activities to other parts of the country.

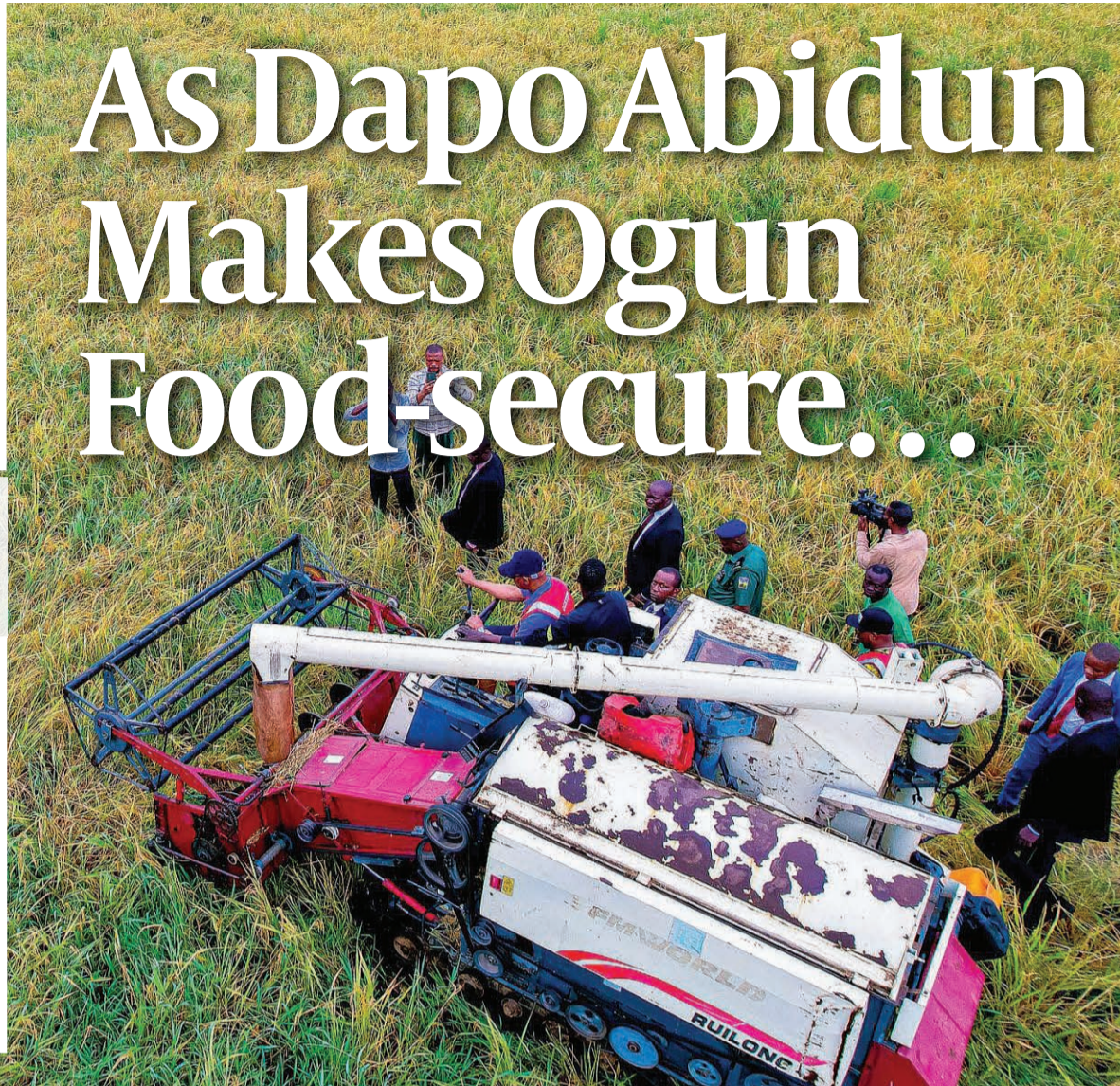
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Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Mrs. Kehinde Jokotoye (left); Secretary to the Ogun State Government, Mr Tokunbo Talabi; Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun; Deputy Governor, Engr. Noimot Salako-Oyedele; Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, Mr Bolu Owotomo; Head of Service, Mr Kehinde Onasanya; Deputy Chief of Staff, Dr. Oluwatoyin Taiwo, during the flag-off of the 2024 Rice Harvesting Season at Magboro, Obafemi Owode Local Council... on August 19, 2024.



As Dapo Abiodun Makes Ogun Food-secure...



By Kayode Akinmade

PRESIDENT of the African Development Bank Group, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, gave a stark warning on Nigeria's import-dependence recently. Speaking at the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa retreat, Adesina said the decision by Nigeria's government to allow massive food importation risks destroying its agriculture.

Hear him: "Nigeria cannot rely on the importation of food to stabilize prices. Nigeria should be producing more food to stabilize food prices, while creating jobs and reducing foreign exchange spending. That will further help stabilize the naira. Nigeria cannot import its way out of food insecurity."

The verdict is hard to contest, especially given that last year, the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) put Nigeria's 2024 projected rice import at 2.1 million metric tons, making the country the top rice buyer globally. However, if state governments in the country adopt the Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun's strategy, this climate of food importation is bound to change. It may sound like a fairytale, but with a yield of seven metric tonnes per hectare on the 200-hectare pilot project, the Gateway State under Abiodun's strategic foresight produced approximately 1,400 metric tonnes of rice, equivalent to 20,000 bags of milled rice, bringing in an estimated revenue of N1 billion every three months.

Governor Abiodun, on Monday, August 19, flagged off the harvest of the 200-hectare Magboro rice farm in Obafemi-Owode Local Council of the state. With the feat, the out-growers, including many youths and women who are new to farming, have effectively conquered poverty. And, what is more, following the success of the first harvest, the project will now be scaled up to 2,000 hectares, and there are plans to expand it to 5,000 hectares.

The scale-up is projected to yield between N10 billion to N25 billion in revenue per quarter. The farm, a brainchild of the Ogun State Economic Transformation Project (OGSTEP), is supported by the World Bank to drive economic growth and development in the state. Hear the Governor: "This project started in April this year. They began planting in May, and today we are already harvesting, making it a three-month cycle. It means that we can do this three times a year. 20,000 bags of milled rice per cycle should be estimated to

cost about N1 billion. So, these 200 farmers, made up of women and youths across the country, who farm here in just three months, have a revenue of N1 billion. If they do this three times this year, they will earn N3 billion. We have no business being hungry in Nigeria. In this place, I have 12,500 hectares of land, and all we have farmed is 200 hectares that yielded N1 billion for 200 farmers. From here, I can feed the rest of the country. We will scale up this project immediately from 200 to 2,000 hectares. We can generate N30 billion in revenue. We can take significant steps towards realising that vision of making Ogun State the food basket of this country."

That is no idle boast. For instance, OGSTEP is not just providing critical support, including advanced agricultural techniques, access to quality seeds, modern irrigation systems and technical training for farmers, Governor Abiodun ensures that beneficiaries get a 65 per cent discount on the cost of each mechanisation operation. OGSTEP empowers farmers through training and re-training, increasing farm productivity. Crop inputs, herbicides and birds are distributed freely to farmers to boost their productivity. Aiming to strengthen the value chain processes in agriculture, especially among smallholder farmers in Nigeria, the Ogun State Ministry of Agriculture, in partnership with IITA-CGIAR, launched the Ogun State Farmer Information Management System (OGFIMS) on April 20, 2023. Before then, Governor Abiodun had won back-to-back Best Governor in Agriculture recognition at the Nigerian Agriculture Awards.

No one who knows anything about the Gateway International Cargo Airport can doubt Abiodun's commitment to agricultural revolution. The airport provides a veritable platform to enhance the industrial base of the state, opening the frontiers of businesses and also opening the state to the rest of the world. It will generate approximately 50,000 direct and indirect jobs. It is built on an airport city and massive construction is ongoing there, courtesy of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), among other agencies that have mapped out the place for their agency needs. It is not for nothing that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu approved the Special Agro-Cargo Processing Zone as a Free Trade Zone.

It can be no surprise that Ogun under Abio-

dun has one of the highest number of beneficiaries in the CBN/Federal Government Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) in cassava, and has retained its ranking as the largest hub for industries (including Agro-ventures) in Nigeria, the largest egg and broiler producer, largest producer and exporter of lemon grass oil, largest hub for aquaculture in West Africa (according to FAO) and many others.

Governor Abiodun puts the development in perspective: "In line with our resolve to partner with the private sector and provide enabling environment for investments and agribusinesses, we have become the world epicenter as a dependable host and partner, especially with the Government initiative of establishing the Cargo Airport to supplement the Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zone (SAPZ) of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and other donor funded projects including the IFAD/FGN

This project started in April this year. They began planting in May, and today we are already harvesting, making it a three-month cycle. It means that we can do this three times a year. 20,000 bags of milled rice per cycle should be estimated to cost about N1 billion. So, these 200 farmers, made up of women and youths across the country, who farm here in just three months, have a revenue of N1 billion. If they do this three times this year, they will earn N3 billion. We have no business being hungry in Nigeria. In this place, I have 12,500 hectares of land, and all we have farmed is 200 hectares that yielded N1 billion for 200 farmers. From here, I can feed the rest of the country. We will scale up this project immediately from 200 to 2,000 hectares. We can generate N30 billion in revenue. We can take significant steps towards realising that vision of making Ogun State the food basket of this country.

Value Chain Development Project (VCDP), in which our state has recorded tremendous success with 12,000 beneficiaries supported with technology, inputs and credit."

The establishment of an integrated farm estate, gari packaging plant and a 200-trainee soil-testing programme, complemented with the signing of MoUs with national and international development partners such as IITA, HarvestPlus and a host of other private sector partners on private sector-led initiatives, are all part of the Ogun agriculture revolution story, as is the Planting Materials Palliative (PMP) rolled out at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and targeted at 40,000 smallholder farmers. The Presidential Fertilizer Initiative supplied fertilizer to target 10,000 farmers.

If Ogun is now a leading producer of rice, maize, and cassava in Nigeria, it is because the Abiodun government invested heavily in the development of agricultural infrastructure: irrigation systems, farm roads, and storage facilities. It has won plaudits for fostering partnerships with private sector players and implementing livestock improvements mechanisms, including the distribution of breeding stock, veterinary support, and the establishment of grazing reserves.

That's not all. Through the Anchor Borrowers Programme, the Abiodun administration has revolutionized youth involvement in agriculture in Ogun State. It created the Ogun State Investment Promotion Agency (OGU-NIPA) and the Ogun State Business Executive Council (OGUNBEC) to make the Gateway State the destination of choice for investors. It regularly supports farmers to produce high-quality products and links them to markets and processors. Among others, the Ogun State Agricultural Policy and the Ogun State Livestock Development Policy guarantee this. The government empowers farmers with solar pump machines. It rolled out the N50 million Ijebu Development Initiative for Poverty Reduction (Eriwe) to develop the fish subsector in the state. At one go, it empowered 40,000 agripreneurs in cassava cultivation.

The message is clear: Ogun under Abiodun is on a massive journey of food security that highlights a cardinal feature of progressive, visionary leadership. That, in the final analysis, is a big plus for Nigeria.

