2022 FYE: Five Big Banks Stand Firm Despite Economic Headwinds

●Hold combined total assets of N58tn, N1.1trn profits

Kayode Tokede

A total of five of Nigeria's Systemically Important Banks (SIB) resisted domestic and external economic challenges to declare impressive 2022 financial performance that led to dividend pay out to shareholders.

The five big banks whose 2022 full year-end (FYE) financial statements were assessed by THISDAY included Access Holdings Plc, Zenith Bank Plc, Guaranty Trust Holding Company Plc (GTCO), Ecobank Transnational Incorporated and United Bank for Africa (UBA).

FBN Holdings, the parent company of FirstBank, one of the country's tier-1 banks is yet to release its full year results.

But the aforementioned five banks all raked in combined

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Wigwe: We Want 30% Trade in Africa Facilitated by Access Holdings... Page 32

THISDAY

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Afenifere: Resurgence of Terrorism After 2023 Polls Worrying

●President to launch network against crime in Gulf of Guinea ●Leaves for Accra today to attend maritime security summit

Deji Elumoye, Emameh Gabriel in Abuja and **Blessing Ibunge** in Port Harcourt

Yoruba's foremost socio-political organisation, Afenifere, yesterday, expressed concern about the upsurge in terrorist activities since after the 2023 general election, especially as the country got closer to the handover date.

Afenifere raised the concern in a statement by its National Publicity Secretary, Comrade Jare Ajayi.

The group challenged President Muhammadu Buhari on the post-election rising terrorism rates, and him offered tips on how to earn the forgiveness of the Nigerian people.

However, the president was scheduled to launch "Network on Organised Crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea (NOCINAG)" at a national conference on Friday in Port Harcourt.

Buhari would depart Abuja for Accra on Tuesday to attend the Third Extraordinary Session of the

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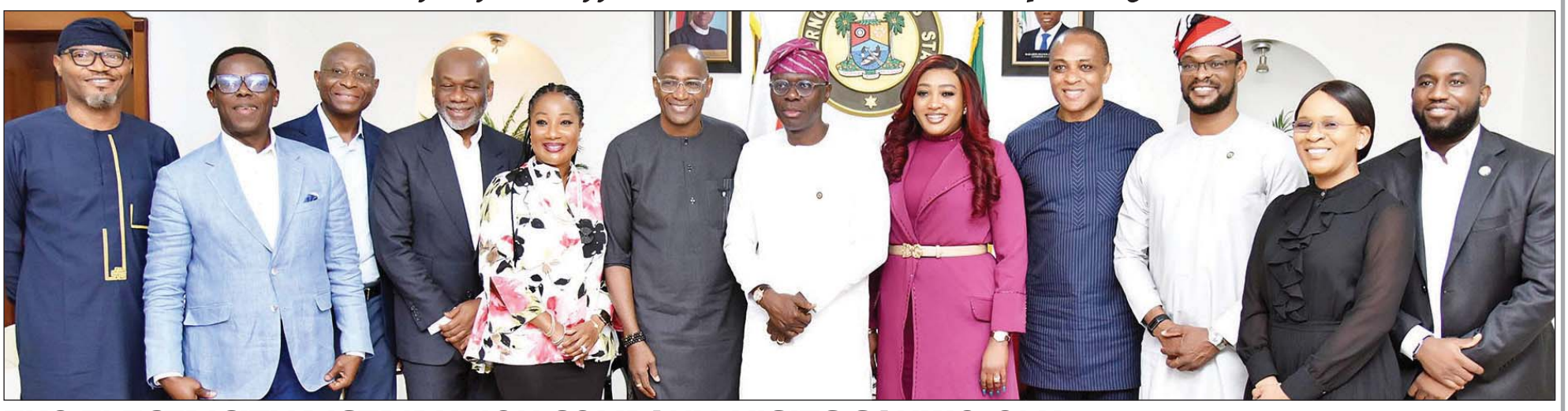
Tinubu: Disregard Rumour About My Health, I'm Refreshed, Ready for Task Ahead

●Nigerians are glad to see you back and fit, says Barau ●APC to suspend Amaechi's ex-Chief of Staff, others over anti-party activities

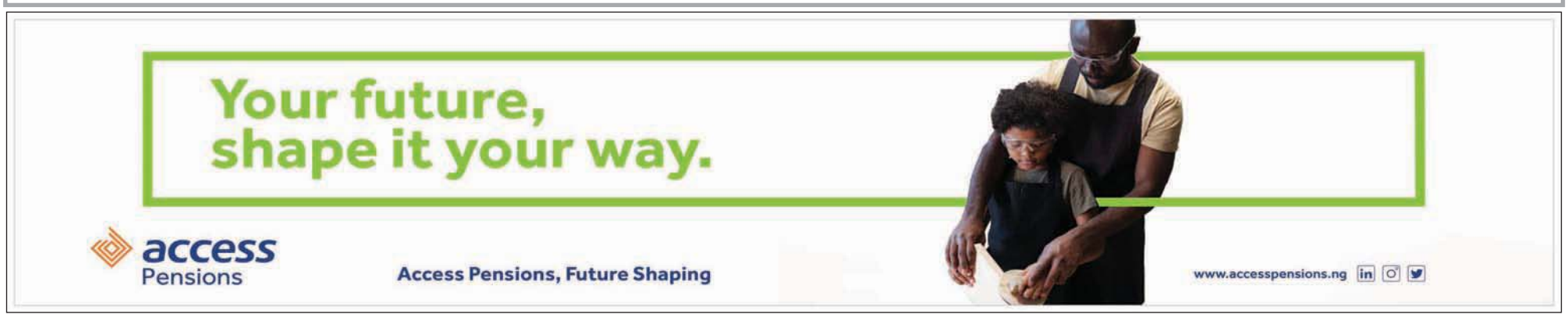
Story on page 10



EKO ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY VISITS SANWO-OLU...

L-R: GM, Corporate communications, Eko Electricity Distribution Company (EKEDC), Babatunde Lasaki; Director, Babor Egeregor; Director, WPG, Tien George; Director EKEDC, Charles Momoh; Chief Legal Officer, EKEDC, Wola Joseph; Chairman, EKEDC Board of Directors, Dere Otubu; Governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu; MD/CEO EKEDC, Dr. Tinuade Sanda; Director WPG, Ernest Oji; LASG, Commissioner for Energy & Mineral Resources, Olalere Odusote; Perm. Sec LASG, Ministry of Energy & Mineral Resources, Shola Mosunlola Shasore, and GM, Lagos State, Electricity Board, Mr. Mukhtaar Tijani, during a courtesy visit by the Board and Management Team of EKEDC to congratulate the governor on his re-election and discussed ways of collaboration with the Lagos State Government on the decentralisation of power and optimisation of service delivery to consumers in Lagos... recently

Enugu Governor-Elect, Mbah Names Chioke, Abah, Onyia, Nebo, 60 Others in Transition Committee... Page 33



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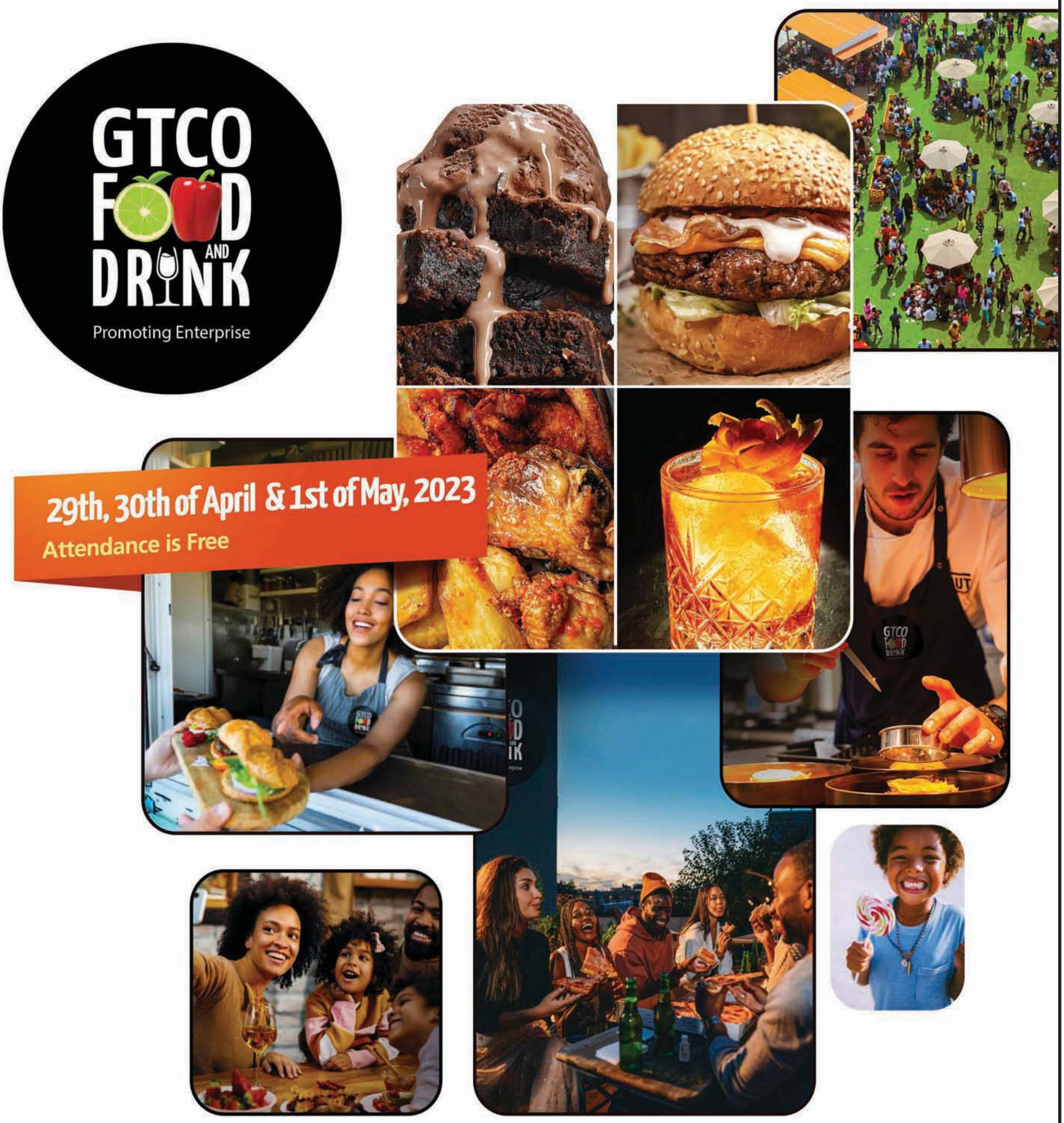

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TINUBU RETURNS...

President-elect, Bola Ahmed Tinubu arrived Abuja Airport yesterday sandwiched by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabiamila and other party officials and supporters, after weeks in France

W'Bank Ranks S'Africa, Egypt, Benin Republic, Others Ahead of Nigeria in Global Logistics Performance Index

Nigeria Customs rated 90th among 139 countries

Ndubuisi Francis in Abuja

South Africa, Egypt, Benin Republic, Botswana, Namibia, Djibouti and Rwanda are better rated than Nigeria in the latest global Logistics Performance Index (LPI) released by the World Bank.

The LPI is an interactive bench-marking tool created to help countries identify the challenges and opportunities they face in their performance on trade logistics, including shipping and what they can do to improve their performance.

The LPI report, titled "Connecting to Compete 2023: Trade Logistics in an Uncertain Global Economy," provides a measure of countries' ability to move goods across borders with speed and reliability, the report is coming after three years of unprecedented supply chain disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, with soaring delivery times.

Covering 139 countries, the LPI measured the ease of establishing reliable supply chain connections and the structural factors that make it possible, such as the quality of logistics services, trade, transport-related infrastructure, and border controls.

The report which is based on a maximum score of 5.0, adjudged South Africa as the best in Africa and 19th in the world with a score of 3.4 per cent, followed by Botswana and Egypt which scored 3.1 per cent each to place a joint 57th position globally.

However, Botswana is better rated than Egypt due to the performance of its Customs.

Benin Republic, which many importers in Nigeria prefer its ports due to logistics convenience and Namibia are on the 66th position while Rwanda on the 73rd spot, and Djibouti (79th) are clearly rated ahead of Nigeria (88th) in the World Bank LPI report.

Congo Democratic Republic, Guinea Bissau, Mali and Nigeria share the 88th spot among the 139 countries assessed, with a score of 2.6 per cent apiece.

Bangladesh, Dominican Republic Guatemala, Uzbekistan and Russia are other jurisdictions outside the African continent that are in the joint 88th position.

Nigeria posted 2.6 per cent (Customs); 2.4 per cent on logistics infrastructure, 2.5 per cent on international shipments, 2.3 per cent on logistics competence and quality, 3.1 on timeliness and 2.7 on tracking and tracing.

The Nigeria Customs Service was also rated 90th among the 139 countries, behind their South Africa and Beninoise counterparts ranked at 31st and 65th positions respectively.

On the overall scale, the 2023 LPI report ranked Singapore number one in the world with 4.3 per cent score, followed by Finland in the second place with 4.2 per cent.

Another Scandinavian country, Denmark with 4.1 per cent shared the third position with Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland.

Giving an insight into the report, the World Bank revealed that the survey was conducted between September 6 and November 5, 2022 and contains 4,090 country assessments by 652 logistics professionals in 115 countries across all World Bank regions.

The report highlighted the crucial importance of resilience and reliability in the performance of logistics.

According to the Global Director for Trade, Investment, and Competitiveness at the World Bank, Mona Haddad, "Logistics are the lifeblood of international trade, and trade in turn is a powerful force for economic growth and poverty reduction. "The LPI helps developing countries identify where improvements can be made to boost competitiveness."

The LPI 2023 report revealed that end-to-end supply chain digitalisation, especially in emerging economies, is allowing countries to shorten port delays by up to 70 per cent compared to those in developed countries. Moreover, demand for green logistics is rising, with 75 per cent of shippers looking for environmentally friendly options when exporting to high-income countries.

However, the report also noted that most time is spent in shipping, adding that the biggest delays occur at seaports, airports, and multimodal facilities.

It pointed out that policies targeting these facilities can help improve reliability, including improving clearance processes and investing in infrastructure, adopting digital technologies, and incentivising environmentally sustainable logistics by shifting to less carbon-intensive freight modes and more energy-efficient warehousing.

On average across all potential trade routes, 44 days elapse from the time a container enters the port of the exporting country until it leaves the destination port, with a standard deviation of 10.5 days.

That span represents 60 per cent of the time it takes to trade goods internationally.

The LPI report provides valuable information for policymakers and stakeholders involved in the logistics industry. It helps identify areas where countries can improve their logistics performance, thereby enhancing their competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Experts Call for Improved Access to Capital for Nigerian Startups

Oluchi Chibuzor

For Nigerian startups to survive, the federal government has been advised to democratise access to capital. This was the view of participants at the Knowledge Digest Africa conference.

They equally for specialised banks for startups that would accommodate their learning curve to growth path.

Speaking at the event, the convener of the conference, Samson Olatunde, stressed that the problem of job creation could be solved when the challenges facing entrepreneurs are taken away.

According to him, "We have a huge number of young Africans doing stuffs and suddenly they all want to leave the country. The reason why all these things are happening is because they are going through a series of challenges particularly the angle of entrepreneurship.

"I believe that when we federal government democratises access to entrepreneurship, when we empower more entrepreneurs to emerge on the continent, then you will be able to engender wealth creation."

He added that, "But for that to happen, you must be able to create an enabling environment for them. The enabling environment must start from the bottom of the pyramid and the bottom of the pyramid is an idea.

"Now a lot of investors are interested in products, but they are not interested in investing in ideas."

Speaking also at the event, the Chief Executive Officer, Tabacaps Partners, Paul Okunaiya, said organisations must begin to provide platforms that would allow people to learn the act of entrepreneurship.

"By this we are democratising access to entrepreneurship and capital because when you get to the space of entrepreneurship what you need next is human capital- whether human, financial, social," he added.

Commenting also, the founder, First Founders Inc., David Messan, stressed the need for specialised banking services for the Nigerian Startup.

According to him, "The commercial banks in Nigeria are not helping the startups and they are not designed for startups. So, when we say we are giving you room to fail is to evolve, get to a point when you pivot down and up.

"That point is the failure for you, but you are moving because you are in a system that allows you to continue the movement and learning.

"Startup means you are building something and there is no bank that is giving you money to build and we have more people in Nigeria and Africa at the bottom of the pyramid but there is no financial system giving them money to build."

Commenting further, the convener said the summit with the theme, 'Monetise your expertise,' provides the platform for the business community to leverage real life case studies to gain momentum for the ideas and innovation.

"The whole idea of doing this is for all of us to see the need to empower more people, startups, SMEs, career people, professionals especially from Africa.

"We realised that there are a lot of knowledge gaps and people need to understand how to apply information to different aspects of their lives, most especially mentoring.

"But with just a click of the mouse you are able to do that, so what we are able to do is put a one stop Africa Digital Knowledge Bank platform together that does meetup, mentorship, master class, market place and everything you can think about learning."

Also, the Director of Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Centre, University of Lagos, Prof. Sunday Adebisi, said the institution was deliberate about teaching the students on how to create a decent job for themselves.

Afrihealth Launches Healthcare App

Oluchi Chibuzor

Afrihealth, a premier technology solutions provider in Nigeria, has launched its groundbreaking medical super app known as Rigour+.

The app, according to the firm, would transform the African healthcare landscape by addressing critical challenges and providing convenience and quality healthcare services at users' fingertips.

Speaking at the launch of the app in Lagos, recently, the Afrihealth CEO, Linda Obi, said the app Rigour+ would revolutionise healthcare access for millions of Africans, adding that it would tackles major issues such as limited access to quality healthcare, rampant counterfeit drugs and difficulty in obtaining medical services.

She said Afrihealth's Rigour+ medical super app was designed to combat challenges affecting the sector, improve access to quality healthcare services for Nigerians and eventually the entire African continent.

She maintained that Afrihealth's dedication to patients' safety was showcased through Rigour+'s emphasis on combating counterfeit drugs.

According to her, "The app's innovative scanning technology empowers users to make informed choices, ensuring they purchase only genuine products. This feature can significantly reduce the risk of adverse health effects and save lives by detecting fake or substandard medications.

"We're thrilled to launch Rigour+ after countless hours of development and refinement. We believe this app has the potential to radically transform healthcare access for Nigerians, making it more accessible, convenient, and reliable than ever before."

Speaking at the event also, a health education expert, Mr. Chinonso Ejemba, who buttressed the role that technology was going to play in Nigeria's health sector, stressed that it was going to democratise the healthcare system by making room for accessible, affordable and premium health care.

VP OSINBAJO TOURS EXHIBITION BOOTHS AT ENERGY SUMMIT...

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum Resources, Amb. Gabriel Tanimu Aduda; Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo; Secretary General, African Petroleum Producers' Organisation (APPO), Dr. Omar Farouk, and Managing Director, Global Process & Pipeline Services (GPPS) Limited, Obi Uzu, during the tour of exhibition booths by the vice president at the Nigeria International Energy Summit held in Abuja...recently

NNPC: $2.8bn AKK Gas Pipeline Project to Be Inaugurated in Q3, 2023

●Says $1.1bn spent so far, project self-financed ●Set to support generation of 3,650mw

Emmanuel Addeh and **Udora Orizu** in Abuja

The $2.8 billion Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano (AKK) gas pipeline which will support the generation of about 3,600mw of power is set for completion in the third quarter of 2023, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) said yesterday.

The scope of work of the project includes the construction of a 40× 614 kilometre linear section from Ajaokuta in Kogi state, traversing the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Niger and Kaduna states, terminating in Kano as well as a 24 × 15km spur line to Abuja terminal gas station.

The pipeline has the capacity to transport 2 billion Standard Cubic Feet (SCF) of natural gas per day to three proposed Independent Power Plants (IPPs) in Abuja, Kaduna, Kano, and other gas-based industries as well as other identified and proposed commercial off-takers along the entire pipeline route.

The Group Chief Executive Officer of the National Oil Company (NOC), Mallam Mele Kyari, who spoke when he took journalists on an official tour of one of the sites of the project in Ahoko area of Kogi State, disclosed that so far $1.1 billion had been spent on the project estimated to cost $2.8 billion.

He also disclosed that the project is being fully funded by NNPC with no third party support, explaining that the project is being delivered in phases, with welding now 70 per cent completed.

"This is one of the most massive projects that we run in the company. It's of immense value to our country and to its socio-economic growth. We know that this is a must-deliver project. This project has not stopped for one day, we have continued to fund it despite the fact we do not have third party financing.

"We have so far spent over $1.1 billion on this project from our cash flow. We have different companies, commercial companies, inter-company loans within our company. These companies can fund these projects.

" So, we do not need any support. As we speak now, we don't owe a dollar to our contractors. We pay all their invoices, we are hopeful that we will deliver this project," Kyari stated.

THISDAY learnt that overall engineering design for the linear section of the two segments of the project already stands at 93.48 per cent, while overall procurement for the linear section for the two segments is at 88 per cent.

According to the NNPC, 94 per cent of the total line pipes have been manufactured and 90 per cent already in-country, while 400km of the linear section/mainline welding, representing 68 per cent of Right of Way (ROW) from Ajaokuta in Kogi state to Kano.

The procurement process was endorsed by the Bureau for Public Procurement (BPP) having complied with all regulatory requirements before the approval by the Federal Executive Council (FEC) in 2018.

NNPC, it was learnt , further renegotiated the project cost downwards to $2.5 billion in 2019 with the attendant savings of $300 million, which culminated in the final approval by FEC.

The 3,650 expected megawatts are broken down into Abuja (1,350) Kaduna (950) and Kano (1,350)

"By the third quarter of this year we will complete the entire welding of this. What this means is that we can energise this line by end of third quarter of this year.

"We are going to commence the construction of the Kaduna, Abuja Power plants in earnest. It's a cumulative thing gradually we will deal up to that capacity. To naysayers, we will shame them , project will be delivered, we are not scared of their comments," Kyari added.

Speaking further, Kyari lamented the loss of some workers due to security challenges in some locations where work on the project is ongoing.

While offering his condolences to the families of the workers who lost their lives, he expressed gratitude to security agencies for increasing security and ensuring security of the workers.

"There are challenges, security issues. We have lost men and we are so sorry to their families. We continue to share their grief. Despite these, we have gotten massive support from our government security agencies, the Nigerian army, Department of State Service, DSS and others.

"They are making sure that our workers work safely and that we are able to continue this project uninterrupted. We are grateful to this team and we assure Nigerians that this project is different and will be delivered," he added

Giving a tour of the site, Project Manager, Oilserv Limited Pipelines and Facilities, Steve Nnorom disclosed that the company had done about 222 kilometres welding work with about 27km remaining for completion.

"We have completed about 73 per cent of our mainline wielding works. We have done 222 kilometres, we have about 27 km of welding work to complete. Our target is that all works will be going on at different spreads.

"We are progressing gradually. We have terrain challenges especially for the location we are in now, there's a steep. The NNPC is paying all our bills and we are not being owed," he stressed.

Buhari, Obasanjo, Gowon, Abubakar, Tinubu, Others Expected at Book Launch on Osinbajo

Organisers of the "Osinbajo Strides", a book in honour of the Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo would now publicly present the collection of articles by 25 writers at a virtual event to hold 5pm on May 1.

According to a statement yesterday, President Muhammadu Buhari would be the father of the day.

The Foreword of the book was written by General Abudulsalami Abubakar and former Head of State, Yakubu Gowon would chair the book launch.

Expected at the event are: Former President, Olusegun Obasanjo; President-elect, Bola Ahmed Tinubu; Senate President, Ahmad Lawan; Speaker, Femi Gbajabiamila, Vice President-Elect, Kashim Shettima; APC National Chairman, Abdullahi Adamu, Chief Emeka Anyaoku and all State Govs; Senators and Reps members.

It disclosed that famed author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, would speak on the theme: 'Inspiring A New Nigeria.'

"Twenty-five prominent journalists and writers from across the country had come together to write the book, 'OSINBAJO STRIDES: Defining Moments of an Innovative Leader,' as earlier announced.