• Akinmade is Special Adviser to the Governor on Media and Strategy



Guinea Insurance Plc

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AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2023

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION
As at 31st December 2023

	DEC-31-2023	RESTATE DEC-31-2022	RESTATE JAN-1-2022
	=N=000	=N=000	=N=000
ASSETS:			
Cash and cash equivalents	1,025,935	386,998	383,566
Financial assets:			
At fair value through profit or loss	79,471	70,761	61,261
At fair value through other comp inc.	339,286	299,063	227,268
At amortised cost	1,745,367	1,424,569	971,998
Reinsurance contract assets	355,330	305,865	302,527
Trade receivables	8,830	-	-
Other receivables & prepayments	70,721	343,290	47,936
Investment properties	150,000	113,000	106,300
Intangible asset	52,953	3,514	4,900
Property, plant and equipment	842,065	863,620	934,001
Statutory deposit	333,654	333,654	333,654
Total assets	5,003,313	4,144,334	3,373,411
LIABILITIES			
Insurance contract liabilities	1,072,187	851,682	788,511
Other payables and accruals	282,991	168,616	202,554
Employee benefit obligations	2,614	7,575	11,034
Current tax payable	40,034	26,992	20,368
Deferred tax liabilities	108,036	110,011	110,011
Deposit for shares	-	901,400	151,400
Total liabilities	1,505,862	2,066,276	1,283,878
EQUITY			
Issued share capital	3,971,400	3,070,000	3,070,000
Share premium	337,545	337,545	337,545
Contingency reserve	728,346	632,792	592,015
Accumulated losses	(1,851,134)	(2,233,350)	(2,109,300)
Fair value reserve	245,606	205,383	133,585
Asset revaluation reserve	65,688	65,688	65,688
Total equity	3,497,451	2,078,058	2,089,533
Total liabilities and equity	5,003,313	4,144,334	3,373,411

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 28th June 2024 and signed on behalf of the Board of directors by:

Ademola Abidogun
Managing Director/CEO
FRC/2016/CIIN/00000014549

Pius Edobor
Executive Director, Finance
FRC/2013/ICAN/0000004638

STATEMENT OF P/L & OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
For the year ended 31st December 2023

	2023	RESTATE 2022
	=N=000	=N=000
Insurance revenue	2,077,012	1,390,650
Insurance service expenses	(1,117,592)	(571,290)
Net expenses from reinsurance contracts	(285,738)	(224,974)
Insurance service result	673,682	594,386
Interest income	201,022	102,823
Unrealised forex gain on fixed deposits	312,967	-
Net fair value gains on fin. assets at FVTPL	8,410	9,500
Fair value gains on investment properties	37,000	6,700
Impairment loss on fin. assets at amort. cost	(722)	(210)
Net investment income	558,677	118,813
Insurance finance expenses from insurance contracts issued	(6,104)	(61,129)
Insurance finance income from reinsurance contracts held	(359)	21,084
Net Insurance finance expenses	(6,463)	(40,045)
Net Insurance & Investment result	1,225,896	673,154
Other operating income	208,164	113,613
Other operating expenses	(934,411)	(862,125)
Profit/(loss) before taxation	499,649	(75,358)
Income tax expense	(21,879)	(7,915)
Profit/(loss) for the year	477,770	(83,273)
Other comprehensive income		
Item that are or may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss	-	-
Item that will not be reclassified to profit or loss		
Net fair value gain on financial assets at FVTOCI	40,223	71,795
Total other comprehensive income	40,223	71,795
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year, net of tax	517,993	(11,478)
Contingency reserve	95,554	40,777
Earnings/(loss) per share - Basic and Diluted (kobo)	6.02	(1.36)

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOW
For the year ended 31st December 2023

	2023	2022
	=N=000	=N=000
OPERATING ACTIVITIES:		
Reinsurance premium paid	(606,860)	(411,167)
Amounts received under reinsurance contracts held	156,113	42,677
Commission received	155,181	113,658
Gross claims paid	(388,464)	(164,922)
Insurance acquisition cash flows paid	(601,798)	(372,923)
Premium received	2,164,085	1,359,246
Premium deposit	146,211	-
Payments to employees	(390,851)	(411,341)
Other operating cash payments	(189,101)	(264,550)
Other income received	146,937	70
Tax paid	(10,812)	(1,291)
Net cash flow/(outflow) from operating activities	580,641	(110,543)
INVESTING ACTIVITIES:		
Purchase of treasury bills	(232,558)	(383,072)
Utilisation of deposit/(Deposit for inv.)	290,000	(290,000)
Purchase of intangible assets	(53,500)	-
Purchase of property and equipment	(68,322)	(12,427)
Proceed from sale of PPE	15,640	16,360
Investment income received	107,036	33,114
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from investing activities	58,296	(636,025)
FINANCING ACTIVITIES:		
Deposit for shares	-	750,000
Net cash inflow from financing acts.	-	750,000
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	638,937	3,432
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January	386,998	383,566
Cash and cash equivalents at 31st December 2023	1,025,935	386,998

BDO

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT ON SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

To the shareholders of Guinea Insurance Plc

Opinion

The summary financial statements, which comprise the summary statement of financial position as at 31 December 2023 and summary statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended, are derived from the audited financial statements of Guinea Insurance Plc for the year ended 31 December 2023.

In our opinion, the accompanying summary financial statements are consistent in all material respects with the audited financial statements, in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and International Accounting Standards, issued by the International Accounting Standards Board and in compliance with the relevant provisions of the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (Amendment) Act, 2023, the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020, Insurance Act CAP 17, LFN 2004 and the Prudential Guidelines issued by National Insurance Commission.

Summary Financial Statements

The summary financial statements do not contain all disclosures required by the International Financial Reporting Standards, the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020, the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (Amendment) Act, 2023, the Insurance Act CAP 17, LFN 2004 and the Prudential Guidelines issued by National Insurance Commission applied in the preparation of the audited financial statements of the Company. Therefore, reading the summary financial statements and the auditor's report thereon, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial statements and the auditor's report of Guinea Insurance Plc.

The Audited Financial Statements and Our Report Thereon

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial statements in our report dated 26 August 2024. That report also includes the communication of the key audit matters as described in the auditor's report on financial statements.

Responsibilities of the Directors for the Summary Financial Statements

The directors are responsible for the preparation and the presentation of summary financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and in the manner required by the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020, Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (Amendment) Act, 2023, Insurance Act CAP 17, LFN 2004, and the Prudential Guidelines issued by National Insurance Commission.

Auditor's responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the summary financial statements are consistent in all material respects with the audited financial statements based on our procedures which were conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISA Bio revised) - "Engagement to report on Summary Financial Statements".

Report on other Legal and Regulatory Requirements

The Company complied with the fifth schedule of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020.

The Company did not contravene the requirements of the National Insurance Commission of Nigeria's Operational Guidelines during the year and therefore no penalty was paid.

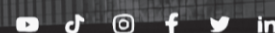
Lagos, Nigeria
26 August 2024

The above summary statement of financial position and summary statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income are published in compliance with Section 27(6) of the Insurance Act CAP 17, LFN 2004. For a better understanding of the financial position and results of operations of the Company, these extracts of financial statements should be read in conjunction with the full financial statements on which the auditor's report was issued. The complete annual report of the Company can be obtained from the Company's Registrars.

BDO Professional Services, a firm of Chartered Accountants registered in Nigeria, is a member of BDO International Limited, a UK company limited by guarantee, and forms part of the international BDO network of independent member firms. Partners: Chigbema A. Akibayo, Komolafe Salami, Henry B. Omosigbo, Gideon Adewale, Oluwaseun Agbana Anubaba, Ajibola O. Fadiyi, Wabubu O. Ajidabi

BN 170585

Guinea Insurance House: 33, Ikorodu Road, Jibowu, Lagos State.



Guinea Insurance Plc

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UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION
As at 31st March 2024

	MAR-31-2024	MAR-31-2023	DEC-31-2023
	=N=000	=N=000	=N=000
ASSETS:			
Cash and cash equivalents	1,186,596	488,025	1,025,935
Financial assets:			
At fair value through profit or loss	79,171	73,817	79,171
At fair value through other comp inc.	339,286	299,063	339,286
At amortised cost	1,800,587	1,446,209	1,745,367
Reinsurance contract assets	420,885	232,290	355,330
Trade receivables	52,439	11,940	8,830
Other receivables & prepayments	70,956	348,081	70,722
Investment properties	150,000	113,000	150,000
Intangible asset	49,947	29,922	52,953
Property, plant and equipment	822,586	870,626	842,065
Statutory deposit	333,654	333,654	333,654
Total assets	5,306,111	4,246,627	5,003,313
LIABILITIES			
Insurance contract liabilities	1,387,122	1,210,581	1,072,187
Other payables and accruals	199,650	137,771	282,991
Employee benefit obligations	2,664	7,237	2,614
Current tax payable	41,011	31,013	40,034
Deferred tax liabilities	110,011	110,011	108,036
Deposit for shares	-	901,400	-
Total liabilities	1,740,458	2,398,013	1,505,862
EQUITY			
Issued share capital	3,971,400	3,070,000	3,971,400
Share premium	337,545	337,545	337,545
Contingency reserve	735,738	656,919	728,346
Accumulated losses	(1,790,325)	(2,494,413)	(1,851,134)
Fair value reserve	245,606	212,876	245,606
Asset revaluation reserve	65,688	65,688	65,688
Total equity	3,565,652	1,848,614	3,497,451
Total liabilities and equity	5,306,111	4,246,627	5,003,313

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 28th June 2024 and signed on behalf of the Board of directors by:

Ademola Abidogun
Managing Director/CEO
FRC/2016/CIIN/00000014549

Pius Edobor
Executive Director, Finance
FRC/2013/ICAN/0000004638

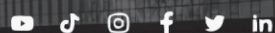
STATEMENT OF P/L & OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
For the period ended 31st March 2024

	MAR-31-2024	MAR-31-2023
	=N=000	=N=000
Insurance revenue	484,869	359,929
Insurance service expenses	(342,902)	(155,912)
Net expenses from reinsurance contracts	(91,770)	(73,005)
Insurance service result	50,197	131,012
Investment income	89,204	33,367
Unrealised forex gain on fixed deposits	-	-
Net fair value gains on fin. assets at FVTPL	-	-
Fair value gains on investment properties	-	-
Impairment loss on fin. assets at amort. cost	-	-
Net investment income	89,204	33,367
Insurance finance expenses from insurance contracts issued	(7,601)	(533)
Insurance finance income from reinsurance contracts held	1,183	302
Net Insurance finance expenses	(6,418)	(230)
Net Insurance & Investment result	132,983	164,148
Other operating income/(loss)	230,499	2,295
Other operating expenses	(264,690)	(200,126)
Profit/(loss) before taxation	98,793	(33,683)
Income tax expense	(5,426)	(4,021)
Profit/(loss) for the year	93,366	(37,704)
Earnings/(loss) per share - Basic and Diluted (kobo)	1.18	(0.61)

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOW
For the period ended 31st March 2024

	JAN-MAR-2024	JAN-MAR-2023
	=N=000	=N=000
OPERATING ACTIVITIES:		
Premium received	1,041,645	2,164,085
Commission received	6,707	155,181
Commission paid	(150,737)	(601,798)
Maintenance cost	(156,202)	-
Reinsurance premium paid	(272,398)	(606,860)
Gross claim paid	(185,402)	(388,464)
Reinsurance recoveries	18,615	156,113
Premium deposit	-	146,211
Payments to employees	(95,541)	(390,851)
Other operating cash payments	(174,816)	(189,101)
Other income received	2,876	146,937
Tax paid	(13,727)	(10,812)
Net cash flow/(outflow) from operating activities	21,020	580,641
INVESTING ACTIVITIES:		
Investment income received	89,204	107,036
Purchase of intangible assets	-	53,500
Utilisation of deposit/(Deposit for inv.)	-	290,000
Purchase of property and equipment	(3,025)	(68,322)
Proceed from sale of PPE	-	15,640
Purchase/sales of financial assets	53,462	(232,558)
Proceed/(purchase) of inv. properties	-	-
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from investing activities	139,641	58,296
FINANCING ACTIVITIES:		
Deposit for shares	-	-
Interest repayment on finance lease	-	-
Net cash inflow from financing acts.	-	-
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	160,661	638,937
Effect of exchange rate changes on cash and cash equivalent	-	-
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January	1,025,935	383,998
Cash flow	-	-
Cash and cash equivalents at 31st March 2024	1,186,596	1,025,935

Guinea Insurance House: 33, Ikorodu Road, Jibowu, Lagos State.



Again, MoneyMaster Gets Nod for Lagos Food Discount Market

By Maria Diamond

THE Lagos State government has reappointed MoneyMaster PSB, a leading payment service bank, for the second phase of the "Ounje Eko" food discount market, which will open throughout the state on Sunday, September 1, 2024.

The state government launched *Ounje Eko*, a programme that offers the people a 25 per cent discount on a range of food items. Its purpose is to provide relief to the state's citizens amid the rising cost of food items.

On Sunday, September 1, the discount market, which was

successfully piloted in March this year, will resume in all Local Government Areas (LGAs), Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs) and on the campuses of five post-secondary institutions in the state.

MoneyMaster has been given the nod to deploy its state-of-the-art collecting solution for smooth transactions at the *Ounje Eko* discount markets due to its creative and strong payment and collection technological infrastructure. The bank will be doing this to guarantee great experiences for the patrons of the markets and ensure payment destinations also get real-time value.

Terrorists Kill Three Students In Yobe State

From Njadvara Musa, Damaturu

PERSONS suspected to be Boko Haram terrorists have killed three students with one other sustaining injury in the early hours of Friday in Yobe State.

The students were killed when suspected terrorists attacked Faudiya Islamic School (FIS), Geidam, a border community with Niger Republic.

Confirming the incident, on Friday, in Damaturu, spokesman of the Yobe State Police Command, DSP Dungus Abdulkarim, said: "The suspected terrorists attacked the Faudiya Islamic School on 10 motorcycles with AK-47 rifles

shooting sporadically at 4pm. The school belongs to the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) known as the Shiite.

"When we received a distress call, the police in Geidam rushed to the school, and discovered that three students were killed with one other injured," he said.

He said that the injured student was evacuated and taken to the Geidam Specialists Hospital for treatment.

Abdulkarim listed the slain students to include Muhammadu Saleh, 22; Ahmed Abdulrahman, 21, and Abdullahi Adamu, 21, while the hospitalised student is Sani Haruna, 25.

APC Rules Out Replacing Ganduje At NEC Meeting

From Adamu Abuh, Abuja

THE ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) has said that the National Chairman of the party, Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, would not be relieved of his job after the planned caucus and National Executive Committee (NEC) meetings as speculated in some quarters.

The party's National Secretary, Sen. Ajibola Basiru, who spoke after the Ganduje-led National Working Committee (NWC) met behind closed doors with Governor Abdullahi Sule of Nasarawa State, claimed that the proposed meetings are being convened in line with

Article 11 of the constitution of the party.

"None of these meetings are being scheduled for regime change in the party. It is being held to give stewardship of what has been done by the leadership of Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje in terms of also presenting our audit report to show what we have been doing as well as the way forward," he said.

The APC scribe expressed gratitude to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for the confidence reposed on the Ganduje-led NWC.

Sule, who chairs the North-Central APC Governors

Forum, rallied support for the NWC, calling for concerted efforts towards ensuring the victory of the party in the Edo and Ondo governorship polls.

He disclosed that his visit to the party secretariat was connected with the crisis rocking the Benue State chapter of the party.

He added: "APC has five out of the six governors in North Central. So, for that reason, we need to strengthen our zone. We cannot afford any kind of disagreement in our zone. And I have no doubt that if there is any gentleman that can work to resolve that matter, it's a man who has been in

several positions. A deputy governor, a governor, a chairman, in fact so many other positions that he has been."

Ganduje reiterated his desire to ensure that the party continues to wax stronger.

"When you are looking for a medical doctor, you know where to get him. If you are looking for an accountant, it is also easy to get one. But politics is an environment that has no boundary. A politician must be someone of character, capacity and capability. Those are what we want to entrench in our party constitution," he added.

Your Criticisms Of Tinubu's Govt Barren, Group Tells Atiku

By Oludare Richards

FORMER vice president Atiku Abubakar has been challenged to offer a better economic blueprint, if he has any, to the present administration in the country in the spirit of national patriotism and demonstrable evidence of no bitterness and pull him down syndrome but genuine desire as an elder statesman to move Nigeria forward.

A civil society group, Congress for Good Governance for National Unity (CGGNU), said this in a statement, on Friday, in a statement by its National Chairman, Abiodun Fanoro.

The group said the time has

come to interrogate Atiku's patriotism and the genuineness of his long self-acclaimed determination and commitment to transforming the country and alleviating the suffering of the ordinary Nigerian.

The group said the need to question Atiku's patriotism and possession of the right antidotes to the country's myriad of challenges as well as the genuine desire to deploy them to the benefit of the people became imperative after a critical review of his avalanche of bitter criticism of President Bola Tinubu's policies aimed at rejuvenating the economy.

Fanoro said: "Atiku rather than

disparaging Chief Bode George and rather than continuing with what is obvious bitterness, envy and desperation as reflected in his unkind and charade criticism of President Tinubu, should advertise to Nigerians his better alternatives to what Tinubu is feeding Nigerians with.


"The difference between Atiku and George is that the retired Naval chief, as a democrat, has accepted that the 2023 presidential election has been won and lost but Atiku is yet to come to terms with the reality, which keeps fueling his bitter comments."

The group noted that offering an alternative blueprint

amounts to no crime, as the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo did it during the administration of the late Alhaji Shehu Shagari.

"Nigerians also offered an alternative blueprint to General Ibrahim Babangida during the famous debate on Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP).

"The former vice president may have found it difficult or disinteresting in outlining any elaborate blueprint if what he has is not different from what he presented during the 2023 presidential election which was obviously rejected by the electorate as revealed by his rejection at the poll.

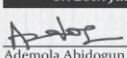


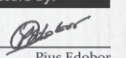
Value OUR PROPOSITION FOR EXCELLENCE

UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30TH JUNE 2024

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION <i>As at 30th June 2024</i>			
	JUN-30-2024	JUN-30-2023	DEC-30-2023
	=N=000	=N=000	=N=000
ASSETS:			
Cash and cash equivalents	1,108,682	605,136	1,025,935
Financial assets:			
At fair value through profit or loss	80,732	74,150	79,171
At fair value through other comp inc.	339,289	299,062	339,286
At amortised cost	1,833,173	1,455,080	1,745,367
Reinsurance contract assets	784,783	314,386	355,330
Trade receivables	67,225	-	8,830
Other receivables & prepayments	111,482	342,338	70,721
Investment properties	150,000	113,000	150,000
Intangible asset	46,942	29,576	52,953
Property, plant and equipment	848,858	853,998	842,065
Statutory deposit	333,654	333,654	333,654
Total assets	5,704,820	4,420,380	5,003,313
LIABILITIES			
Insurance contract liabilities	1,526,411	1,270,829	1,072,187
Other payables and accruals	172,703	128,592	282,991
Employee benefit obligations	5,699	4,662	2,614
Current tax payable	34,530	26,204	40,034
Deferred tax liabilities	110,011	110,011	108,036
Deposit for shares	-	901,400	-
Total liabilities	1,849,354	2,441,698	1,505,862
EQUITY			
Issued share capital	3,971,400	3,070,000	3,971,400
Share premium	337,545	337,545	337,545
Contingency reserve	799,695	672,902	728,346
Accumulated losses	(1,564,468)	(2,380,661)	(1,851,134)
Fair value reserve	245,606	213,208	245,606
Asset revaluation reserve	65,688	65,688	65,688
Total equity	3,855,466	1,978,682	3,497,451
Total liabilities and equity	5,704,820	4,420,380	5,003,313

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 26th July 2024, and signed on behalf of the Board of directors by:



 Ademola Abidogun
 Managing Director/CEO
 FRC/2016/CIIN/00000014549


 Pius Edobor
 Executive Director, Finance
 FRC/2013/ICAN/0000004638

STATEMENT OF P/L & OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME <i>For the period ended 30th June 2024</i>		
	JUN-30-2024	JUN-30-2023
	=N=000	=N=000
Insurance revenue	1,267,163	874,656
Insurance service expenses	(600,461)	(425,528)
Net expenses from reinsurance contracts	(131,401)	(130,994)
Insurance service result	535,301	318,134
Investment income	155,963	69,520
Unrealised forex gain on fixed deposits	-	-
Net fair value gain on fin. assets at FVTPL	1,561	3,388
Fair value gains on investment properties	-	-
Impairment loss on fin. assets at amort. cost	-	-
Net investment income	157,523	72,908
Insurance finance expenses from insurance contracts issued	(11,523)	(1,335)
Insurance finance Income from reinsurance contracts held	2,575	605
Net Insurance finance expenses	(8,948)	(730)
Net Insurance & Investment result	683,876	390,312
Other operating income/(loss)	247,831	37,974
Other operating expenses	(563,903)	(402,276)
Profit/(loss) before taxation	367,804	26,010
Income tax expense	(9,788)	(6,685)
Profit/(loss) for the year	358,016	19,325
Earnings/(loss) per share - Basic and Diluted (kobo)	4.51	0.31

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOW <i>For the period ended 30th June 2024</i>			
	JAN-JUN-2024	JAN-JUN-2023	JAN-DEC-2023
	=N=000	=N=000	=N=000
OPERATING ACTIVITIES:			
Premium received	1,267,163	874,656	2,164,085
Commission received	55,196	66,376	155,181
Commission paid	(326,383)	(166,829)	(601,798)
Reinsurance premium paid	(398,293)	(246,422)	(558,608)
Gross claim paid	(235,705)	(105,361)	(388,464)
Reinsurance recoveries	84,102	37,795	156,113
Premium deposit	-	-	146,211
Payments to employees	(208,769)	(195,756)	(390,851)
Other operating cash payments	(342,343)	(129,262)	(237,262)
Other income received	167,006	28,623	146,937
Tax paid	(24,570)	(7,473)	(10,812)
Net cash flow/(outflow) from operating activities	37,403	156,318	580,641
INVESTING ACTIVITIES:			
Investment income received	155,960	66,286	107,036
Purchase of intangible assets	-	(25,282)	(53,500)
Utilisation of deposit/(Deposit for inv.)	-	-	290,000
Purchase of property and equipment	(53,831)	(34,606)	(68,322)
Proceed from sale of PPE.	-	16,360	15,640
Purchase/sales of financial assets	(56,784)	39,062	(232,558)
Proceed/(purchase) of inv. properties	-	-	-
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from investing activities	45,345	61,821	58,296
FINANCING ACTIVITIES:			
Interest repayment on finance lease	-	-	-
Principal repayment on finance lease	-	-	-
New allotted shares	-	-	-
Net cash flow from financing acts.	-	-	-
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	82,747	218,138	638,937
Effect of exchange rate changes on cash and cash equivalent	-	-	-
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January	1,025,935	386,998	383,998
Cash inflow	-	-	-
Cash and cash equivalents at 30th June 2024	1,108,682	605,136	1,025,935

Guinea Insurance House: 33, Ikorodu Road, Jibowu, Lagos State.



Special

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Why Nigeria's Love For GMOs May Lead

For now, it may not be wrong to say that Nigerians are becoming more confused than ever over the safety of food and agro commodities, following the endless debates that characterise the adoption or otherwise of the Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), commonly called GM seeds, by Nigeria, especially now that over 42 countries have banned the cultivation of these controversial crops. Experts are insisting on their warning that through the adoption of the GMOs, the Federal Government, without conducting adequate, independent and long-term assessment, might be exposing Nigerians to some products or technologies whose negative impact on human and environmental health is allegedly huge. Currently, Nigeria tops the list of six African countries that have adopted and are now planting the GM crops, alongside Ethiopia, Malawi, South Africa, Sudan and Swaziland. While the Federal Government and pro-GMO advocates seem unfazed and resolute in their stance, many concerned Nigerians have expressed fear that the country might be ignorantly threading the dangerous path of food colonization, GBENGA AKINFENWA writes.

JUST a few weeks ago, the Nigeria Biotechnology Management Agency (NBMA) and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) got entangled in an inter-agency 'scuffle' over the safety of genetically engineered foods, popularly known as Genetically Modified Crops.

The cold war was an aftermath of an outburst of the Director General of NAFDAC, Mrs. Mojisiola Adeyeye on the safety of the GM crops. On June 29, 2024, to be precise, Adeyeye, during an interview, stated that GMO foods in Nigeria are not considered safe for consumption due to insufficient research and data at the disposal of her agency.

"In terms of GMOs, we do not think it is safe. We don't think it is safe for our consumption. Exactly! First, a lot of research has not been done in terms of the safety of GMO products and the genetics of the seeds have been modified. Until we get very convincing data to show the safety for human consumption," Adeyeye said. She, however, noted that the GMOs could be used for non-food crops such as timber, furniture, and for rubber plantation, maintaining that there is no evidence from NAFDAC that the foods are safe for human consumption.

The comment drew the anger of the NBMA, which described the NAFDAC boss' position as one that can undermine the mandate and functions of the NBMA. In its reaction to NAFDAC, the Director General of NBMA, Mrs. Asagbra, in a letter dated July 2, said: "The views you expressed appear to discredit the hard work and integrity of the NBMA and its several renowned stakeholders and experts for which your agency is one."

Undoubtedly, the NAFDAC's position, which attracted criticisms from pro-GMO advocates, including NBMA, echoes the sentiments and anxiety of many Nigerians on the adoption or otherwise of these crops that have brought endless fear and uncertainty to farmers, consumers and other stakeholders in the food sector. The fear is reinforced by the fact that many countries that had adopted the GMOs are opting out lately, although their reason is still shrouded in secrecy.

The genetically modified crops are plants used in agriculture, the DNA of which has been modified using genetic engineering methods. In most cases, the aim is to introduce a new trait to the plant, which does not occur naturally in the species. Food crops, for example, can be genetically engineered to be



resistant to certain pests, diseases, environmental conditions, reduction of spoilage, chemical treatments - resistance to a herbicide, or just to improve the nutrient profile.

Though its adoption has been a subject of intense debate among scientists, environmentalists, food activists and civil society organisations over the years, the Federal Government and proponents of this initiative, claim that the GMOs are capable of addressing a range of agriculture, nutrition and climatic challenges in developing countries like Nigeria. What has been a major worry to the critics is that while some developing countries are responding to the health and other concerns about the GMOs through outright ban or finding a balance between the fears and the benefits, the Federal Government gave outright approval.

According to a report by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), Nigeria is one of the six African countries that have adopted and are now planting the GM crops. Others are Ethiopia, Malawi, South Africa, Sudan and Swaziland. ISAAA revealed that at least 33 major food crops have been genetically modified across the globe. From the 33, Nigeria has approved four - maize, cowpea, cotton and soybean, for commercialisation.