"They are: Richard Akinnola, Azu Ishiekwene, Garba Mohammed, Etim Etim, Donu Kogbara, Sadiq Abdullateef, Fatima Mamman-Daura, James Akpandem, Mustapha Ogunsakin, Dayo Akintobi, Dr. Wale Adeduro, Columba Ogah, Haruna Abdullahi, Temilade Okesanjo, Arukaino Umukoro, Olaolu Beckley, Jude Zoho, Vitalis Obidiaghaa, Seun Bisuga, Seyi Gesinde, Faith Dafe-Joseph, Muritala Ayinla, Abimbola Olaniyan and Ibrahim Bature. Mr Jahman Anikulapo was the Editorial Consultant for the work.

"The book is essentially a collection of essays written by the journalists, writers and other persons from different walks of life. It periscopes the Vice President's public service since he was Special Adviser to the Attorney-General of the Federation in 1988 to date. Foreword is written by His Excellency, General Abudulsalami Abubakar.

"A blurb would be made available ahead of the public presentation. Proceeds from the sales of the book will go to charity organisations.

"The launch event is organised by PYO Collective, a nonpartisan and multicultural group of Nigerians who are interested in good governance and economic development of the country. Its core values include ethics, professionalism, honesty & accountability and good governance.

"PYO Collective promotes unity and prosperity of our dear country. Our membership is drawn from across the country and includes writers of the essays in the book."

Lightning Strike Warning Not from Us, Should Be Disregarded, Says NiMet

●Insists it remains sole authority to issue meteorological data, forecasts

Kasim Sumaina in Abuja

The Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) yesterday told Nigerians to disregard the information issued and disseminated by a body called the Nigerian Lightning Safety and Research Center (NLSRC), that had alerted citizens to the possibility of lightning strikes across the nation in May.

The NLSRC had in a publication alerted the public on the possibility of lightning strikes across Nigeria next month.

But NiMet in a statement issued in Abuja, by its General Manager, Public Relations, Muntari Yusuf Ibrahim, stressed that NiMet was the sole authority to prescribe and issue the meteorological data and information required for all sectoral activities in Nigeria (Section 7(2)."

NiMet therefore advised Nigerians to obtain all weather-related information/warning from its headquarters in Abuja; from any of its duly authorised publication or any NiMet licenced/authorised body, in line with the requirements of the law.

This, it stated would help ensure the accuracy and reliability of such information.

NiMet further advised the public to promptly report any observed unauthorised dissemination of weather/meteorological information to the agency through the office of the Director General/CEO.

On its Twitter handle, @NigeriaLSRC, the purported Nigeria Lighting Safety and Research Centre, displaying a map of Nigeria had on April 15 stated: "Thunderstorms are expected to spread across Nigeria throughout May. The RED states are at higher risk of severe lightning strikes & flooding. Prepare for possible fatalities & fire outbreaks. Stay informed & stay safe.

#Nigeria #Nigerians #LightningSafetyNG."

However, NiMet stressed that at no time did it authorise NLSRC to issue such weather forecast to the public, stating that this was the statutory function of the Nigerian Meteorological Agency.

NiMet stated that the Agency was statutorily mandated under Sections 7 (1) (a) and (i) of the Nigerian Meteorological Agency Establishment Act, 2022 (NiMet Act), to advise the federal government on all aspects of meteorology and to collect, process and disseminate all meteorological data and information within and outside Nigeria.

"Further to the above stated provisions, any person who collects, uses or disseminates weather forecast or any other meteorological information obtained from any other source outside the approval, licence or authority of the agency for commercial or public purpose, commits an offence and is liable upon conviction to a fine or a term of imprisonment or both (Section 30 (2) of the NiMet Act).

"Consequently, the public is hereby advised to totally discountenance the information issued/disseminated by the NLSRC as stated above, as well as any meteorological information issued or to be issued by this body or from any source outside of the Nigerian Meteorological Agency or the agency's approval/authorisation.

"NiMet is not responsible or liable in any way for any consequence(s) resulting from reliance or acting upon the said weather information issued by NLSRC or any meteorological/weather information obtained from any source outside of its approval/authorisation," it said.

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EID-EL-FITRI CELEBRATION AT THE LAGOS HOUSE...

L-R: MD/CEO of Ebenezer Group, Folashade Okoya; Founder of Ebenezer Group and the Aare of Lagos, Chief Razaq Okoya; Lagos State Governor, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu and his Special Adviser on Islamic Affairs, Hon Jebe Abdullahi during the 2023 Eid-El-Fitri celebration at the Lagos House, Ikeja, Lagos... yesterday

Nigerian Authorities Insensitive to Plight of Citizens in Sudan, Says CNG

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

The Coalition of Northern Groups (CNG) has expressed disappointment over what it described as the insensitivity of Nigerian authorities to the plight of Nigerian citizens in Sudan.

The group in a statement issued yesterday, by its spokesperson, Abdul-Azeez Suleiman, expressed worry over reports that about 4000 Nigerians trapped in Sudan were yet to be evacuated.

It said: "We are worried also by reports of the inhuman and exploitative treatment that those who managed to arrive at Cairo and Ethiopian borders are subjected to, while the Nigerian government appears helpless.

"We are thus worried because majority of the stranded Nigerians in Sudan are northern Nigerians which perhaps explains the levity and condescension with which the federal authorities are handling the situation."

The group wondered why the sense of emergency applied in the evacuation of Nigerians from Ukraine at the onset of the Russian invasion was not extended to the situation in Sudan.

It stressed that it was otherwise curious why the federal government would allow innocent lives to be endangered in a foreign land, while Egypt and Ethiopian authorities exploit their situation.

The group said a responsible and responsive government would by now have reached out to the authorities in Cairo and Addis Ababa to secure easy passage for the stranded Nigerians who have managed to arrive at their borders.

It stated: "The CNG hereby categorically condemns the deliberate insensitivity in the handling of the situation of Nigerians in Sudan who are mostly of northern extraction.

"We demand action from both houses of the National Assembly to compel the federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Adviser and Nigeria's representative in the African Union to ensure urgent and safe evacuation of Nigerians who are mainly northerners trapped between Khartoum, Ethiopia and Egypt."

The northern group warned that the federal government would be held responsible for any harm to any Nigerian citizen in the conflict in Sudan for not showing real commitment to their evacuation as other responsible governments have done.

It, therefore, demanded full explanation for the delay in evacuation of Nigerians, mostly northerners, from Sudan, while those trapped in Ukraine were treated with a sense of urgency and responsibility.

Ajaokuta Steel Concession: Group Urges Senate to Halt Process

Kasim Sumaina in Abuja

A civil society group, the Social Integrity Network, (SINET), yesterday, questioned the role of the Minister of Mines and Steel Development in his move to concession the Ajaokuta Steel Company and Itakpe Iron Ore Company

The group noted that barely five weeks to the end of President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration, attempt by the federal government through the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development to commence process for the concession of Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited and Itakpe Iron Ore Company called for concerns intervention by the general public.

The group therefore appealed to the Senate President, Dr. Ahmad Lawan, to urgently constitute a committee of enquiry and ensure that the process was halted, reversed and handed over to the incoming administration for proper scrutiny and consideration with national interest.

They stated this at an emergency meeting held in Jos, the Plateau State capital, in reaction to some newspaper advertisements calling for request for qualification for the concession of the two companies.

SINET National Coordinator, Ibrahim Issah, noted that concession of National Heritages such as National Iron Ore Company Limited, Itakpe and Ajaokuta Steel Company Limited should be subjected to thorough Legislative Processes and Contributions from major stakeholders such as the Manufacturers of Association of Nigeria (MAN) with considerable time frame.

The group added: "There is need for the leadership of the National Assembly, civil society organisations, the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, (ICPC) Bureau of Public Enterprises, (BPE), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, (EFCC) to quickly intervene and order immediate reversal of the process in the interest of over 200 million Nigerians.

"Failure to do this is tantamount to the fact that Nigeria is sitting on the keg of gunpowder and only waiting to explode.

"Its explosion will no doubt set the economy of Nigeria backward geometrically and further create some unforeseen consequential repercussions for the incoming administration amidst numerous campaign promises, high determination to deliver as well as high expectations from the electorates."

Speaking further SINET commended the federal government for settling the long-standing contractual dispute with a foreign investor group in the steel industry, by securing a reduction of a the claim of the sum $5.258 billion to $496 million, "owing to the mistake which was made by the federal government by dashing away Delta Steel Company which was one her best National Steel Heritage to a foreign investor without any success story till date, thereby laying fallow.

"Delta Steel Company which is supposed to generate employment opportunities for Nigerians and create more economic fortunes to entrepreneurs is still left redundant even after many years of its outright sale-off."

More Bodies Recovered in Kenya Church; Red Cross Says 178 Missing

Kenyan authorities have recovered at least 50 bodies of Good News International Church members believed to have starved themselves to death. The death toll is expected to rise as the Kenya Red Cross said 178 members of the church were reported missing.

Hassan Musa, the Kenya Red Cross regional manager for the Coast region, said there were still 178 people missing and the organisation is working closely with the government and other stakeholders to see if they can identify the missing while also dealing with the number of bodies.

Kenyan security forces and residents of the coastal town of Malindi continue to recover the bodies of people who were following the teachings of Good News International Church pastor Paul Makenzi.

Kenya's inspector general of police, Japhet Koome, said an additional 11 bodies were exhumed from Makenzi's land in Shakahola forest on Monday. He said 29 people were rescued.

Authorities have recovered 50 bodies from the Shakahola forest since then. According to reports, Makenzi was arrested more than a week ago after four of his followers died of starvation, thinking it was a way to meet Jesus.

Unilag Student Emerges Winner of EY Nigeria's Young Tax Professional Competition

Peter Uzoho

A final year student of the University of Lagos, Moyosoreoluwa Dada, has been crowned the overall winner of the EY Young Tax Professional of the Year 2023 (YTPY) competition.

Dada, beat nine other finalists to emerge top in a fiercely contested competition, at the just concluded presentation of award certificates and gifts ceremony in Lagos.

Now in its 12th year running, the EY Global YTPY programme continues to demonstrate EY Tax's commitment to the future of the tax profession by fostering the next generation of tax leaders.

The company said the programme was designed for undergraduate students in their pen-ultimate or final year who have a keen interest in taxation, or young tax professionals who have interned with EY for a duration of less than a year.

In his remarks during the presentation of award certificates and gifts to the top finalists at EY's office in Lagos, the Director of the programme, Akeem Ogunseni, said the amazing talents uncovered in the course of the event renewed optimism that the tax profession's future was very bright.

This assertion, he said, was drawn from the salient discoveries and recommendations made by the finalists on voluntary tax disclosures in Africa.

In addition, Ogunseni noted that the focus of YTPY, among others was to provide potential recruitment opportunities for EY as a means of contributing its own quota to the wider communities across the world.

EY West Africa's Chief Operating Officer, Oluwabusiayo Layade, while lending his voice, congratulated the 10 top finalists and assured them that they were all winners.

He said: "Your success story is a glimpse into the future, and it shows what the future holds for each and every one of you. Some of you will be professors, doctors, lawyers, accountants, entrepreneurs, amidst other professions.

"Regardless of which career path you toe, the end result is to make you a better person for yourself; and your family and the country will be better for it. This aligns with EY's business tagline of 'Building a better working world' for her people, business stakeholders, and communities at large."

EY Tax Partner, Temitope Samagbeyi, who represented EY West Africa Tax Leader, Akinbiyi Abudu, encouraged the finalists to build on the confidence and content garnered at this event to reach the top of the tax profession.

In her remarks, Dada, the first-place winner, who was visibly excited, said, "I want to thank EY for the opportunity to participate in the competition. This is my first major competition, and the award means so much to me, because I am so much interested in Tax. It is a milestone in my career. I would also want to thank my parents for the support and encouragement."

Other EY top management at the grand finale included EY Talent Leader, Jane Onobhayedo and EY Immigration Leader, Kayode Faboyede, both of whom gave pep talks to encourage the 10 finalists. Other dignitaries present were parents and guests of the finalists, as well as panel of assessors.

Buhari Rejoices with Literary Giant, Prof Omotosho at 80

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Muhammadu Buhari has sent congratulations to revered scholar, teacher and writer, Prof. Bankole Omotosho, on his 80th birthday anniversary.

The president, in statement issued yesterday, by his Media Adviser, Femi Adesina, joined family, friends and professional colleagues to share in the scholar's joyous occasion.