The last entrant - TELA maize, is a maize variety that has been genetically engineered for improved insect resistance and drought tolerance, to boost farmers' yield per hectare and also close the existing demand gaps.

Its approval and commercial release placed Nigeria second in the list of African countries that have adopted and commercialised the TELA maize varieties, behind South Africa.

The *Guardian* investigation showed that at least 42 countries have banned the cultivation of the GMO crops in their lands. They are - Germany, France, Australia, Norway, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Poland, Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Turkey, Italy, Hungary and Greece. Others are Belize, Cyprus, Ecuador, Malta, Kenya, Algeria, Madagascar, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Latvia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, India, Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan, Peru, Ukraine, Serbia, Slovenia, Venezuela, Zambia and Tanzania.

It is this latest development that has got stakeholders to be worried and anxious over the safety of food and agro commodities in Nigeria following the endless criticisms and arguments trailing the GMOs' adoption in the country.

Some environmentalists have argued that commercialization of GMO seeds would have far-reaching consequences in Nigeria and across Africa. Aside from health and environmental consequences, critics of the GMO technology in Nigeria say it violates the principles of "food sovereignty" and are worried over the ability to effectively regulate and label genetically engineered foods, especially the newly commercialised Tela maize. There is also the concern that GM seeds are often patent-locked and privatised, which could weaken the position of African farmers and communities and worsen the depletion of indigenous/conventional seed banks on the continent.

There have been allegations of attempts by some foreign insti-

tutions to control food supply in the world and ensure that Africa is put under food colonialism through the GMOs, hybrid crops and agricultural technology of chemicals that destroy the soils and the continent's ability to reproduce food.

For instance, in Zimbabwe, the farmers claimed that they have started losing their conventional seeds as a result of the introduction of the GMO seeds. It is also rumoured that the introduction of the GMOs on the continent might be another orchestrated attempt by the West to reduce Africa's population, since the COVID-19 pandemic had little effect in that regard.

In addition, the Brazilian Supreme Court, recently ordered Bayer to return the \$252million it charged farmers as royalties for using GMO products in their farms. Though further information on this ruling is still sketchy, concerned experts say the court order has further confirmed the danger posed by the cultivation and consumption of the GMOs.

An agribusiness specialist, Mr. Oluwaseyi Ifelaja, said the proliferation of GMO seeds was aimed at neo-colonisation of the developing countries. "The discussion on GMOs should have been locked away since three decades ago when the infiltration by the colonialists into our food system became pronounced. We consider the crops and seeds as agents of colonisation tied to agric-led growth and food security. The thought of having GMO patented seeds as the order of the day should be vehemently opposed and critically looked into before we sign off our food security."

Amid this controversy and concern over food and environmental safety, the House of Representatives in May urged the Federal Government to suspend the commercialisation of the GMO crops.

An environmentalist, who doubles as the Executive Director, Health of the Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), Nnimmo Bassey, described the GMOs as risky manipulations. According to Bassey, the law requires risk assessments, sadly, the law in Nigeria does not have provisions for strict liability.

"Citizens are being treated like Guinea pigs. As we all know, seeds are basically engineered to act as pesticides or to withstand very toxic herbicides. The dangerous seeds are also produced to do the same.

"We are literally being ambushed to eat GMO foods because the farmers are not informed that they are being given transgenic seeds and the food sellers cannot label GMOs due to our largely informal markets. Not labeling GMOs is against the law and to continue to deploy their varieties is a lawless activity. To ensure wholesome foods, the government should support farmers and the use of indigenous varieties that are safe, resilient to climate stresses, and are culturally appropriate.

"The government should focus more on this, rather than exposing the people and the environment to harm in an attempt to invest in technology that promotes monoculture,

Feature

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To Food 'Colonisation'

dependence on dangerous chemicals, which erodes the country's biodiversity.

"They are genetically engineered to act as pesticides ostensibly to kill identified pests that would otherwise attack the crop or seeds. Examples include Bt Cotton and Bt Cowpea or beans approved for commercial release in Nigeria. The implication of eating a seed engineered to kill a pest is that you are actually eating a pesticide with unexamined implications, including on the microbes in our guts," he said.

The expert noted that in a country like Nigeria, consumers are unable to exercise the right to choose whether or not to consume GMOs due to the peculiar way food is sold and consumed. "We cannot label the foods and seeds largely sold by the roadside, in the traffic, and in an assortment of our informal markets. This is even if labeling is to be successfully enforced."

The Executive Director further said: "It is unacceptable that in the name of food sufficiency, the country is exposing its citizens to products of risky technologies without adequate, independent and long-term assessment on their impacts on human and environmental health.

"So far, GMOs have been linked to cancers, diseases, allergies, and all sorts of health challenges due to environmental implications because of their dependency on toxic pesticides and the destruction of biodiversity and nutritional diversity. We are also concerned that there is no way to label or inform our farmers that they are planting GMO maize. To deny Nigerians the right of choice is highly objectionable and wicked."

The former Executive Director, National Agricultural Extension Research and Liaison Services (NAERLS), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Prof. Khalid Othman, said that while the incredible innovation could advance the cause of human progress, it could potentially affect humanity adversely, which causes people to be concerned.

He alerted Nigeria to the fact and fear that those manipulating a gene from one organism to another can also introduce a harmful gene for ulterior motives, adding that nothing stops an insane from using the novel technology as biological warfare to wipe out certain people.

Othman said: "The world must protect itself from this murderous insanity, not by shying away from using the technology, but by adopting a foolproof strategy for the safe utilisation of the technology. In line with this thinking, a biosafety international agreement called "Cartagena Protocol" was signed by 173 United Nations member countries to address the safe transfer, handling, and use of GMOs and their products.

"Thus, all GMO products in countries with a biosafety law go through a series of stringent food toxicity and environmental safety tests that include assessment of homology to known allergens and toxins of the target genes, protein digestibility, acute oral gavage study toxicity (in mice), compositional analysis for unintended effects on carbohydrate, protein, and minerals, gene flow studies, and impact on non-target insects, among others, before they can be used commercially for food or feed.

"Safety was the main reason for adopting the Cartagena Protocol. Nigeria, along with other countries that signed the protocol, was told to domesticate it for the sound protection of its citizens. The government has an absolute and unflinching responsibility to protect people against food poisoning, contamination, and adulteration."

The lingering complaints and concerns forced the House of Representatives to call on the Federal Government to suspend the introduction of new genetically modified crops until an investigation by its Committee on Agricultural Production and Services is completed and the findings are made public.

The call for suspension followed the adoption of a motion on the need to investigate the introduction of GMO crops in the country. The House mandated the committee to conduct a comprehensive investigation into GMO introduction by the NBMA. It also mandated the committee to assess the potential health and environmental risks associated with GM crops.

On her part, a Director at the Centre for Food Safety and Agricultural Research (CEFSAR), Prof. Qrisstuberger Amua, said: "The dangers in GMO foods go beyond genetic engineering. It is a way of pumping toxic chemicals into the environment and ultimately on the breakfast tables. There is an emerging situa-

tion short of criminality that is pervading the public space with GMO crops.

"It appears that some persons outside the country have some business interests to push out these GMO products for wealth accumulation. As a centre, we have begun a journey to aggregate the relevant voices in the sector on the dangers of GMO foods."

While stressing the need for the government to do great service to farmers, a former Commissioner of Women Affairs in Anambra State, said "it's time we look at our farmers as our greatest asset as a nation. Without the farmers, there will be no food or industry.

"In 2008, during former President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua era, I was a member of the Committee on Agriculture and Food Security, where a vision 2020 plan was developed to make Nigeria great through agriculture. The lack of continuity in government is an impediment to that plan, which has now degraded badly into accepting dangerous genetically modified options from the outside our borders." She encouraged the public to watch what they eat, warning that "If you don't eat food as medicine, you would eat medicine as food."

Though experts have linked the consumption of the GM crops to several dire side effects, which include antibiotic resistance, allergy, autism spectrum disorder, cancer, gastrointestinal tract diseases, infertility, celiac disease and kidney disease, among others, the government and other pro-GMO advocates claim the assumptions are wrong.

During a recent media engagement in Lagos, the Director, Agricultural Biotechnology Department, National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA), Rose Gidado, told *The Guardian* that no ill-health or safety concerns have been traced to the previous

cialised biotech crops in the market.

"Considering the uncertainties of the number of GM crops in the market, it is very important to give this update on the status of GM crops in the country with precise traits and approval status. Biotechnology offers new tools for increasing agricultural productivity and protecting food crops from climate changes, such as heat, floods and drought."

Also, the NBMA boss, Asagbra, who claimed that the safety and health of Nigerians is of topmost priority to her agency and will not be compromised, said the agency was committed to ensuring transparency, safety, and unbiased decision-making regarding the GMOs.

"NBMA states here that the safety and health of Nigerians is of topmost priority, we will not compromise on this. The agency has done a proper risk assessment and analyses were conducted to ensure the safety of this product for human health and the environment," she argued.

Asagbra particularly noted that the application for TELA maize was thoroughly examined by two committees comprising of experts and scientists from the various relevant agencies and the academia - NAFDAC, Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON), Nigerian Agricultural Quarantine Service (NAQS), Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC), National Agricultural Seed Council (NASCs), universities and research institutions - with renowned professionals in the particular field, noting that the agency's internal review process confirmed that TELA maize meets safety standards.

"This ensures that the regulatory oversight of GMOs by NBMA meets strict safety standards and poses no adverse risks to health or the environment. NBMA acknowledges that there have been misleading claims about TELA Maize, including allegations that it is fake and laced with insecticides/pesticides.

"These claims are not based on scientific evidence and are designed to create unnecessary fear and panic in the country. The TELA maize was developed by Nigerian scientists in the IAR who took into cognisance the challenge farmers have faced over the years in the planting of maize. This maize variety rather reduces the use of pesticides while boosting productivity thereby having better health benefits.

"We assure Nigerians that this maize variety has been certified to be as safe as its organic or conventional counterpart as there is no chemical or insecticides laced in them as claimed by some groups in Nigeria," she claimed.

According to her, the agency operates independently and without bias, with their decisions guided by scientific evidence, international best practices, and the wellbeing of Nigerians in mind. "TELA Maize was modified for insect resistance and drought tolerance and our risk assessment considered exposure to the environment, nutritional composition, and potential impacts on biological diversity."

She called for open dialogue, scientific literacy, and evidence-based discussions, saying "Let us work together to ensure food security, sustainable agriculture, and informed decision-making in Nigeria."



Society

Birthdays

OBALANLEGE, His Majesty Oba Professor Adeyemi Abdulkabir Obalanlege Ph.D, the Monarch of the ancient Otta land, Ogun State, is 58.

Born on August 28, 1966, Kabiyesi is a professor of journalism, a liberal-minded intellectual, a cerebral personage in the community of knowledge, a goal-getter, and a peace ambassador who is so committed to a course of joining like minds in uniting not just the Aworis but the Yoruba race at large.

Stepping into his reign, Professor Obalanlege brought with him not only the weight of tradition but also a distinguished background in academia and a fervent dedication to community service.

Oba Adeyemi's academic prowess extended beyond the confines of the classroom, earning him recognition as a world-class scholar. His contributions to the field of Mass Communication, in-

cluding publications in esteemed academic journals and presentations at conferences across Africa, Europe, and North America, solidified his reputation as a cerebral intellectual.

Even as his academic and professional pursuits flourished, Oba Adeyemi remained deeply rooted in community service.

He is the Chairman of Awori Obas Forum, Ogun State, a humanitarian, a member of Rotary International, and a Paul Harris Fellow.

Kabiyesi has equally remained undaunted and continues to use his stool to galvanise support and increase the attention and presence of the government to facilitate laudable projects for the kingdom of Otta land.

His Majesty is happily married to Olori Oloruntoyin Obalanlege (Nee Gbobaniyi), and blessed with two sons, Dr. (Engr.) Adewale Mustapha Obalanlege Ph.D and Engineer Adetobi Hamed Obalanlege.



Obalanlege

AKINLOYE, Alayeluwa Oba Atijani Adetunji, the Ojomu of Ajiranland, Lagos, will be 84 on September 6, 2024. Born on September 6, 1940, he is an alumnus of St. Matthias Catholic School, Lafiaji, Lagos 1950; Hussey College, Warri in 1957; Abeokuta Grammar School, Abeokuta, Ogun State and University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), where he studied Agriculture, graduating in 1974.

He later acquired a post-graduate diploma in education in 1981. He started his



Akinloye

career with teaching and taught at various schools between 1965 and 1981; he served as Principal, Community High School, Ilado, Maroko, Lagos in 1983; between 1991 and 1993, he was the first Executive Secretary of the Eti-Osa Local Government Education Authority; he was crowned as the 14th Oba Ojomu of Ajiranland on October 23, 1993.