Buhari affirmed the contributions of the scholar to understanding of African history, culture and significance in the global community, mainstreaming the traditional icons, folklores and value for humanity in his publications, and drawing attention to the need for balance in relationships.

As the playwright and literary critic turns an octogenarian, the president believed Omotosho has more to share, with many years of research in Arabic and English literature and travelling across the world to teach and inspire generations, with many following his footsteps as a scholar.

Buhari prayed that the Almighty God will continue to favour the scholar with good health, and strength.

access

Access Bank Plc RC125384

CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS AT 31 DECEMBER, 2022

AUDITED RESULTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2022

The Board of Directors of Access Bank is pleased to announce the Group's audited results for the year ended December 31, 2022

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER, 2022

In millions of Naira	GROUP DECEMBER 2022	GROUP DECEMBER 2021	BANK DECEMBER 2022	BANK DECEMBER 2021
ASSETS				
Cash and Balances with Banks	1,961,100	1,487,665	1,445,659	1,068,977
Investment under management	3,742	34,942	3,742	34,942
Non pledged trading assets	102,690	892,508	77,624	803,806
Derivative financial assets	402,497	171,332	399,058	161,439
Loans and advances to banks	455,710	284,548	322,610	322,259
Loans and advances to customers	5,100,807	4,161,363	4,084,352	3,256,073
Pledged assets	1,265,279	344,537	1,265,279	344,537
Investment securities	2,761,070	2,270,338	1,946,560	1,553,458
Investment properties	217	217	217	217
Restricted deposit and other assets	2,487,691	1,707,290	2,346,050	1,601,379
Investment in associates	7,510	2,641	6,904	2,548
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	283,045	215,775
Property and equipment	293,152	247,734	245,070	194,071
Intangible assets	73,782	70,332	59,365	58,734
Deferred tax assets	15,023	13,781	7,707	-
	14,930,270	11,689,228	12,493,242	9,618,214
Assets classified as held for sale	42,039	42,737	42,038	42,547
Total assets	**14,972,309**	**11,731,965**	**12,535,280**	**9,660,761**
LIABILITIES				
Deposits from financial institutions	2,005,316	1,696,521	1,637,318	1,422,707
Deposits from customers	9,251,238	6,954,827	7,530,062	5,517,069
Derivative financial liabilities	32,737	13,953	31,072	9,943
Current tax liabilities	4,501	4,643	7,556	3,132
Other liabilities	753,875	560,709	667,195	495,161
Deferred tax liabilities	1,796	11,652	-	4,374
Debt securities issued	307,253	264,494	303,297	260,644
Interest-bearing borrowings	1,385,424	1,171,260	1,286,869	1,072,435
Retirement benefit obligations	3,277	3,877	3,244	3,846
Total liabilities	**13,745,417**	**10,681,936**	**11,466,613**	**8,789,311**
EQUITY				
Share capital and share premium	251,811	251,811	251,810	251,811
Additional Tier 1 Capital	206,355	206,355	206,355	206,355
Retained earnings	409,654	397,273	321,181	304,778
Other components of equity	344,677	171,113	289,319	108,506
Total equity attributable to owners of the Bank	**1,212,497**	**1,026,552**	**1,068,667**	**871,450**
Non controlling interest	14,395	23,477	-	-
Total equity	1,226,892	1,050,029	1,068,667	871,450
Total liabilities and equity	**14,972,309**	**11,731,965**	**12,535,280**	**9,660,761**

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER, 2022

In millions of Naira	GROUP DECEMBER 2022	*RESTATED GROUP DECEMBER 2021	BANK DECEMBER 2022	BANK DECEMBER 2021
Interest income calculated using effective interest rate	769,079	519,417	589,608	375,989
Interest income on financial assets at FVTPL	57,506	82,234	39,418	67,279
Interest expense	(467,729)	(300,243)	(404,198)	(251,030)
Net interest income	358,856	301,409	224,828	192,238
Net impairment charge on financial assets	(197,790)	(83,214)	(118,681)	(53,801)
Net interest income after impairment charges	161,066	218,195	106,147	138,437
Fee and commission income	195,470	158,917	153,535	123,780
Fee and commission expense	(51,850)	(40,589)	(44,907)	(34,581)
Net fee and commission income	143,620	118,328	108,628	89,201
Net gain on financial instruments at fair value	281,304	44,780	280,029	23,174
Net foreign exchange gain	34,500	101,101	11,419	89,691
Net gains/(loss) on fair value hedge (Hedging ineffectiveness)	19,742	(872)	19,742	(872)
Other operating income	24,660	63,411	31,261	55,240
Loss on disposal of subsidiaries	(397)	-	-	-
Bargain purchase from Acquisition	-	2,484	-	-
Personnel expenses	(114,763)	(96,613)	(71,083)	(58,580)
Depreciation	(30,298)	(29,139)	(23,394)	(22,615)
Amortization and impairment	(13,825)	(12,974)	(10,081)	(10,087)
Other operating expenses	(335,720)	(232,213)	(289,959)	(197,107)
Share of profit of investment in Associate	513	93	-	-
Profit before income tax	**170,402**	**176,579**	**162,709**	**106,483**
Income tax	(14,529)	(16,485)	3,951	4,843
Profit for the year for continuing operations	155,873	160,094	166,660	111,326
Discontinued operations				
(Loss)/Profit from Discontinued operations	(700)	120	-	-
Profit for the year	**155,173**	**160,215**	**166,660**	**111,326**
Other comprehensive income/(loss) (OCI):				
Items that will not be subsequently reclassified to income statement:				
Gross Actuarial (loss)/gain on retirement benefit obligations	(1,658)	1,499	(1,658)	1,499
Items that may be subsequently reclassified to the income statement				
- Unrealised foreign currency translation difference	(6,707)	22,418	-	-
- Changes in fair value of FVOCI debt financial instruments	61,904	(58,187)	76,640	(69,495)
- Changes in allowance on FVOCI debt financial instruments	21,283	56	3,472	(136)
Income tax relating to these items	539	(487)	539	(487)
Other comprehensive Income/(loss) net of related tax effects:	**75,361**	**(34,702)**	**78,993**	**(68,620)**
Total comprehensive gain/ for the year	**230,534**	**125,514**	**245,653**	**42,706**
Profit attributable to:				
Owners of the Bank	155,838	158,327	166,660	111,326
Non-controlling interest	(665)	1,888	-	-
Profit for the year	**155,173**	**160,215**	**166,660**	**111,326**
Total comprehensive income attributable to:				
Owners of the Bank	238,284	110,851	245,653	42,706
Non-controlling interest	(7,750)	14,662	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	**230,534**	**125,514**	**245,653**	**42,706**
Total profit/(loss) attributable to owners of the bank:				
Continuing operations	156,538	158,206	166,660	111,326
Discontinued operations	(700)	120	-	-
	155,838	**158,327**	**166,660**	**111,326**
Total comprehensive income/(loss) attributable to owners of the bank:				
Continuing operations	238,984	110,731	245,653	42,706
Discontinued operations	(700)	120	-	-
	238,284	**110,851**	**245,653**	**42,706**
Earnings per share attributable to ordinary shareholders				
Basic (kobo)	452	458	469	313
Diluted (kobo)	436	445	469	313
Earnings per share from continuing operations attributable to owners of the bank				
Basic (kobo)	454	458	469	313
Diluted (kobo)	438	445	469	313
Earnings per share from discontinued operations attributable to owners of the bank				
Basic (kobo)	(2)	-	-	-
Diluted (kobo)	(2)	-	-	-

	GROUP DECEMBER 2022	GROUP DECEMBER 2021	BANK DECEMBER 2022	BANK DECEMBER 2021
Total impaired loans & advances	176,940	181,660	85,196	73,411
Total impaired loans & advances to gross risk assets (%)	3.15%	4.00%	1.92%	2.03%

There were 137,229 number of unresolved consumers' complaints outstanding as at 31 December 2022. The full details are contained in the customer feedback section of the financial statements.

The financial statements were approved by the board of directors on 30th January 2022. Signed on behalf of the directors by:

MANAGING DIRECTOR
Roosevelt Ogbonna
FRC/2017/ICAN/00000016638

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
Taiwo Fowowe
FRC/2021/001/00000024694

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Oluseyi Kumapayi
FRC/2013/ICAN/00000000911

REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITOR TO THE MEMBERS OF ACCESS BANK PLC

Report on the summary consolidated and separate financial statements

Opinion
"The summary consolidated and separate financial statements (the "summary financial statements"), which comprise the summary consolidated and separate statements of financial position as at 31 December 2022 and the summary consolidated and separate statements of comprehensive income for the year then ended are derived from the audited consolidated and separate financial statements (the "audited financial statements"") of Access Bank Plc (""the Bank"") and its subsidiary companies (together the "Group") for the year ended 31 December 2022.

In our opinion, the accompanying summary financial statements are consistent in all material respects, with the audited financial statements, in accordance with the requirements of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act and the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria Act."

Summary Financial Statements
The summary financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by the International Financial Reporting Standards, the Companies and Allied Matters Act, the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria Act, the Banks and Other Financial Institution Act and other relevant Central Bank of Nigeria circulars applied in the preparation of the audited financial statements of the Group and Bank. 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 thereon.

The Audited Financial Statements and Our Report Thereon
We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial statements in our report dated 17 April 2023. That report also includes the communication of key audit matters. Key audit matters are those matters that, in our professional judgement, were of most significance in our audit of the financial statements of the current period.

Directors' responsibility for the summary financial statements
The directors are responsible for the preparation of the summary financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act and the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria Act.

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 Standard on Auditing (ISA) 810 (Revised), 'Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements'.

Report on other legal and regulatory requirements
In accordance with our full audit report, we confirm that:

i. we did not report any exceptions under the sixth schedule of the Companies and Allied Matters Act;

ii. the Bank has disclosed the information required by the Central Bank of Nigeria circular on insider related credits;

iii. the Bank paid penalties in respect of contraventions of certain sections of the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act and relevant circulars issued by the Central Bank of Nigeria during the year ended 31 December 2022. "

For: PricewaterhouseCoopers
Chartered Accountants
Lagos, Nigeria
Engagement Partner: Chidi Ojechi
FRC/2017/ICAN/000000015955

INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF NIGERIA 0615745 ICAN

17 APRIL 2023

The statement of financial position, statement of comprehensive income, report of the independent auditor and specific disclosures are published in compliance with the requirements of S.27 of the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act. The information disclosed have been extracted from the full financial statements of the bank and the group and cannot be expected to provide as full an understanding of the financial performance, financial position and financing and investing activities of the bank and the group as the full financial statements.

TEN

Fox Shares Drop By 5% After Announcing Carlson's Exit

●CNN fires Don Lemon

Fox Corporation shares dropped yesterday, after the media company said in a terse comment that it was parting ways with star host, Tucker Carlson.

According to CBS News, shares of Fox dropped more than five per cent, to as low as $29.27 per share.

Also yesterday, Don Lemon announced that he has been fired from his anchor role at CNN.

Carlson, whose last show was on Friday, April 21, is leaving Fox News even as he remains a top-rated host for the network, drawing 334,000 viewers in the coveted 25- to 54-year-old demographic in the 8 p.m. slot for the week ended April 20, according to AdWeek.

That was more than twice the audience of his competitors at CNN and MSNBC in the same hour, and also represented a bigger audience than other Fox News hosts such as Sean Hannity or Laura Ingraham.

Carlson's abrupt departure comes less than a week after Fox reached a $787.5 million settlement with Dominion Voting Systems, which had sued the company in a $1.6 billion defamation case over the network's coverage of the 2020 presidential election.

Documents revealed during the case proceedings had unveiled scornful text messages from Carlson about former President Donald Trump, including one that expressed, "I hate him passionately."

The host's comments about Fox management that emerged in the Dominion case played a role in his leaving the network, the Washington Post reported, citing a personal familiar with Fox's thinking.

On his final show on Friday, Carlson gave no indication that it would be his final appearance.

Responses to his departure ranged from glee, with the audience of "The View" reportedly breaking into applause, to disappointment, with Eric Trump tweeting, "What is happening to Fox?"

The departure means that Fox News is losing a top audience draw, coming several years after the network cut ties with Bill O'Reilly, one of its superstars.

O'Reilly left the network in 2017, after sexual harassment claims were filed against him, with Carlson taking his spot in the 8 p.m. hour.