He is presently the Chairman of Royal Realities Limited. He was honoured by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2003 as Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON).



Igbinedion

The foremost traditional ruler of the Lekki Peninsula is a Director of CityScape International Limited.

IGBINEDION, Chief Gabriel Osawaru, businessman, industrialist, philanthropist and Esama of Benin Kingdom will be 90 on September 11, 2024.

He was born on September 11, 1934 to Chief Josiah Oviawe Agharagbon Igbinedion and Madam Okunozé Igbinedion, both of Ovia North East Local Council of Edo State. He was educated at Benin

Baptist Primary School, 1944. He joined Leventis Motors, Ibadan and as Sales Manager requested and got transferred to Benin Area Office in charge of the defunct Mid-West Region till 1968.

He established Mid-Motors Nigeria Limited, the first vehicle assembly plant in Nigeria with headquarters in Benin City. In 1976, he established Okada Dry Nigeria Limited, the first indigenous soft drink bottling plant in Nigeria.

He was appointed Minister of Works and Housing in 1986; redeployed as Minister of Employment, Labour and Productivity. He is the Chancellor and Chairman of the Board of Regents of the first private university in Nigeria, Igbinedion University, Okada and Chairman/Group Managing Director, Okada Group of Companies. He holds the traditional title of Esama of Benin Kingdom.

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

Events



Acting Director, Financial Policy and Regulation, Central Bank of Nigeria (left); Executive Vice Chairman, FIC Professionals Network Plc. Mrs Christabel Onyejekwe; Technical Advisor to the President on Financial Inclusion, Dr Nurudeen Abubakar Zauro; President and Chairman of Council, the Chartered Institute of Bankers of Nigeria (CIBN), Prof. Deji Olanrewaju; wife of the CIBN President, Mrs. Remi Olanrewaju, and former Managing Director and Regional Executive, Ecobank Nigeria Limited, Mr. Patrick Akinwuntan, during the reception organised by the FIC Professionals in honour of the CIBN President in Lagos.



Director General and Chief Executive Officer of Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) and Nigeria's Permanent Representative with the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), Professor Charles Anosike (left) and President and Chairman of the Council of Chartered Risk Management Institute of Nigeria (CRMI), Dr. Ezekiel Oseni, during the conferment of Honorary Fellowship (HFCRM) of the institute on Anosike in Lagos...on Thursday

To Mark Birthday, Jerry Eze Builds 18 Houses For Widows, Gives N100m Grants To Young Entrepreneurs



A cross section of the beneficiaries

By Josephine Amaole

TO mark his 42nd birthday, Pastor Jerry Eze, built 18 houses for widows and awarded N100m business grants to over 100 young entrepreneurs.

Eze, a renowned Founder and leader of the New Season Prophetic Prayers and Declarations (NSPPD), demonstrated his deep commitment to uplifting the less fortunate persons in the society.

This life-changing initiative is a testament to Eze's unwavering dedication to supporting vulnerable communities and fostering economic empowerment. The 18 houses, constructed in

various states across the country, are fully furnished and have been handed over to the widows.

In addition to this, the N100 million business grant will empower over 100 young entrepreneurs, providing them with the necessary financial support to scale their businesses and contribute positively to the economy. This grant is a significant part of Pastor Eze's vision to nurture and develop the next generation of business leaders in Nigeria.

Eze expressed his heartfelt gratitude to God for the opportunity to give back to society. He said: "This is just the be-

ginning of what God has laid on my heart to do for His people. My prayer is that these houses will bring comfort and hope to the widows, and that the business grants will inspire these young entrepreneurs to reach new heights in their ventures."

The beneficiaries have expressed profound gratitude to Eze for his kindness and generosity, with many describing the initiative as a divine intervention in their lives.

This initiative further cements Eze's reputation as a man of great compassion and vision, whose leadership continues to inspire millions of people around the world.



Members of Lions Club: Florence Ogu (left); Chioma Amaechi; Esther Ebong; Bola Ogunkanmi; the teacher; Evelyn Oche, participating student; the President, Deacon Adewale Akingboye; Mr. Adebayo Kazeem; Stella Ugobodu and Ijeoma Ndubuka, during the Lion Abidemi Olawumi Essay Writing Competition 4.0, for public schools students organised by Lekki Admiralty Lions Club, Lagos



Director, Food Produce, Safety Quality and Produce for Lagos Initiative, Oluranti Sagoe-Oviebo (left); Lagos State Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Systems, Abisola Olusanya and Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Agriculture and Food System, Emmanuel Audu, during a briefing on Eko Flavours review committee at the Ministry in Lagos... PHOTO: AYODELE ADENIRAN



CHANGE OF NAME

ABRAHAM: I, formerly Abraham Abraham Matthew now wish to be known as Adetokunbo Abraham Matthew. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

ACHI: I, formerly known as Faith Ishioma Achi, now, i wish to be addressed as Faith Ishioma Oguzie. All former documents remain valid. General public note

ADDITION OF NAME: I, formerly known as Anah Mary Chidera now wish to be addressed as Chuks-Anah Chidera Mary. All former documents remain valid. Public note.

ADDITION OF NAME: I, formerly known as Goodlawrence Lenee now wish to be addressed as Meelubari Goodlawrence Lenee. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

ADDITION AND ARRANGEMENT OF NAMES: I, formerly known as David Esire now wish to be addressed as Ochuko David Esire. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

ADEBOYE: I, formerly known as Adeboye Olanrewaju Abduljelili now to be addressed as Adeboye Olanrewaju Abduljelele. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

ADE-JONES: I, formerly Miss Opeyemi Ade-Jones Elizabeth now Mrs Opeyemi Fakoya Elizabeth. Former documents remain valid. General public take note.

ADENEYE: I, formerly known as Miss Adeneye Bisola Oluwatimileyin now wish to be address as Mrs Akanni Bisola Oluwatimileyin. Former documents remain valid public note.

AKINSOLA: I, formerly known as Miss Akinsola Damilola Mary now wish to be addressed as Mrs. David Damilola Mary. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

AROME: I, formerly known as Agatha Iyeh Arome-James now wish to be addressed as Agatha Iyeh Okeme. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

ASIMOT: I, formerly known as Asimot Taiwo Adetoke Olayemi Elegbede, now wish to be addressed as Taiwo Asmot Siyanbade. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

AWONIYE: I, formerly known as Awoniyi Oluwatosin samuel now wish to be addressed as Oluwaniyi Oluwatosin Samuel. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

AYOOLA: I, formerly known as Miss Ayoola Olayinka now wish to be addressed as Mrs Shokoya Olayinka. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

AZEEZ: I, formerly known as Miss Azeez Abidemi Oluwatominsi now to be addressed as Mrs. Ajala Abidemi Oluwatominsi. Former documents remain valid. General public take note.

AZEEZ: I, formerly known as Azeez Abisola Oluwakemi now wish to be addressed as Ehuwa Azeez Abisola Oluwakemi. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

CHANGE OF MIDDLE NAME: I, formerly known as Oaiya Sarah Omonnow wish to be addressed as Oaiya Sarah Imuetinyan. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

CONFIRMATION OF NAME: I, Ishola Tijani Olanrewaju is the same person as Ishola Kolawole Olanrewaju. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

CONFIRMATION OF NAME: I, Mogbeyiteren Napoleon Great, Mogbeyiteren Napoleon, is the same person as Mogbeyiteren Abraham now Mogbeyiteren Napoleon Great Abraham. All former documents remain valid. Public note

CONFIRMATION OF NAME: I, Ademola-Law Adeola Faith, Ademola Adeola Faith, Lawal Adeola Faith is the same person now Adeola-Lawal Adeola Faith. All former documents remain valid. Public note.

CONFIRMATION OF NAME: I, Kaanen Terhamba Daka is same person as Thomas Terhamba Daka and henceforth wish to be called Kaanen Terhamba Daka. Former documents remain valid. Public note.

CONFIRMATION OF NAME: I, My name is Adebayo Raymond Temitope with my middle name as Temitope. NIS and General public should take note.

CORRECTION & ADDITION OF NAME: I, My name was mistakenly written as Akue Theophilus, instead of Akue Theophilus Omoighe. All former documents remain valid. General public note

CORRECTION OF NAME AND DATE OF BIRTH: I, My correct name is Chigere Chukwuebuka not Chukwuebuka Prince and DOB is 02/05/2006 not 02/04/2004. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, formerly know Miss Ochola Virginia, now wish to be known as Miss Virginia Ochola, All existing documents remain valid. General public note

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, My name was wrongly captured as Eromosele-Paul Derrin Issac Irenosen instead of Eromosele-Paul Derrin-Issac Irenosen. All documents remain valid. General public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, My name was wrongly captured as Eromosele-Paul Edrik Ebenezer Ehimen instead of Eromosele-Paul Edrik Ebenezer Ehimen. All documents remain valid. General public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, My name was wrongly captured as Eromosele-Paul Jayden Enoch Ehihogie instead of Eromosele-Paul Jayden Enoch Ehihogie. All documents remain valid. General public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, My name was wrongly captured as Hart Blessing Ezekiel instead of Ezekiel-Hart Blessing. All documents remain valid. General public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, My name was wrongly captured in BVN as Okoye, Obalum Dozie, instead of Okoye-Obalum, Dozie Chisom. All existing documents remain valid. General public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, My name was wrongly written as Ajuwon Abdulganiyu Adebayo instead Ajuwon Ganiyu Adebayo. All former documents remain valid. General public note

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, My name was wrongly written as Akerele Tomswell Morenike instead of Adeoye Morenike Mary. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, My name was wrongly written as Christ Isichei in my BVN instead of Isichei Christopher Onyeka. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, My name was wrongly written as Ibe Afoma Vivian instead of Ofodum Vivian Afomachukwu. All former documents remain valid. Public note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, My name was wrongly written as Mbakwa Ifeanyi instead of Mbakwe Ifeanyi. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

CORRECTIONS OF NAME: I, That my actual name is Alexander John but was previously written as Annas John. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

CORRECTION OF NAME: I, My name was wrongly captured as Olakunle Olaleye Durodola instead of Durodola Olaleye Olakunle. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

DECLARATION OF AGE: I, Ralph-Iheke Chinwendu Theresa declare my date of birth is 27, February, 1980 and not 31, May, 1980. General Public take note.

DOSUNMU: I, formerly known as Afolake Rukayat Dosunmu now wish to be addressed as Afolake Rukayat Eriamiantor. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

DURUJI: I, formerly known as Duruji Uchechi Delight now wish to be addressed as Thompson Uchechi Delight. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

EKAMAH: I, formerly known as Okeoghene Aghogho Ekamah now wish to be known as Okeoghene Aghogho Ojarikre. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

FALUYI: I, formerly known as Faluyi Ayodele Grace now wishes to be addressed as Olusola Ayodele Grace. All Former Documents Remain Valid. General public take note

FAMILY CAHANGE OF NAME: I, We formerly known as Igbokwe Gregory OGomuegbunam, Igbokwe Favour Ijeoma, Igbokwe Gabriel Chibuzor, Igbokwe Jacinta Ijeoma now we wish to be addressed as Chibuzor Gregory Ogomuegbunam, Chibuzor Favour Ijeoma, Chibuzor Gabriel Chibuzor, Chibuzor Jacinta Ijeoma. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

FRANCIS: I, formerly known as Francis Eze Iheakor now wish to be addressed as Duruiheakor Basil Chukwujekwu Francis. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

HAMZAT: I, former Miss Hamzat Adeola Kafayat, now wish to be address as Mrs Ishola Adeola Kafayat. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

IBRAHIM: I, formerly Miss Mutmainat Olabisi Ibrahim now wish to be known as Mrs. Mutmainat Olabisi Ibrahim. All former documents remain valid. General public note

IFEJIKA: I, formerly known as Gloria Taiye Ifejika now wish to be addressed as Gloria Ngozi Nwachukwu. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

IGBAJAR: I, formerly known as Miss Igbajar Onyinyechi now wish to be addressed as Ohaji Onyinyechi. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

IMASUEN: I, formerly addressed as Joan Anwuli Imasuen now wished to be addressed as Joan Anwuli Akwuzie. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

JULIANA: I, formerly known as Owoseni Juliana Mary, Owoseni Julian Mary now addressed as Adams Juliana Mary. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

KALU: I, formerly Kalu Chinyere Ucha, now wish to be addressed as Ukpabi Chinyere Ucha. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

LAWAL: I, formerly known as Miss Aina Omorinsola Lawal and Mrs Esther Omorinsola Lawal, now, i wish to be addressed as Mrs Aina Omorinsola Ayinla. All former documents remain valid. Public note

MAKINDE: I, formerly known as Miss Esther Oluwafunmilayo Makinde now wish to be addressed as Miss, Esther Oluwafunmilayo Imoleayo Makinde. All former documents remain valid. Public note

MULIKAT: I, formerly known as Shade Olayinka now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Yusuf Mulikat Folashade. All documents remain valid. General public take note.