But Carlson's ratings are far below O'Reilly, who averaged 728,000 viewers ages 25 to 54 in the first quarter of 2017, according to the Hollywood Reporter. By comparison, Carlson's viewership in that demographic during the first three months of this year averaged 443,000.

At the same time, Carlson is facing allegations from a former employee about the network's "toxic" work environment. Abby Grossberg, who worked as head of booking on Carlson's primetime program, claimed last month in court papers that she endured an environment that "subjugates women based on vile sexist stereotypes, typecasts religious minorities and belittles their traditions, and demonstrates little to no regard for those suffering from mental illness."

Grossberg also alleged Fox's legal team "coerced" her into providing misleading testimony in Dominion's defamation case.

Meanwhile, Lemon has been terminated from his anchor role at CNN,

The news comes after Variety published a story earlier this month on allegations that he mistreated his female colleagues over the course of his career there, NBC News reported.

And earlier this year, he faced backlash over widely criticised comments he made on-air. Lemon announced the news on Twitter, saying he was informed by his agent that he was being terminated.

"I am stunned," Lemon wrote. "After 17 years at CNN I would have thought someone in management would have had the decency to tell me directly."

In a tweet, CNN refuted Lemon's account as "inaccurate." The network said he was offered a chance to meet with management but, "instead released a statement on Twitter."

CNN's CEO, Chris Licht, said the network and Lemon have "parted ways," according to a memo provided to NBC News yesterday.

"Don will forever be a part of the CNN family, and we thank him for his contributions over the past 17 years," the statement said. "We wish him well and will be cheering him on in his future endeavors."

TINUBU: DISREGARD RUMOUR ABOUT MY HEALTH, I'M REFRESHED, READY FOR TASK AHEAD

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja and **Blessing Ibunge** in Port Harcourt

President-elect Bola Tinubu, yesterday, urged Nigerians to disregard the rumour about his health, saying he is strong and refreshed enough for the task ahead. Tinubu spoke in Abuja following his return from a month's rest in France ahead of his inauguration as 16th President of Nigeria on May 29.

One of the top aspirants for the 10th Senate presidency, Senator Barau Jibrin in a short statement to welcome Tinubu back to the country, said Nigerians were glad to see him back after a well-deserved rest.

But in Rivers State, the All Progressives Congress (APC) said it had submitted the names of ex-Chief of Staff to former Governor Chibuike Amaechi, Chief Tony Okocha, and other leaders of the party in the state for suspension over alleged anti-party activities during the just concluded general election.

Tinubu had left Nigeria for France on Tuesday, March 21, to have a rest after a grueling presidential campaign. He returned yesterday to the transition plans ahead of his inauguration.

However, since he left the country, a series of conspiracy theories had surfaced, especially from the opposition parties, about his state of health, with many querying his whereabouts.

His return yesterday has certainly exploded some of the rumours concerning his health.

As early as noon yesterday, members of the ruling APC and Tinubu supporters filed out on the streets of Abuja to receive the president-elect. He arrived the Presidential Wing of the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, at 4:30pm and was received by enthusiastic associates and supporters.

The president-elect was in company with his wife, Senator Remi Tinubu, and his son, Seyi Tinubu.

The former Lagos State governor, who was cheered by party faithful and supporters, headed straight to his vehicle after a brief stop to acknowledge the crowd that had gathered at the airport to welcome him.

His convoy left the airport about 4:51pm to the city centre.

While some supporters and party faithful waited at the Defence House in Maitama and the APC Presidential Campaign office at Central Business District, trying to lay siege to the president-elect, the convoy headed straight to his house in Asokoro.

In a statement by the Office of President-elect, signed by Tunde Rahman, Tinubu said having observed the much-needed rest, he was refreshed and ready to work.

He said in the statement, "I'm happy to be back. I have rested, I'm refreshed and I'm ready for the task ahead. Forget about what the rumour mill may have told you. I'm strong, very strong."

Asked about his plans for the country, Tinubu said he had been consulting and planning with a view to putting together a strong team so he could hit the ground running after assuming office on May 29.

Among those at the airport to receive the president-elect were the vice president-elect, Senator Kashim Shettima; Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila; as well as Governors Simon Lalong (Plateau) and Abubakar Sani-Bello (Niger), and former Borno State Governor, Ali Modu Sheriff.

There were also former Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu; APC Deputy National Chairman, North, Senator Abubakar Kyari; Deputy National Chairman, South, Emma Enekwu; and National Woman Leader, Dr. Betta Edu.

Others included Jibrin and fellows senators Adeola Olamilekan Yahyi, Opeyemi Bamidele, Dayo Adeyeye, Sabi Abdullahi, and Adelere Oriolowo.

Secretary of the recently-dissolved APC Presidential Campaign Council, Hon. James Faleke; Hon. Babajimi Benson; and Director of Media and Publicity in the dissolved council, Mr. Bayo Onanuga, were also at the airport to receive Tinubu.

Speaking with reporters at the airport, Barau said Nigerians were delighted to see Tinubu back, hale and hearty and ready for work.

He said, "We are all happy to see our leader, our president-elect back with his amiable wife, looking so fresh and fit and ready to hit the ground running.

"Nigerians are here in their thousands and you can see how happy they are right now. Everyone is excited to have him back. My campaign organisation and I are very glad to have him back. He has said he is back, fit and ready for the task ahead. We know and trust him to be a man of his words. We cannot expect less."

APC to Suspend Okocha, Others Over Anti-party Activities

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Rivers State, yesterday, said it had submitted the names of former Chief of Staff to ex-Governor Chibuike Amaechi, Chief Tony Okocha, and others for suspension over alleged anti-party activities during the last general election.

The party lamented that some of its members, who had been compromised by the governing Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state, were the ones pushing for a parallel party structure in the state. The forum of elected APC ward chairmen in Rivers State disclosed this yesterday in Port Harcourt, in a communiqué signed by its Chairman, Ekpumogu Lucky Joshua, after an extraordinary meeting.

The forum passed a vote of confidence on the suspended chairman of the party, Chief Emeka Beke. They said those, who suspended Beke, were bent on destroying APC to ensure PDP remained without opposition.

They said the forum had evaluated the state of the party in the 319 wards of the state and in line with powers vested in it by Article 12(17), Article 13(14) of the APC Constitution (2022) resolved to remain loyal to the leadership of Amaechi, while condemning attacks on the former transportation minister.

The ccommuniqué read, "That having critically looked at Article 21(A)(IV) and identified breach of our Party's Constitution in terms of fair hearing as those who are deemed complainants/petitioners are the same persons who appointed themselves into a fact-finding committee.

"We resolve to solidly adopt and endorse the vote of confidence passed on April 6th 2023 by the Ward 3 executives of our party in Emohua LGA on the third congressionally elected chairman of the party, Chief Emeka Beke, and condemn the sponsored distractions and court cases targeted at making Rivers State a one-party state.

"We view this as a ploy to withdraw and/or canvass for the withdrawal of our cases at the Election Petitions Tribunal and selling off our party to the PDP as the complainants/petitioners should have known that even the most recent case of George Orlu & 4 others Vs INEC & APC decided by the courts in December 2022, the Court of Appeal in a lead judgement delivered by Justice Mohammed Lawal Shuaibu, frowned at party members rushing to court without first exhausting the party's internal conflict resolution mechanisms.

"We reject every attempt at balkanising our party in the state by creating parallel structures, as anything done outside the duly recognised structure or organ of the party shall remain null and void."

AFENIFERE: RESURGENCE OF TERRORISM AFTER 2023 POLLS WORRYING

Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), convened by President Nana Akuffo-Ado of Ghana.

Speaking on the new wave of terrorism, Afenifere stated that the series of attacks on defenceless people and the subversion of economic activities in various parts of the country, "Give us a lot of concern, especially as we move towards the handing over of power on May 29, 2023, by the grace of God."

Afenifere observed that kidnapping and banditry that had ebbed during the general election in February and March had returned shortly after the conclusion of the elections in March. It called on the authorities to ensure that the situation was quickly brought under control.

Afenifere regretted that apart from kidnapping people on highways, "Bandits now even have the effrontery to go and abduct people from their homes, as happened to one Adebukola in Ondo State, to a former deputy governor of Nasarawa State, Professor Onje Gye-Wado, to the driver of the incumbent Nasarawa State deputy governor, to one Muhammadu Jibril in Ago Igbira, Osun State, and to over 100 students of Federal Government College, Yauri, Kebbi State, who were abducted from their hostels – to mention a few."

The group recalled that Minister of Interior, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola, while speaking in Katsina in April, had stated that the federal government would soon "be deploying electronic digital technology to ensure 24/7 inch by inch surveillance of the 4,500 kilometres borderline from the eastern part to the western part, including the coastlines" of the country.

Afenifere wondered why the government was just thinking of taking such a step when it was about one month for it to go. It added that the fate of those in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps was still hanging in the balance.

While noting the plea by Buhari for those he might have hurt to pardon him, Afenifere said it would have been much better if the president listened to various advices and pleas made to him over the years regarding the unfriendly, if not retrogressive, steps his administration had been taking.

Afenifere stated, "The maxim has it that 'to err is human, to forgive is divine.' Without deceiving ourselves, the Nigerian government under the outgoing President Muhammadu Buhari certainly 'hurt' a lot of people (to use his own word). Some of them are even no longer alive.

"Some who are alive have wounds that can hardly ever heal. Both physical and psychosocial wounds, because the Almighty created many humans to have large hearts, many whom the president had hurt may forgive him.

"That is for those who are alive. But then, what about thousands who have died as a result of avoidable acts that can easily be traced to the government, such as non-provision of security and welfare, as clearly enshrined in the constitution?"

Afenifere submitted that many more people might be inclined to forgive the president and change their notions of him if, within the remaining 34 days he had left in the office, he could effect dramatic changes in policies that made life difficult for Nigerians. It added that this was only if the president really wanted the negative perception of his administration to change.

Among the steps suggested by Afenifere were the immediate payment of the eight months salaries of university lecturers, decisive action that would permanently halt banditry, kidnapping and sundry terrorist activities in the country, and allowing those who desired to import fuel to do so for the price of the product to come down to less than N100 per litre.

Afenifere also suggested deliberate actions on the part of the Buhari government to bring down the prices of electricity, gas, kerosene and diesel to about N100 per measure, instead of about N750 that a litre of diesel now costs.

To ensure that the lower prices remained permanent, Afeinfere said the government could license Nigerians, who were into modular refineries, to start producing even

Continued on page xx

2022 FYE: FIVE BIG BANKS STAND FIRM DESPITE ECONOMIC HEADWINDS

profits before tax of N1.1 trillion as at December 2022. This was an increase of 6.9 per cent, compared with the combined profits of N1.03 trillion recorded by the five banks in 2021.

The breakdown of profit before tax posted by the banks showed that UBA generated N200.88billion profit before tax in 2022, an increase of 31 per cent from N153.07billion in 2021; while Zenith Bank announced N284.65 billion profit before tax in 2022, a growth of 1.5 per cent from N280.37billion in 2021.

Also, while ETI declared N230.56 billion in 2022, from N195.72 billion in 2021, GTCO posted N214.155billion profit before tax from N221.5 billion in 2021 and Access Holdings declared N167.68 billion profit before tax in 2022 from N176.58billion in 2021.

These five banks also collectively hold a whopping sum of N57.96 trillion in total assets, which was about 78.76 per cent of the industry assets that closed 2022 at N73.59 trillion.

In terms of total assets, Access Holdings with its African expansion topped the chart as the biggest bank by total assets, followed by ETI and Zenith Bank. Precisely, Access Holdings declared N15 trillion total assets in 2022, an increase of 28 per cent from N111.73trillion reported in 2021. For ETI, its total assets increased to N13.37trillion in 2022, up 14.4 per cent from N11.69 trillion in 2021, while Zenith Bank declared N12.29trillion in total assets, a growth of 30 per cent from N9.45trillion in 2021.

The 2022 results came on the heels of global economy that is faced with so much uncertainty. This was even worsened by two bank failures in the United States - Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank, and in Switzerland, Credit Suisse also failed before it was acquired by rival UBS.

Others challenges the industry had to content with included Ghana's debt crisis that is affecting companies beyond its borders, central banks hiked interest rates to combat inflationary pressures (particularly energy & food) and ongoing Ukraine/Russia, have remained concerns for financial stability.

Double-dight inflation due to higher food and energy prices; tension towards the 2023 general elections; FX scarcity that eventually led to crash in forego exchange, were among domestic headwinds Nigeria's economy faced in 2022.

However, despite these headwinds, the five banks declared a significant increase in customer loans and advances and deposits.

For instance, Access Holdings, again led other banks in loans and advances to customers as it granted N5.1trillion in 2022, an increase of 23 per cent from the N4.16 trillion reported in 2021. ETI came close with N5.07 trillion loans and advances to customers in 2022, 25 per cent higher than N4.06 trillion loans granted to customers in 2021.

At N9.6 trillion, ETI led other big banks in deposits from customers, followed by Access Holdings that grew its deposits from customers to N9.25 trillion in 2022, from the N6.95 trillion reported in 2021.

Stakeholders and analysts lauded the 2022 corporate earnings and dividend pay-out, among others, by the big banks, stating that financial institutions in Nigeria are resilient to overcoming domestic and foreign challenges and declared dividend from their earnings.

The Group Chief Executive Officer of GTCO, Mr. Segun Agbaje, noted that, "Despite the varying challenges and headwinds that weighed on growth in 2022, we were determined to deliver a decent performance and scale effectively to strengthen our competitive edge and drive long-term growth."

While commenting on the pan-African bank performance in 2022, the CEO of Ecobank Group, Jeremy Awori, said, "Ecobank's strong 2022 performance reflects the strength of our diversified business model, growth momentum and efficiency, and was achieved despite operating in a challenging macroeconomic environment, which also included the difficulties that Ghana's debt restructuring exercise placed on us."

Speaking with THISDAY, the Chief Research Officer, InvestData Consulting Limited, Mr. Omordion Ambrose, said the 2022 performance of the companies were impressive and their dividend returns more attractive when compared to yields on money market instruments.

"From the Tier-1 results we have seen so far, Zenith Bank proposed N3.10 final dividends and UBA declared N1.1 dividend pay-out on the NGX. Access Holdings proposed N1.50 total dividends, while GTCO announced N3.10 total dividend pay-out to shareholders.

"Some companies' dividend pay-out to investors were flat to undermine how the operating environment was challenging in 2022.

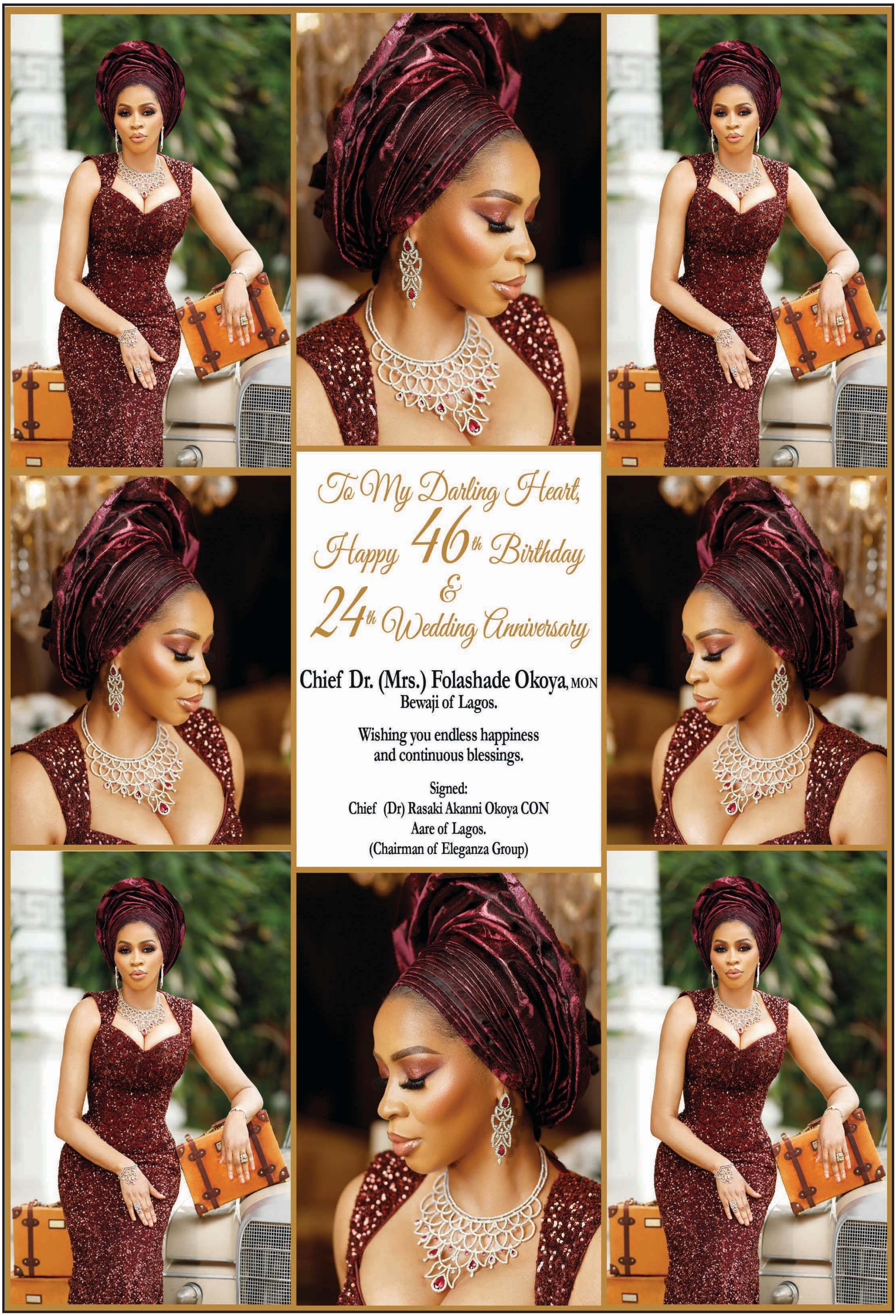
"Some of these companies over the years have been consistent in generating profit and dividend pay-out to shareholders. Their 2022 performance is commendable and it shows how resilient these banks are despite challenges."

For his part, the Chairman Progressive Shareholders Association (PSAN), Boniface Okezie, stated that despite economic hardship, some quoted companies reported impressive performance.

According to him, "As we have seen from their performance, there is resilience in the corporate world which means there is hope for our domestic economy. Those in the private world have put more handwork, and diligence in growing profit and declared dividend in their move to give back to shareholders."

"These firms pay heavily for security and infrastructure which is not their duty."

"Beyond valuation, dividend-paying stocks can be a good source of stable income streams. Many investors will want to invest in companies with a history of growing dividend and the likes of Zenith Bank, UBA and Access Holdings, ETI, and GTCO over the years have sustained dividend pay-out to investors," he added.


To My Darling Heart,
Happy 46th Birthday
&
24th Wedding Anniversary
Chief Dr. (Mrs.) Folashade Okoya, MON
Bewaji of Lagos.
Wishing you endless happiness
and continuous blessings.
Signed:
Chief (Dr) Rasaki Akanni Okoya CON
Aare of Lagos.
(Chairman of Eleganza Group)

First Pension Custodian

FIRST PENSION CUSTODIAN NIGERIA LIMITED

SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022

The Directors present the summary financial information of First Pension Custodian Nigeria Limited ("the Company") for the year ended 31 December 2022. These summary financial information are derived from the full financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2022 and are not the full financial statements of the Company. The full annual financial statements, from which these summary financial information were derived, will be delivered to the Corporate Affairs Commission within the required deadline. The Company's Auditor issued an unmodified audit opinion on the full financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2022 from which these summary financial information were derived.

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 31 DECEMBER

In thousands of naira	31-Dec-22	31-Dec-21
Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	4,603,146	1,897,766
Investment securities	12,574,477	12,101,222
Trade and other receivables	999,295	872,645
Property, plant and equipment	5,123,911	4,548,231
Right of Use assets	17,063	58,013
Intangible assets	63,804	135,153
Deferred tax assets	232,215	165,528
Total assets	**23,613,911**	**19,778,558**
Liabilities		
Current tax liabilities	3,714,360	2,793,287
Other liabilities	1,680,584	1,345,227
Retirement benefit obligations	79,212	44,953
Total liabilities	**5,474,156**	**4,183,467**
Equity		
Share capital	2,000,000	2,000,000
Retained earnings	16,152,757	13,617,086
Actuarial reserves	(13,002)	(21,995)
Total equity	**18,139,755**	**15,595,091**
Total equity and liabilities	**23,613,911**	**19,778,558**
Pension assets under custody	**5,734,354,485**	**4,306,728,230**

The full financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 7 March 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Akin G. Fanimokun
Chairman
FRC/2013/CIBN/00000001940

OLORUNtimilehin George
Managing Director/CEO
FRC/2020/003/00000021829

Adefemi Ogundele
Chief Financial Officer
FRC/2013/ICAN/00000001633

STATEMENTS OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER

In thousands of naira	31-Dec-22	31-Dec-21
Custody fees	8,447,480	7,172,440
Interest income	1,666,459	1,373,283
Other income	151,959	2,129
Gain on bargain purchase	200,518	-
Total income	**10,466,416**	**8,547,852**
Personnel expenses	(1,305,180)	(1,171,537)
Depreciation of property, plant and equipment	(190,492)	(223,899)
Depreciation of right of use assets	(40,950)	(40,950)
Amortisation of intangible assets	(71,350)	(77,866)
Impairment loss charge	(41,470)	(7,478)
Other operating expenses	(1,566,161)	(1,423,305)
Total expenses	**(3,215,603)**	**(2,945,035)**
Profit before tax	**7,250,813**	**5,602,817**
Income tax expense	(2,455,133)	(1,839,904)
Profit for the year	**4,795,680**	**3,762,913**
Other comprehensive income:		
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss		
Actuarial gain / (losses) on post employment obligations	3,783	(3,730)
Deferred tax relating to components of other comprehensive income	5,210	(5,480)
Other comprehensive income, net of tax	**8,993**	**(9,210)**
Total comprehensive income	**4,804,673**	**3,753,703**
Earnings per share		
Basic and diluted earnings per share (kobo)	**240**	**188**

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Shareholders of **First Pension Custodian Nigeria Limited**

Report on the Summary Financial Information

Opinion

The summary financial information, which comprise:
- the statement of financial position as at 31 December, 2022;
- the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income;
are derived from the audited financial statements of First Pension Custodian Nigeria Limited ("the Company") for the year ended December 31, 2022.

In our opinion, the accompanying summary financial information are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial statements, in accordance with the Companies and Allied Matters Act, (CAMA), 2020 and Pension Reform Act, 2014.

Summary Financial Information

The summary financial information do not contain all the disclosures required by the International Financial Reporting Standards, the Companies and Allied Matters Act, (CAMA), 2020, the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria Act, 2011, the Pension Reform Act, 2014 and the National Pension Commission (PENCOM) guidelines and circulars. Reading the summary financial information and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial statements and the auditor's report thereon. The summary financial information and the audited financial statements do not reflect the effects of events that occurred subsequent to the date of our report on the audited financial statements.

The Audited Financial Statements and Our Report Thereon

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial statements in our report dated 20 April 2023.

Directors' Responsibility for the Summary Financial Information

The Directors are responsible for the preparation of the summary financial information in accordance with the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020 and the Pension Reform Act, 2014.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the summary financial information are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial statements based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with International Standard on Auditing (ISA) 810 (Revised), *Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements* .

Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements

Compliance with the requirements of Schedule 5 of the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), 2020

i. We have obtained all the information and explanations which to the best of our knowledge and belief, were necessary for the purpose of our audit.

ii. In our opinion, proper books of account have been kept by the Company, so far as appears from our examination of those books.

iii. The Company's statement of financial position and statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income are in agreement with the books of account.

Signed:

Oseme Obaloje
FRC/2012/ICAN/00000004803
For: KPMG Professional Services
Chartered Accountants
20 April 2023
Lagos, Nigeria

Directors: AKIN G. FANIMOKUN (CHAIRMAN), OLORUNTIMILEHIN GEORGE (MANAGING DIRECTOR/CEO), BUNMI ADERONMU (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR), IJEOMA NWOGWUGWU, DR. PHILIP OLUFUNWA, CHRISTOPHER ADEYEMI, PATRICK IYAMABO, STELLA OJEKWE-ONYEJELI

DOZY MMOBUOSI SUPER CUP FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT EXPANDS: 12 TOP TEAMS TO COMPETE FOR N1.5 BILLION PRIZE POOL.