MUTIU: I, formerly known as Mutiu Angela now Ugwi Okhani Lamosi Angela. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note

NNAMANI: I, formerly known as Esther Immaculate Nnamani now to be addressed as Nnamani Esther Chiebonam. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

NTAMERE: I, formerly known as Mary Nwaka Ntamere, wish to be addressed now as Mary Nwaka Ebite. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OBANLA: I, formerly known as Obanla Abosede Alaba, now wish to be addressed as Zanu Abosede Alaba. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

OBUTE: I, formerly known and addressed as Obute Ukamaka Calister now wishes to be known and addressed as Onovo Calister Ngozi. All former documents remain valid. General public please take note.

ODI: I, formerly Miss Odi Ginika Elizabeth now wish to be known as Mrs Ndubuisi Ginika Elizabeth. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

OGECHI: I, formerly known as Ogechi Azuike now wish to be addressed as Ogechi Dublin-Green. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

OGUNTONA: I, formerly known as Miss Oguntona Oluwatobi R now wish to be addressed as Mrs Akinbodunwa Oluwatobi R. All former documents remain valid, public take note

OKECHUKWU: I, formerly known as Okechukwu Dominic Anolue, now wish to be addressed as Dominic Okechukwu. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

OKONKWO: I, formerly known as Okonkwo Elochukwu now wish to be addressed as Efoagi Christian Elochukwu. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OKORIE: I, formerly known as Okorie Ozioma Judith now wish to be addressed as Uchendu Ozioma Judith. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

OLAWALE: I, formerly Miss Olawale Mary Olubunmi now wish to be known and addressed as Mrs Ogunsola Mary Olubunmi. All former documents remain valid. General public take note.

OLUWADAMILOLA: I, formerly Akilo Mary Oluwadamilola now which to be known as Akilo Mary Oyindamola. All former documents remain valid, my birth is 27/02/2004 public take note.

OLUWADARE: I, formerly known as Oluwadare Sharon Chiemerie now wish to be addressed as Ogbonna Sharon Chiemerie. All former documents remain valid. General public note

OMENOGOR: I, formerly known as Omenogor Ifeoma Nelly now wish to be addressed as Odetundun Ifeoma Nelly, All former documents remain valid. General public take note

OMOLOLA: I, formerly known as Dorcas Omolola Oyelade now wish to be addressed as Dorcas Ajitoni Oyelade. All former documents remain valid. Public take note.

ONIFADE: I, formerly Tolulope Ademilola Benedicta Onifade and Tolulope Benedicta Babatunde now wish to be known as Tolulope Benedicta Ademilola Babatunde on all my documents. Public note

ORIE: I, formerly Okorie Sandra Uchenna, now wish to be addressed as Ibemere Sandra Uchenna. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

OYESINA: I, formerly known as Miss Oyesina Kudirat Oluwakemi now wish to be addressed as Mrs Dadson Kudirat Oluwakemi. OAK Pensions, General Public note.

OYEWOLE: I, formerly Ms Itunu Temitope Oyewole now wish to be known as Mrs Itunu Temitope Oyewole-Shittu. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

OZOIGBO: I, formerly known as Ozoigbo Linda Nneka now wish to be addressed as Achilonu Linda Nneka. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

REARRANGEMENT OF NAME: I, My name was improperly arranged as Bukky Morufat Olagunju on my BVN instead Morufat Bukky Oladoye. All former documents remain valid. Public note.

SAMSON: I, formerly known as Rebecca Samson, now wish to be addressed as Rebecca Bawa. All former documents remain valid, public take note

SHADARE: I, formerly known as Miss Shadare Omoyeni Adenike now wish to be address as Obitokun Omoyeni Adenike. All former documents remain valid. General public note.

SOPRINYE: I, formerly known as Soprinye Jed Dublin-Green, now wish to be addressed as Jed Soprinye Dublin-Green. All former documents remain valid. General public take note

UDOH: I, formerly known as Mrs Mary Dickson Udoh now wish to be addressed as Mrs. Mary Olusanya Afolabi. All former document remain valid public note

UMOH: I, formerly known as Effiong Ini-Obong Umoh now wish to be addressed as Okon Love Effiong. All former documents remain valid. Public take note

WALTER: I, formerly Walter Blessing Ijeoma now wish to be addressed as Ugoala Blessing Chibuzo. All former documents remain valid. Banks, general public take note.

News Extra

PSC Promotes Lagos, FCT, Six Other CPs To AIG

From **Odita Sunday, Abuja**

The Lagos State Commissioner of Police and his Federal Capital Territory (FCT) counterpart, Benneth Igweh, were among 684 senior officers promoted by the Police Service Commission (PSC).

Their promotion was announced at the first Plenary Meeting of the new Board of the commission, which took

place on Friday.

According to the PSC spokesman, Ikechukwu Ani, the meeting presided over by the Chairman of the Commission, DIG Hashimu Argungu (retd), had in attendance Honourable Commissioner DIG Taiwo Lakanu (retd) and Secretary to the Commission, Chief Onyemuche Nnamani. Ani said: "Eight

Commissioners of Police were elevated to the rank of Assistant Inspectors General of Police while 15 Deputy Commissioners of Police were promoted to the next rank of full Commissioners of Police.

"Fifty-two Chief Superintendents of Police were also promoted to Assistant Commissioners of Police, 525 Superintendents of Police promoted to the rank of

Chief Superintendents of Police and 84 Deputy Superintendents promoted to Superintendents of Police. ASP Patrick Ebhodahe was also promoted to the next rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police.

"The eight Commissioners of Police and 15 Deputy Commissioners were subjected to some form of assessment/examination, a condi-

tion now precedent for their promotion to the new ranks. "Commission Chairman, DIG Argungu said the officers must engage in deliberate self development through constant knowledge acquisition so as to be ready and equipped to face the challenges of 21st century policing.

"DIG Argungu said henceforth police officers must be subjected to formal examina-

tion before consideration for their promotion, stressing that it is a requirement imposed on all federal civil and public servants by the Public Service Rules. He said the police officers would not be an exemption.

"The PSC Chairman said the Commission must also ensure that promotions in the Police will be merit based and predictable."

Bruno Who?- Big Gamble By The NFF ?

A FEW days ago, a new coach was hired for the Super Eagles, the national football team of Nigeria. Under normal circumstances, it would be considered too soon to start any controversial discourse on the man.

However, the shrouded process of the appointment, the timing of it, and the calibre of the person engaged following one of the worst periods in Nigeria's football history, have raised a lot of eyebrows. To be silent would be tantamount to lazy journalism.

He is foreign, a German. His name is Bruno.

The only famous Bruno in sports that I know of are Fernandez of Manchester United FC, and the British boxer. In coaching, not any of the known names in international football that would have silenced critics and sceptics averse to hiring any more foreign coaches in Africa in 2024 after all the previous failures.

So, Bruno who?

The appointment of a Bruno Labbadia, therefore, came as a complete surprise to everyone (except, of course, those that must have been behind the deal).



Bruno Labbadia

There must be some kind of deal in this new arrangement. That's the only way to understand the rationale for a football administration to dare at this time to present to Nigerians a totally unknown coach, straight from the blue, completely outside the radar of even the most ardent football followers.

Bruno's choice immediately attracts interest. The current relatively subdued debates on the issue are a result of the 'shock' of the audacity of the NFF administration to present, without clear reasons and motivation, a low-level foreign coach without international recognition or solid credentials after the unconvincing performances by several foreign coaches with better credentials, including Jose Peseiro, to Nigerians.

This is not even a good to stick to the doctrine of a foreign coach given the outcry over previous dismal failures marked by a desert of trophies. The impression most Nigerians had after Peseiro's ouster is that any new appointment would pass through microscopic lenses and scrutiny. For any foreign coach to be hired would be as difficult as a 'camel passing through the eye of a needle'.

I had assumed that an unknown foreign coach would never again be unleashed on Nigerians. I now humbly concede naivety.

There are too many boxes that any prospective new coach would have to tick.

The person must be renowned internationally; must have clear and solid records of achievements to show in football; must be grounded in African football and footballers, either as a coach or even as a player; must have the reputation as a former player or as a coach to earn the immediate respect of the big superstars in the Eagles and the critical Nigerian public.

Does Bruno Labbadia tick any of the boxes?

The Super Eagles are a very troubled team.

The team has not done well for several years in all competitions. The last AFCON in January/February this year was

a punctuation mark with performances, since then, that make their commendable achievement look like a fluke. At AFCON 2023, they defied all the odds, rode on the back of some decent performances and got to the finals of the African Championship.

Since then, however, there has been a huge slump in performance, disturbing to the extent that the coach of the team, even after being lavishly celebrated and rewarded (pre-maturely it now seems), was sent 'packing' with the refusal to renew his contract.

The Super Eagles now face many challenges. The most glaring is that the team lacks depth in quality of players that can lift it above the present plateau where the team has remained for well over a decade, unable to win any major trophies, and not convincing anyone of its once-undisputed status as a giant in African football. Smaller countries that the Super Eagles used to devour for 'breakfast' have suddenly become their Nemesis.

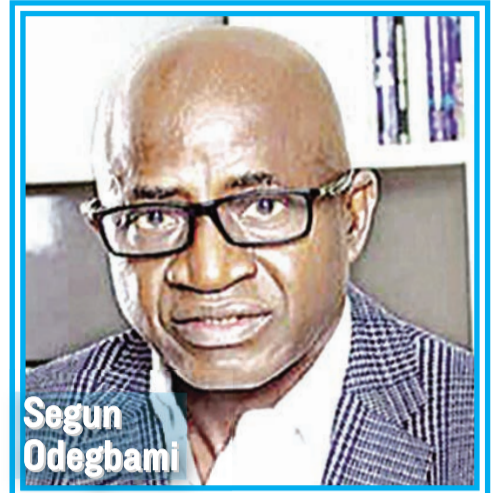
Some have even defeated the Super Eagles on their home turf, something that was once considered 'impossible'!

With this new appointment of Bruno, my feeling is that the NFF has taken on a big gamble.

The expectation was that any new coach must start to win from Day One, and that there will be no excuses or time a honeymoon. Nigerian coaches were not given any such luxury.

As Bruno Labbadia resumes and takes charge, his previous 'record' of never winning any trophy in his almost 30 years career as a coach, amounts to nothing. It will not serve as an acceptable excuse should he fail to deliver by defeating the Cheetahs of Benin Republic next week in a 2025 AFCON-qualifying match to be played in Uyo, Nigeria. The match has tension and grudge written all over it.

Gernot Rohr, the last German coach that was sacked by Nigeria some years ago, now leads the Cheetahs for this sequel against the Super Eagles.



Segun Odegbami

He came a few months ago and inflicted the defeat on the Super Eagles that fast-tracked Jose Peseiro's exit from Nigeria. That defeat was one of the worst and most humiliating in Nigerian football history. It must not happen again!

Unfortunately, even as the team list for the match was released during the week, it showed that Bruno would still be working with most of the same set of players that could not lift Nigerian football higher in the past decade. Is there some 'magic' that he would perform with the players within the one week that he has before the match?

There is also a second match within days against Rwanda in Kigali, another mountain that the new coach will have to climb to clear the cloud before the eyes of Nigerians about a certain coach from 'nowhere' leading their prized Super Eagles.

These two matches are critical for Bruno's survival as the coach of the national team, and for the NFF itself as a board. Nigerians are waiting and watching.

Meanwhile, for academic reasons only, it will be interesting to know the value of Bruno's contract, the duration of the contract, the target(s) set for him, who pays his wages between the sports ministry and the federation, foreign assistants (will he make use of local coaches), and so on.

The more I look at all this matter of Bruno Labbadia, the more I see it as one huge gamble by the NFF.

Organisers Roll Out Entries For 2024 GCU Relays

WHILST awaiting the official flag off and portal opening for invitation and entries of the Sixth edition of the GCU Relays 2024, regular participants at the annual Inter Collegiate Athletics Competition, have inundated the organisers (Government College Ughelli Old Boys Association, Worldwide) with enquiries and outright submission of entries.

Perennial participants and previous winners of the One Day Track Meet, Hussey College and Federal Government College, Warri, have led the charge.

Although the GCU Relays is originally meant to be Invitational, with correspondences to Legacy Schools, Pan Nigeria, increasing demand for participation by schools, outside this bracket, has ensured an open window for some schools to feature after crit-

ical screening and assessment.