The Dozy Mmobuosi Foundation, in partnership with the Nigeria Professional Football League (NPFL) and under the auspices of the Nigeria Premier Football League Ltd by Guaranty, is excited to announce the return of an expanded and more lucrative 2023 Dozy Mmobuosi Super Cup Football Tournament. This year's edition will feature 12 of the top teams from the Nigerian Professional Football League (NPFL).

A record-breaking of about N1.5 billion prize pool has been established for the tournament. The winning team will walk away with N1 billion, while the runners-up will receive N200 million. Additionally, each participating team will be granted an appearance fee of N20 million.

Dozy Mmobuosi explains the decision to expand "The increased funding will allow teams to invest more resources in players, facilities, and infrastructure, attracting top talent to the league, and raising the overall standard of football in Nigeria,"

Dozy Mmbousi-Founder of the Dozy Mmobuosi Foundation

Hon. Gbenga Elegbeleye, Chairman of the NPFL Interim Management Committee

Ebuwa Martins Agbonwaneten, CEO of The Dozy Mmobuosi Foundation, said, "The Tournament is an excellent platform to promote the growth and development of Nigerian football. We look forward to another successful tournament.

The inaugural edition of the Dozy Mmobuosi Super Cup Tournament took place in November 2022 in Lagos, where Shooting Stars SC of Ibadan emerged as the champions, winning the first prize of N100 million. Enyimba FC of Aba claimed the runner-up position, earning prize money of N30 million.

Hon. Gbenga Elegbeleye, Chairman of the NPFL Interim Management Committee, has welcomed the partnership. He sees the tournament as a fantastic opportunity to showcase the talent in the league, promote Nigerian football to a broader audience, and inspire teams and players to contribute to the growth of the sport in the country.

To ensure the smooth and successful execution of the tournament, a joint organising committee has been established comprising members from both the Foundation and the NPFL.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT DMF AT INFO@DOZYMMOBUOSIFOUNDATION.ORG. FURTHER DETAILS ABOUT THE COMPETITION WILL BE RELEASED IN DUE COURSE.

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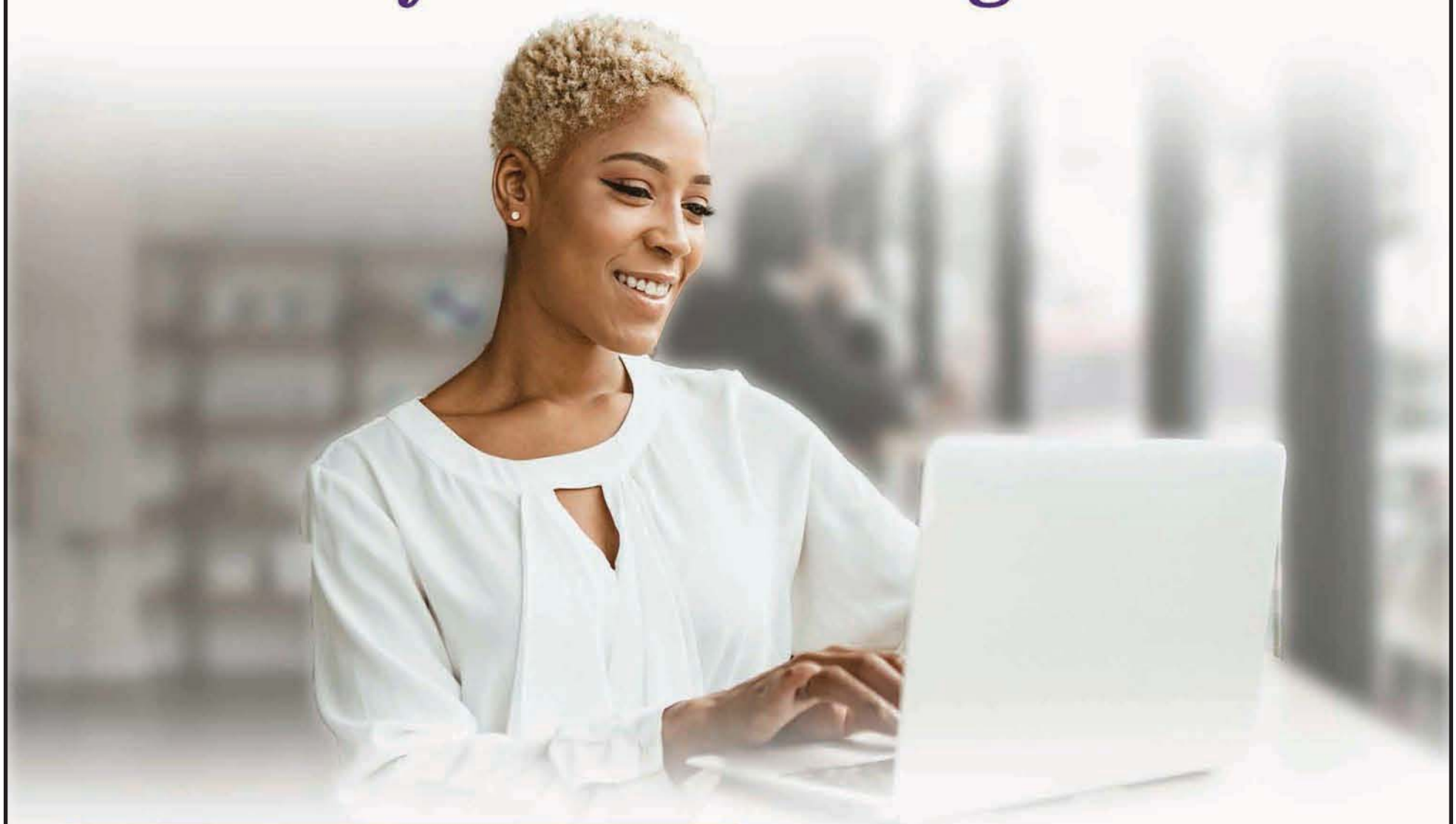

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Memories are Forever
Saying Goodbye on this Side of the Divide

The Family of Late Chief Olalekan Akande, Ashipa Are of Ibadan Land announce the transition of our sweet, loving and unforgettable Mother, Grandmother & Great Grandmother

MRS. BAMIDELE ABIOSE AKANDE SRN (J.P)

(NEE AFOLABI)

6 / 4 / 1932 - 3 / 3 / 2023

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

WAKE & SERVICE OF SONGS:
Date: Thursday 27th April, 2023 | **Time:** 5pm - 7pm
Venue: Bell Event Centre, 63 Campbell Street, Lagos
Colour: Pink

LYING IN STATE:
Date: Friday 28th April, 2023 | **Time:** 8am - 9am
Family Home

FUNERAL SERVICE:
Date: Friday 28th April, 2023 | **Time:** 10am
Venue: Chapel at Vaults and Gardens Ikoyi
Colour: Royal Blue on Sky Blue

INTERMENT
Private

Children

- Mr. Mofolusho Adetokunbo Akande (deceased)
- Mr. Olugbenga Ajibola Akande (deceased)
- Hon. Justice Olabode Rhodes-Vivour JSC (Rtd) CFR & Mrs. Adedoyin Rhodes-Vivour SAN, Chartered Arbitrator
- Mrs. Olakunle Okupe
- Engr. Oladipo & Hon. Mrs. Tolulope Sadipe, Member House of Representatives

16 Grandchildren & 17 Great Grandchildren

FOCUS

Dissecting the NNPC-Neconde Faceoff

The prolonged business disagreement between the NNPC and Neconde, an indigenous operator in the Nigerian oil and gas industry, is costing Nigeria its much-needed foreign exchange earnings as well as goodwill and desperately needed jobs, writes Emmanuel Addeh

In business dealings, disagreements are bound to happen. But when these disputes remain unresolved and are allowed to fester, hurting the parties to the deal and even the entire society, therein lies the problem.

For the first time in recent history, Nigeria has in the last two years, been unable to meet its Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) crude oil quota.

For instance, last year, the country was only able to produce just over 60 per cent of its 1.8 million barrels per day allocation. Output mostly hovered around 900,000 bpd and 1.2 million bpd.

Therefore, one would expect that with such massive production losses, the operators in the country would take advantage of every drop of readily accessible oil to ramp up production and increase the country's foreign exchange earning while also increasing their bottom-line.

However, that appears not to be, with the ongoing war of attrition or even of egos between the erstwhile Nigerian Petroleum Development Company (NPDC) now renamed NNPC Exploration and Production Limited (NEPL), a subsidiary of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) and Neconde Energy Limited, a Nigerian Independent exploration and production firm.

The contentious point of disagreement is the mode of transportation of the oil from Oil Mining Lease (OML) 42 to an exit point.

Neconde is currently in a Joint Venture (JV) with the NPDC or the NEPL, as it is called now on the asset, a lease which comprises previously discovered oil fields in the Niger Delta area, onshore Nigeria.

THISDAY recalls that OML 42 was acquired from Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in 2011. While Neconde has a cumulative 45 per cent participating interest in the asset, the remaining 55 per cent interest is held by the NNPC subsidiary.

Much Ado about oil movement

While the Joint Operating Agreement (JOA) guiding the relationship between the NEPL and Neconde clearly prescribes consultation in all major decisions between the two parties, Neconde contends that the unilateral decision by the NNPC subsidiary to switch the mode of transportation of oil from OML 42 without the its consent is a breach of the rules.

Indeed, the indigenous oil exploration firm, THISDAY learnt, favours barging the crude from the facility due to its greater than 90% reliability and availability that guarantees cashflow certainty over the last four years while the NNPC subsidiary insists that the oil must go through the problematic Trans-Forcados Pipeline (TFP) and Forcados Terminal (FOT) which had deteriorated to 58% availability in 2022.

THISDAY further understood that without giving any further explanation, the NEPL is basing its decision to ensure the switch from barging to the use of the trouble-ridden pipeline on a resolution by the National Security Council (NSC), which effectively took off on March 31.

However, Neconde contends that the pipeline that it is being compelled to use in transporting its > 35,000 bod production is aged and lacks integrity, thereby leading to cashflow uncertainty and serious environmental issues.

Insiders told THISDAY that the indigenous firm is maintaining that the pipeline must either be replaced immediately or alternative methods of evacuating crude oil must be deployed.

The TFP

The 95-kilometre TFP was commissioned in 1971 and is therefore about 52 years old, even though the pipeline was built to last for about 25 to 30 years. What this means is that the TFP should no longer be in use because it is already overdue for replacement by more than 20 years. Its current age far exceeds original design life.

Indeed, frequent leaks have plagued the pipeline. Numerous clamping and sectional replacements carried out to repair leaks have led to pipeline downtime on the line, thus taking a huge toll on Nigeria and Nigerians by the huge economic losses , in a country that is already severely economically challenged.

But even more catastrophic, according to those in the know, is the environmental pollution and degradation associated with every leak and subsequent repair.

The effects, according to knowledgeable sources, are long-lasting and destructive on the humans and environment, causing serious damage to human and aquatic life. Due to the incessant breakage of the pipeline, immense tracts of the mangrove forests have already been destroyed.

"It is even more devastating on humans. Spills have caused deaths, destruction of farmlands, destruction of fishing industry, destruction of the local economy, destruction of tourism facilities and cultural areas.

"Animal studies indicate that contact with Nigerian crude oil could be hemotoxic and hepatotoxic and could cause infertility and cancer. The oil spills in the Niger Delta region have acute and long-term effects on human health," a person with knowledge of the workings of the facility told THISDAY.

Managing Director, NNPC Exploration and Production Limited (NEPL), Ali Muhammed Zarah

In addition, the pipeline integrity is said to have been further compromised by frequent third party interferences over the years due to crude theft. In 2021, Mohammad Abubakar, Minister of Environment disclosed that Nigeria recorded 4,919 spills between 2015 and March 2021 and lost 4.5 trillion barrels of oil to theft in four years.

Oil companies, particularly the Local and Indigenous Producers using the TFP as their evacuation route will face an uphill task trying to increase production. This is because the issues the outdated pipeline has will be further exacerbated with any planned increased production and pressure.