Schools in this category fall within the geographical proximity of GCU, whilst a few have come from distant locations, such as Yewa College, Ilaro, at the second edition.

Still, the

organisers are conserved with the integrity of the GCU Relays and the need to checkmate and screen out desperate mercenaries.

"We have noticed the huge interest shown towards the GCU Relays, over the years. Yet, we are mindful of the mercenary tendency

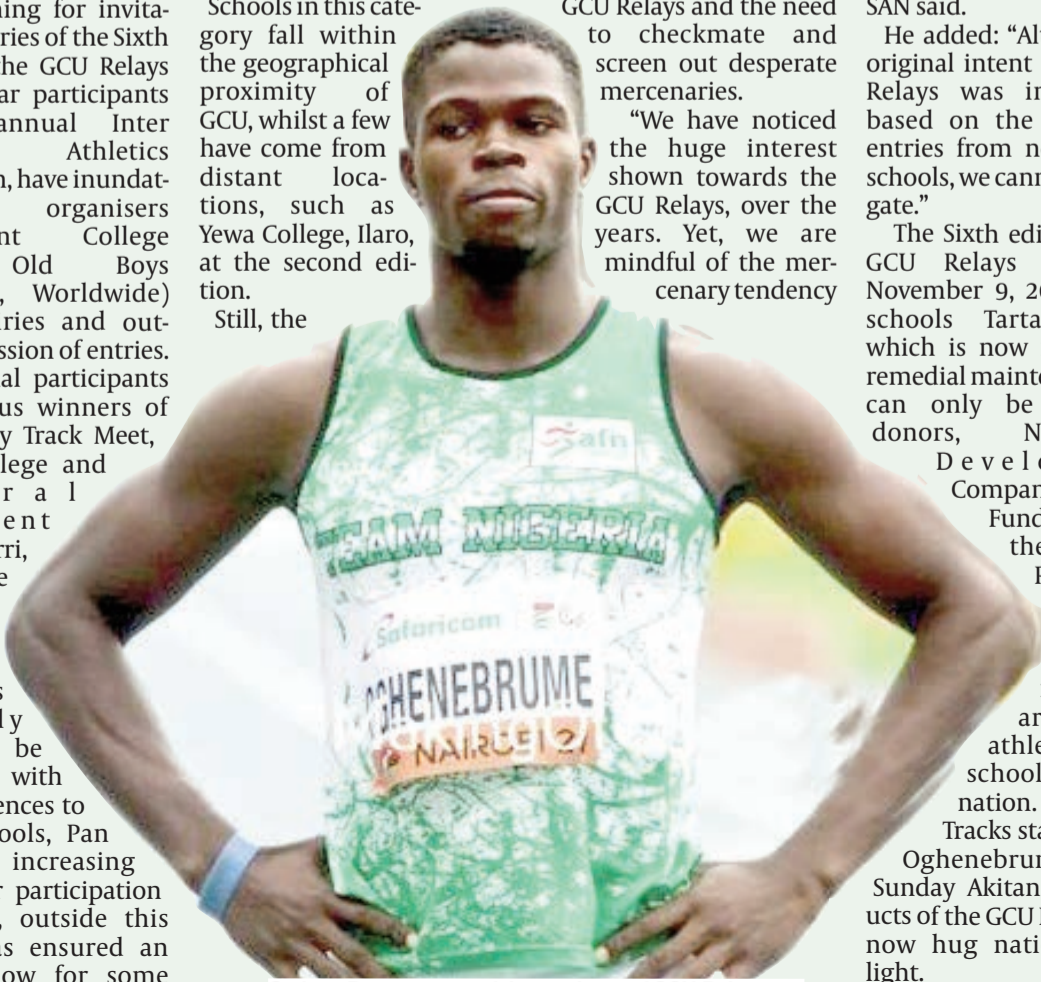
by some schools", PGWW Chief Albert Akpomudje, SAN said.

He added: "Although the original intent of the GCU Relays was invitational, based on the deluge of entries from non-invited schools, we cannot shut the gate."

The Sixth edition of the GCU Relays holds on November 9, 2024, at the schools Tartan Tracks, which is now in need of remedial maintenance that can only be done by donors, NNPC/SHELL Development Company.

Fundamental to the GCU Relays is the development of outstanding secondary school athletes for schools and the nation.

Tracks stars, Godson Oghenebrume and Sunday Akitan, are products of the GCU Relays, who now hug national limelight.



Godson Brume is one of the products of GCU Relays

'Real Madrid, Hisense Partnership Will Boost Fan Experience'

EUROPEAN champions, Real Madrid, has announced a partnership with global consumer electronics and home appliances firm, Hisense, aimed at boosting fanbase among Nigerian football fans.

Real Madrid, in a statement, said that the alliance not only deepens the connection it has with Hisense, but also represents a significant milestone for both organisations as they strive to deliver unparalleled fan engagement over the next three years.

Hisense said that the partnership will encompass Real Madrid's men's and women's first division teams in all championships, including the UEFA Champions League and the Supercopa de España, which will be held in Saudi Arabia.

Real Madrid, renowned for its global success and passionate supporters, continues to captivate millions in Nigeria. With a roster featuring global icons like Kylian Mbappé, Vinícius Júnior, and Jude Bellingham, alongside a

rich history of legendary players such as Cristiano Ronaldo, David Beckham, and Zinedine Zidane, the club continues to solidify its status as a sporting powerhouse.

The company said it aims at creating unforgettable moments for Nigerian Fans, adding, "Hisense and Real Madrid are committed to enhancing fan experiences in Nigeria. As part of this collaboration, they will launch a limited-edition co-branded 100-inch TV, designed to elevate the home viewing experience.

"This partnership will also introduce initiatives aimed at enriching fans' engagement with the sport and its broader cultural context, leveraging Real Madrid's global appeal and Hisense's technological expertise."

Building on successful collaborations with UEFA Euro and FIFA World Cup over the past decade, it said that this partnership further deepens Hisense's connection with communities and commitment to promoting a healthy, active lifestyle.

TheGuardianSports

www.guardian.ng

World U-20 Athletics Championships

Nigeria's Free Fall Continues In Peru, Ella Onojuwewwo Flops

By Gowon Akpodonor

A DAY after long jumper, Prestina Ochonoghor, and sprinter, Justina Eyakpobeya, failed to deliver medal for Team Nigeria at the 2024 World U-20 Athletics Championships in Lima, Peru, Nigerians got another rude shock in the early hours of Friday with pre-championship favourite, Ella Onojuwewwo, failing in the 400m final. Some athletics-loving Nigerians had stayed awake late into the night waiting for Onojuwewwo to deliver the nation's fifth gold medal in the women's 400m and 15th gold overall by Nigeria in the history of the Championships. But like those who competed before her in Peru, Onojuwewwo disappointed, and in the process became the sixth Nigerian woman to return without a medal in the 400m event.

The 19-year-old Onojuwewwo, who was part of Team Nigeria to the Paris 2024 Olympics, faded badly in the home stretch, level with Lurdes Gloria Manuel, allowing the Czech athlete to move

Nigerian Wins 400m Gold For South Africa

ahead and win in 51.29 seconds.

The Nigeria ended in a disappointing fifth position (52.61seconds) to become the sixth Nigerian woman to run in the final of the event without winning a medal after Yemi Fagbamila in 2002, the duo of Sekinat Adesanya and Folasade Abugan in 2006, Bukola Abogunloko in 2010 and Edidiong Ofonime Odiong in 2014.

According to SportsNow.com, Nigeria remains the most decorated nation in the women 400m event with four gold medals won by Fatimah Yusuf in 1990 in a 50.62 Championship record, Olabisi Afolabi (1994), Folashade Abugan (2008) and Imaobong Nse Uko (2021).

With Onojuwewwo's inability to deliver on Friday morning, Team Nigeria now stand the risk of coming back home without a medal for the second straight edition of the Championships and eighth time overall after returning empty handed in 1988, 2000

(did not participate), 2004, 2012, 2016 and 2018.

Perhaps, one of the best moments for Team Nigeria in the championships came in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2021, when it finished third for the first time on the medals table. That historic performance at Nairobi 2021 brought the likes of Favour Ofili, Udodi Onwuzurike and Godson Brume to limelight.

Nigeria now hope to win medals in the relay events, which started on Friday.

The relays have come to the rescue for Nigeria at a number of editions and Nigerian athletics officials will be hoping for a repeat scenario especially after the Team Nigeria track and field team also failed to make it to the podium at the Paris 2024 Olympics.

Nigeria is presenting teams in the women's 4x400m and the 4x100m as well as the men's 4x100m.

The country won two gold medals in the relays three years ago in Nairobi, Kenya courtesy the women's

4x400m and the mixed 4x400m relay teams.

Nigeria won her first relay medal at the Championships in 1986 when Mary Onyali led the women's 4x100m team to win a bronze medal.

The country recorded her best relay success in 2021 when the women's 4x100m, 4x400m and the mixed relay teams all made it to the podium.

The women have won five relay medals made up of one gold and four bronze, while the men have won four viz two silver and two bronze.

Both men and women com-

bined to win one-the mixed 4x400m gold at Nairobi 2021.

While bonafide Nigerians are still searching for the men's 400m gold at the World Athletics U20 Championships for the past 26 years, another 'Nigerian', Udemé Okon, on Friday morning secured for South Africa its second straight gold in the competition.

Okon 45.69secs to win the gold ahead of two Americans, Jyaden Davis (46.08sec) and Sidi Njie (46.29ses).

The 18-year-old Okon has now succeeded Lythe Pilly who won it for South Africa for the first time ever in 2022 in Cali, Colombia.



Ella Onojuwewwo could not rescue a medal for Team Nigeria in the 400m event in Peru....on Friday morning

500 Delta Athletes Begin Closed Camping For 8th National Youth Games, LOC Appeals To States To Educate Athletes

By Gowon Akpodonor

Over 500 Team Delta athletes have gone into closed camping ahead of the 8th edition of the National Youth Games. Director General of the Delta State Sports Commission, Festus Ohwojoro told *The Guardian*, on Friday, that the closed camping followed the conclusion of the over one month opening camping organised by the Sports Commission. According to Ohwojoro, over 200 officials also entered into the closed camp with the athlete with the

aim of enhancing their preparations for the games. He warned that that unserious athletes could be replaced with those who were initially dried from the open camping, adding that they must see themselves as the state's ambassadors and must work hard to ensure Team Delta retains its top spot at the Youth Games. Ohwojoro stated that so much had been invested by Governor Sheriff Oborewori towards the welfare and preparations of the athletes, and that the only way to thank the Governor was to successfully de-

fend their title haven won the last seven editions of the games since inception in 2013. He urged the coaches and officials to take their jobs seriously as they have the backing of Governor Oborewori to produce a formidable team that would astound the nation during the Youth Games. He also called on parents whose wards were selected for the closed camping not to be afraid of their wards safety as everything has been put in place to ensure their security, wellbeing and development.

Saudi's Al Ahli Drops Interest In Osimhen

SAUDI ARABIA club, Al-Ahli, reportedly dropped interest in signing Nigeria's Victor Osimhen on Friday evening, and in his place, picked England's Ivan Toney to strengthen its attack. According to reports gathered by SportsVillageSquare, the England international had already undergone medical examinations and exchanged of documents between the Saudi club and Brentford.

With Al-Ahli opting out of the deal to sign the Nigerian, the future of the Osimhen therefore remains uncertain

as he has only Chelsea still interested in him before the close of the transfer market in the midnight of Friday.

Osimhen's deals are complicated as he is on big contract at his current clubs and will want to keep his earnings at a similar level as Chelsea look to implement a wage structure.

As at Friday morning, there was also rival interest from Al Ahli in Osimhen for around £60million.

According to the BBC, Osimhen preferred to move to Stamford Bridge.

However, it was unclear on Friday afternoon whether Chelsea could sign Osimhen

as the club boast a huge number of options in attack, including

Christopher Nkunku, Nicolas Jackson, Marc Guiu, Pedro Neto, Mykhailo Mudryk, Noni Madueke, Cole Palmer and Joao Felix.

Chelsea agents were reported to have landed in Napoli for Osimhen in the earlier hours of Friday.

Napoli based publication, Tutto Napoli reported Friday afternoon the arrival of officials of Chelsea who are not yet giving up on the pursuit of the Nigerian.

"They have arrived in Naples to try to snatch the Nigerian striker from the Arab association, which in the meantime has taken precautions by having Ivan Toney undergo medical examinations."

As at Friday afternoon, Al Ahli continues its plan to take only one between Osimhen and Toney.

The Saudi Pro League side was said to be waiting for Osimhen on Friday to agree to switch from Europe to Saudi Arabia after reaching an agreement with Serie A side, Napoli to sell him.

According to international football expert and journalist, Fabrizio Romano, Al Ahli have agreed a deal for between €75/80m.

"Napoli reach total agreement with Al Ahli for Victor Osimhen!."

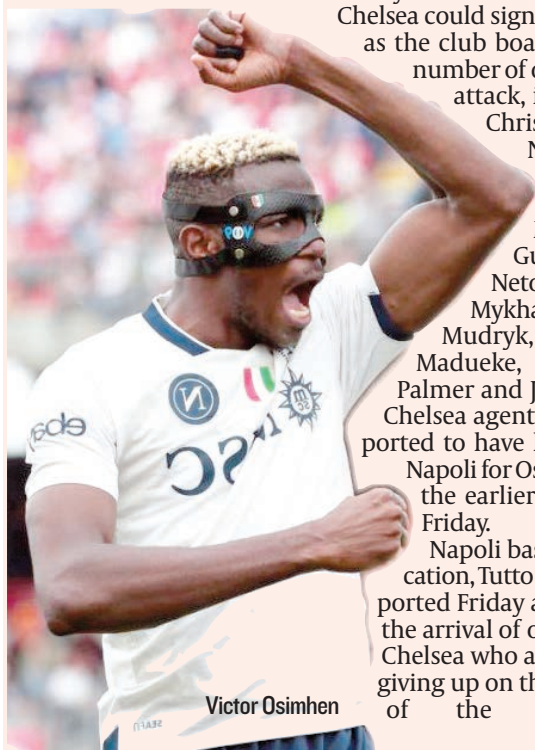
"Club to club deal done for €75/80m total package, Al Ahli have already booked a medical."

"Four-year contract worth €25/30m per season net to Osimhen + RELEASE clause."

"Final green light up to Victor,' Romano wrote on his X page Friday morning."

Romano also revealed that the Saudi Pro League side also included a release clause that will allow the Nigerian to return to Europe if and when he wishes.

"Al Ahli have included an affordable and easy release clause for Victor Osimhen as part of their proposal. It's lower than reported €100m."



Victor Osimhen

Bruno Labbadia Turns Down Super Eagles Job?

By Gowon Akpodonor

GERMAN tactician Bruno Labbadia has reportedly broken off communication with the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF), and will no longer become the head coach of the Super Eagles, as earlier announced. It was gathered late Friday

that the recruitment process was stalled over organisational issues that could not be resolved.

The NFF announced Labbadia as the new head coach on August 27 as a replacement for Finidi George.

He was expected to lead Nigeria in the Nations Cup

double-header against Benin Republic and Rwanda next month.

A list of 23 players has already been unveiled to prosecute the fixtures before the latest development.

No official of the NFF was ready to speak on the issue on Friday.

Man United, Liverpool Clash In EPL's Biggest Rivalry

THE biggest rivalry in English football will take centre stage on Sunday when Manchester United square up against Liverpool at Old Trafford. Both teams are the most successful in English football history, with 20 and 19 league titles respectively.

For the first time in their 175 encounters, the rivals will

have Dutch managers in their dugouts. Eric Ten Hag's men knocked Liverpool out of the FA Cup in the quarter-finals last season and completed the damage by denting their league title hopes with a 2-2 draw in April. The highly anticipated encounter will kick off at 4:00 pm on Sunday, live on DStv ch 203 and GOtv ch 66.

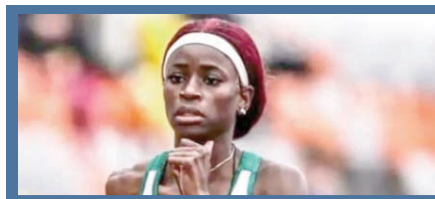
Manchester United lost to Brighton Hove Albion in their last match and will aim to end Arne Slot's perfect start to his Liverpool managerial career. Slot, in his press conference on Friday said he fully understands the magnitude of the game.



Man United defeated Liverpool 2-1 for first points of Premier League season....last year

Saturday's EPL Fixtures

- Arsenal Vs Brighton 12:30
- Brentford Vs Southampton 15:00
- Everton Vs Bournemouth 15:00
- Ipswich Town Vs Fulham 15:00
- Leicester Vs Aston Villa 15:00
- Nott' Forest Vs Wolves 15:00
- West Ham Vs Man City 17:30
- Saturday Spanish La Liga**
- Barcelona Vs Real Valladolid 16:00
- Athletic Club Vs Atlético Madrid 18:00
- Espanyol Vs Rayo Vallecano 18:15



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Before Electricity Bills Destroy Nigerian Universities

THERE is a time for everything... as the ancient word reveals to us. I dedicated the last two weeks on 'Why Teachers Too Should Get 300% Pay Rise'. I promised to continue this week but this is a time to look at a weightier matter of teaching - the socio-economic challenge that is threatening the foundation of tertiary education in Nigeria. Most of the media organs have been raising alarms on how unbearable electricity bills have begun to cripple academic and non-academic activities in Nigerian universities and polytechnics. Sadly, instead of managing the threat to our development as a priority, education authorities in Nigeria appear more concerned about meretricious age-limit for admission into the institutions of higher learning and age-limit to sit for school certificate examinations for admissions into the same institutions facing existential threat.

And so, I think this is a time to suspend commentaries on pay rise for teachers and age-limit for entry points and qualifying examinations. This is another time to remind authorities in Abuja that they should not play I-don't-care politics with the health of public and private tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Doubtless, they would like to think about Project-2027 instead of attention to the quality of education in Nigeria. After all, they have been dribbling the ASUU members (university teachers) for decades. They have been demonising them over unfulfilled covenants and agreements with them. But here is the thing, we cannot continue nation building this way. The education authorities in Abuja should not continue with debates on inconsequential age-limit in 21st century where 17-year-old students have reportedly completed doctorate degrees and 14-year old students are enrolling for medical sciences. They need to wake up in Abuja to freeze all irrelevant distractions including police invitation to Labour leaders on alleged terrorism financing, president's frequent trips and age-limit for university education. They should face the weightier matter of the law and governance of university education in Nigeria. Reason: it is another time to remind our leaders in Abuja and all the 36 state capitals about a post that has been trending for some time from entrance gate of a South African university that: collapse of education is collapse of a country. The post reminds us that we don't require any atomic bomb to destroy a country: all that is required is to destroy education in that country and the country will be forgotten.

Specifically, the following words posted at the entrance gate of a South African university sums up the problems we are now facing: 'Destroying any nation does not require the use of atomic bombs or the use of long-range missiles. It only requires lowering the quality of education and allowing cheating in the examinations by the students.' The result is that: Patients die at the hands of doctors. Buildings collapse at the hands of engineers. Money is lost at the hands of economists and accountants. Humanity dies at the hands of religious scholars. Justice is lost at the hands of judges. Because "The collapse of education is the collapse of the nation."

As I once wrote here, the message from South Africa where seven top universities are better rated than Nigeria's in global context, is not directed at President Bola Tinubu and his



Adelabu

Minister of Education alone. It is directed at all the 36 state governors and 774 local government council officials in this convoluted federation. It is not about typing out the quotable quotes or words on marble on education in our various rooms and offices. It is about how our leaders can manage priorities in a way that will empower them to regard education as a weapon of country and global competitiveness. That has been the motivation for writing about pay rise for teachers to raise standards and defeat the power of mediocrity that has been overwhelming us. This is not a time of lamentation about the quantum of time the ASUU members have spent on strike, the only language authorities understand in Nigeria. It is not just a time to remember that ASUU has been the most unappreciated driving force behind improved remuneration package in the public sector. It is just the right time to encourage our leaders at all levels to swallow their pride and vanity and be angry with themselves about the consequences of their violent 'attack on education' and indeed on the future of their country.

The current power challenge:

Reports are widespread now that the University of Benin Students have been at home in the middle of the academic session. Authorities shut down the institution the other day following a peaceful protest by the students. It is understood that the aggrieved students were not asking for student loan or any concessions from the university authorities. The demand is for electricity and water, two basic ingredients for a comfortable stay in school or home or office.

The absence of electricity has made pumping of water impossible. Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC) cut off power to the school for failure to pay its electric bill of N280 million monthly. This followed a 300 per cent increase in April this year. This is however not strictly a UNIBEN challenge. Reports have indicated that several federal universities in Nigeria are on the

brink of a major crisis, with 52 institutions facing a potential collapse because of a steep increase in electricity tariffs. UNIBEN just happened to be the first to bite the bullet as a commentator put it the other day.

This alarming situation has raised serious concerns among Vice Chancellors and educational stakeholders, who have urgently called on the federal government to intervene. The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) recent approval of a 300 per cent increase in the tariff paid by Band A customers, from N68/kWh to N225/kWh is the trigger of this trouble. This decision affects federal universities located in areas designated as Band A, leading to a quadrupling of their monthly electricity bills. For instance, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) in Zaria now faces an annual electricity bill of N4.4 billion, up from N1.2 billion. Similarly, the University of Ilorin's monthly bill has surged from N70 million to N230 million, a situation the vice chancellor describes as "unsustainable."

The financial strain caused by the tariff hike is crippling university operations across the country. Most of the institutions have been struggling to meet their overhead costs, and the additional burden of increased electricity bills only threatens to halt their activities entirely. Prof. Yakubu Ochefu, Secretary to the Committee of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (CVCNU), has warned that if the federal government does not intervene, 52 federal universities may collapse sooner than later.

The consequences are glaring: the potential collapse of universities would not only disrupt the academic calendar but also jeopardise the education of millions of Nigerian youths. This would be an unfortunate development as Nigeria is already far behind in many educational indices and this could take the country down a peg or two.

The Academic Staff Union of Universities too has cried out against the huge power bills paid by universities in the country estimated at N275bn annually, following the recent increase in electricity tariffs. In a quick response to the crisis, the National President, ASUU, Prof. Emmanuel Osodeke, has called for per-unit billing as the universities' power bill rose by 300 per cent, hitting N21.480b monthly.

The universities are under Band A where customers enjoy electricity for at least 20 hours daily. Electricity is an essential need in the universities as they are required in laboratories, libraries and for other critical purposes. Before the tariff increase, all 274 universities in Nigeria paid N5,252,000,000 monthly or N63,024,000,000 yearly. After the increase, the universities now pay N21,480,000,000 monthly and N257,760,000,000 annually. For instance, inquiries have revealed that the University of Lagos, which previously paid an average bill of N180m, now spends N300m on power.

The ASUU boss, in an interview insisted that the Federal Government must ensure fairness to all, citing the increased electricity tariffs, which had risen sharply. He noted that all users should be charged based on the actual units of electricity consumed, with a uniform rate, rather than being categorised into different bands. Osodeke also criticised the Band A classification for the universities, stating that, "Electricity tariffs are a nationwide concern and not limited to universities alone. The idea of categorising consumers into bands such as Band A or Band B is flawed. Billing should be based on actual consumption, with a consistent per-unit rate for all users. His words: "If someone receives 14 hours of electricity, they naturally pay more because they use more, but automatically charging them more simply because they fall under Band A is illogical. This new system is terrible and unfair." Suggesting a way out, Osodeke stated, "We suggest that the rate should be equitable for everyone. People will pay more because they consume more energy, not because of arbitrary classifications. The system should be fair to all Nigerians, charging solely based on the actual electricity units consumed. Whether in universities, towns, or villages, everyone should pay the same rate per unit of energy consumed." However, the Committees of Pro-Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities called for a concession in electricity tariffs for all 274 universities in Nigeria.

According to statistics provided by the Secretary-General of CVCNU, Prof. Yakubu Ochefu, the average monthly electricity cost for first-generation universities increased from approximately N80m to N300m, while for second-generation universities, it rose from N50m to N200m.

He noted, "Electricity costs for first-generation tech/agric universities increased from N30m to N150m. First-generation state universities also saw an increase from N30m to N150m. Second-generation state universities (1999/2000) experienced the same hike, from N30m to N150m. "First and second-generation private universities' costs rose from N10m to N60m and universities established by former President Goodluck Jonathan increased monthly from N20m to N100m."

Ochefu maintained that the VCs committee had written a letter to the Federal Government in this regard, and the matter was now in the hands of the pro-chancellors, insisting that if the government did not give concession to the universities, students might have to pay an extra N80,000 for electricity. "The vice-chancellors have done their part. Since the pro-chancellors have been inaugurated, they will continue from where the vice-chancellors left off because it's a fundamental funding issue. For example, we reported that universities used to pay N1.2bn to N1.3bn annually for power.

This is another huge challenge before the Tinubu administration. What is more, this is another area where silence won't be golden. This existential threat to the tertiary education in Nigeria should not be left to attract the attention and indeed violent protest of the ultimate losers, the students. In the main, it is too sensitive to be left to the Education and Power Ministers alone. They haven't been resourceful so far in handling crises in their domains. The presidency and National Assembly should get cracking immediately before it is too late.

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