"Imagine turning on your tap water and trying to use a very old hosepipe with leakages at multiple points to supply water to your garden or to your overhead tank. It is very ridiculous.

"There are significant line losses due to the combination of crude theft and high water cut of most of the well at this time," the person argued.

Also, due to the overall process and integrity challenges with the pipeline, oil companies that use the TFP experience more than 40 per cent reconciliation or loss of crude pumped into the pipeline as against less than 1 per cent for those using alternative methods of evacuating their oil such as the barging method, it was understood.

Besides, due to the fact that most injectors do not have functional custody transfer units to ensure accurate measurements of injected crude into the pipeline, it further creates more issues with the accurate accounting for produced crude oil for those using TFP method of evacuation.

"With this catalogue of monumental woes, why on earth is anyone still using the Trans Forcados Pipeline or advocating the use of the pipeline without first discussing a well-drawn out plan of facility overhaul and management of change with the potential users as is traditional in any service provision of this nature with far reaching consequences in case of failure ?

" In addition to TFP integrity issues, there have been several shuts -ins of oil wells due to challenges with FOT Forcados Terminal. Forcados loading buoy was blown up in 2016 leading to a 17-month shutdown. Also the problems with FOT's Single Point Mooring (SPM) system resulted in 108 days of pipeline shutdown in 2022.

"An alternative is imperative and the Nigerian government is already going in this direction based on the new guidelines for barging operations effective April 1, 2023 as issued by the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA)," the source explained.

To this end, it was learnt that barging and trucking permits and renewals have been issued lately to companies like Sterling, Amni, NDPRA as well as Millennium Oil and Gas.

Back & Forth

While the dispute lingers, Nigeria which has borrowed massively in recent years to fund even its recurrent expenditure, remains the biggest casualty. As it is today, due to the disagreement, there's no production taking place in the facility due to no barging permit that should have been procured by the Operator – NEPL

But in trying to resolve the matter, a number of exchanges between the NNPC subsidiary and Neconde have taken place even though not much progress had been made.

For instance, in a letter obtained by THISDAY titled: " OML42 Crude Evacuation: Restoration of Flow through TFP to Forcadas Terminal", emanating from the NEPL, the NNPC subsidiary told the firm that it had gone ahead with the switch in mode of transportation despite Neconde's protestations.

"Please be advised that project activities for the restoration of OML 42 (JV, Odidi, Egwa) crude oil evacuation through the TFP have been implemented. Accordingly, by the close of business on March 31, 2023, OML 42 crude will be diverted via the TFP to Forcados Oil Terminal. The engineering team has confirmed preparedness to this effect.

"This action is in compliance with directives from the National Security Council and other Authorities to cease barging operations before March 31, 2023. You are invited to witness the activity via the different media to be communicated," a letter signed by Ibe Zimako on behalf of the NNPC unit. Neconde expects that as an Investor with international and Local Finance partners these sort of decision should be discussed with them.

However, in a response, Neconde reminded NEPL of its much-mouthed importance of good JV governance and stakeholders relationship and management, stressing that it was rather disappointing therefore to receive a mail 'casually' informing it of NEPL's preparedness to switch the evacuation of OML 42 crude oil to Trans-Forcados pipeline (TFP/FOT) in 24 hours.

"You will recall (just in case you forgot), that OML-42 asset is owned 55 per cent by NEPL and 45 per cent by NECONDE (the only company, in the entire Nigerian upstream JV, with that level of equity interest)..

"NEL (Neconde) as an OML licence holder has full rights to determine how, and where its equity crude is taken to for sales," the firm stated.

On November 28, 2022, Neconde recalled that NEPL wrote to both the NUPRC and NMDPRA without prior notice or engagement with NEL and without the consent of NEL, seeking their approval for the diversion of crude evacuation to TFP/FOT.

At the tripartite meeting with the Chief Executive of NMDPRA on January 6, 2023, Neconde said that the NEPL head committed to improving the governance and joint collaborative decision making for the JV.

Based on the action items from that meeting, Neconde said it wrote to NEPL on February 13, 2023, requesting for a meeting to further work on the switch and come up with timelines and modalities that will ensure that the necessary detailed diligence and management of change process is in place.

However, Neconde stated that the NNPC subsidiary ignored the letter and did not call for the suggested meeting or workshop.

"This sadly has been the treatment meted out to NEL by NEPL with regards to all JV governance. NEPL, apparently went ahead to execute a project to redirect partners crude without notice to nor consent of the equity partner. This is in blatant violation of the right of NEL as a licence holder and 45 per cent equity partner." Part of the communication obtained by THISDAY stressed.

While admitting that NEPL, as the operator has rights enshrined in the JOA, which NEL does not contest, the firm noted that as an equity partner, it has written several emails to NEPL requesting for operational, financial , product and other relevant JV reports to no avail.

This in some quarters may have been treated differently if it was a private company taking such unilateral decision, it could be termed " an intention to divert Crude " as Neconde wasn't carried along in the unilateral decision even though they kept asking.

Contempt Charges

To resolve the matter which appeared to have gone beyond peaceful settlement between the parties involved, Neconde approached the court to wade into the matter. But that too has become problematic, as the NNPC subsidiary has apparently flouted the order of the court.

In asking the court to begin contempt proceedings against NEPL, Neconde Energy Limited accused the Managing Director of NEPL, Ali Muhammed Zarah of alleged disobedience of the interim order of court made on March 29, 2023.

Other contemnors in the matter were: the Executive Director, Production and Asset Management NNPC Exploration and Production Limited, Mustapha Yusufu and the Asset Manager OML 42 —NNPC E&P Limited,- Zimako Ibe.

The applicants in their application brought pursuant to section 72 of the sheriffs and civil process Act CAP. S6 LFN 2004, filed by their lawyer, Uche Valentine Obi (SAN), stated that the alleged contemnors flouted a subsisting court order made by Justice Daniel Osiagor of the Federal High Court, Lagos State.

According to sources , the order restrained the respondents from changing, altering or replacing the crude oil evacuation arrangement in place for OML 42 crude oil through pipelines from the asset to Keremor Manifold and vessel barging operation to Ugocha export Terminal.

It also stopped the NNPC subsidiary from diverting or rechanneling the crude oil to Trans-Forcados export Terminal through the Trans-Forcados pipelines or any other means pending the hearing and determination of the motion on notice for interlocutory injunction filed in suit number no: FHCL/CS/550 2023.

Besides, the order requires that NEPL should not perform any act that could mean impeding, diverting, rechanneling the flow, evacuation or export of crude oil produced at OML 42 or otherwise failing, neglecting, withholding, delaying, the timely and adequate presentation and follow up of the mandatory application for renewal of the barging permit as Operator of OML 42 ,which is the primary cause of the shutdown of the Asset at the moment .

Aside restraining the NNPC unit from changing, altering or replacing the crude oil evacuation arrangement in place for OML 42 crude oil, it further stopped them from acting contrary to the terms enshrined in the binding Master Service Agreement (MSA) executed by it in favour of the plaintiff.

It said the document granted the sole right to handle and evacuate the entire crude oil produced at OML 42 through Ugocha Export Terminal for a period of 15 years pending the hearing and determination of the motion on notice.

"In defiance of orders of this court, the contemnors instructed its personnel, workmen drawn largely from the contractor, Pipeline Infrastructure Nigeria Limited, to continue with the injuncted works at the Keremor manifold .

"This was with a view to concluding it expeditiously and achieving its planned switch and diversion of OML 42 crude oil over the weekend so that it could claim that the injuncted acts had been already concluded and thus undermine the orders and foist a fait accompli on the court and render its orders impotent and academic.

"It is in the best interest of justice that each of the respondents contemnors be committed to prison until they purge themselves of their contemptuous conduct," the local firm added.

Will the gladiators sheathe their sword in the interest of the generality of the country? Shouldn't the NNPC subsidiary be more concerned about ramping up production using whatever mode of transportation which bears the highest profit, as is envisaged in the current Financing arrangement that was jointly signed on by the parties and activated less than 1 years ago , rather than the rigidity being currently displayed? These questions remain unanswered.

PROVIDUSBANK

PROVIDUSBANK LIMITED
SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT 31 DECEMBER

	2022 N'000	2021 N'000
ASSETS		
Cash and bank balances	76,645,764	24,660,678
Due from other financial institutions	32,930,070	26,642,717
Financial assets at fair value through Profit or Loss	-	507,790
Loans and advances at amortised cost	282,647,938	165,946,359
Financial assets at amortised cost	141,601,993	138,719,320
Cash reserve balance with Central Bank of Nigeria	146,458,944	148,095,780
Other assets	27,163,795	13,183,141
Investment properties	3,264,527	5,425,737
Property and equipment	22,132,982	16,646,156
Right of use assets	519,811	668,626
Intangible assets	2,427,097	2,493,680
Deferred tax assets	15,200	76,508
TOTAL ASSETS	**735,808,121**	**543,066,492**
LIABILITIES		
Deposits from customers	504,462,667	340,299,967
Borrowed funds	46,371,208	67,326,091
Current tax liability	726,489	418,870
Debt Securities Issued	4,609,162	-
Other liabilities	133,988,560	97,320,447
Lease liabilities	385,298	380,468
Deferred tax liabilities	-	81,797
TOTAL LIABILITIES	690,543,384	505,827,640
EQUITY:		
Share capital	18,018,393	18,018,393
Share premium	13,854,341	13,854,341
Retained earnings	32,083	(3,005,583)
Other reserves	13,359,919	8,371,701
TOTAL EQUITY	45,264,737	37,238,852
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	**735,808,121**	**543,066,492**

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER

	2022 N'000	2021 N'000
GROSS REVENUE	**62,861,708**	**39,706,515**
Interest income calculated using effective interest rate	50,190,640	29,394,929
Interest expense	(28,811,845)	(17,180,574)
Net interest income	21,378,795	12,214,355
Loan impairment charges	(3,236,350)	(1,018,297)
Net interest income after loan impairment charges	18,142,445	11,196,058
Fee and commission income	8,526,866	7,011,919
Fee and commission expense	(449,960)	(461,703)
Net fee and commission income	8,076,906	6,550,216
Net trading gains	1,645,294	1,031,456
Other operating income	2,498,908	2,268,211
Impairment charge on other financial assets	(7,444)	(383,609)
Net operating income	30,356,109	20,662,332
Personnel expenses	(6,593,224)	(4,810,872)
Other Operating expenses	(12,055,761)	(6,194,105)
Depreciation and amortisation	(3,071,781)	(2,204,647)
Profit before tax	**8,635,343**	**7,452,708**
Tax expense	(609,458)	(340,150)
Profit after tax	**8,025,885**	**7,112,558**
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income	**8,025,885**	**7,112,558**
Earnings per share (basic)	**22k**	**23k**

Reports on the resolution of Customers' Complaints for 2022

Below is a breakdown of complaints received and resolved by the Bank during the year ended 31 December 2022 pursuant to CBN circular dated April 16, 2011:

Description	Number	Amount Claimed N	Amount refunded N
Pending Complaints from Prior Year	3	600,000	-
Received Complaints	15,689	26,810,494	303,000
Resolved Complaints	10,914	26,810,494	303,000
Unresolved Complaints escalated for CBN in	-	-	-
Unresolved Complaints	-	-	-

The financial statements were approved by the Board of directors on 31 March, 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Adeoye Ojuroye
Executive Director/Chief Financial Officer
FRC/2016/ICAN/00000014356

Walter Akpani
Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer
FRC/2013/CIBN/00000005007

Alhaji Hussaini Dikko
Chairman
FRC/2017/NIQS/00000016746

Report of the independent auditor on the summary financial statements
To the members of ProvidusBank Limited

Report on the summary financial statements

Opinion

The summary financial statements, which comprise the summary statement of financial position as at 31 December, 2022 and the summary statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year then ended are derived from the audited financial statements of ProvidusBank Limited ("the Bank") for the year ended 31 December, 2022.

In our opinion, the accompanying summary financial statements are consistent in all material respects, with the audited financial statements, in accordance with the requirements of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act and the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria Act.

Summary financial statements

The summary financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by the International Financial Reporting Standards, the Companies and Allied Matters Act, the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria Act, the Banks and Other Financial Institution Act and other relevant Central Bank of Nigeria circulars applied in the preparation of the audited financial statements of the Bank. 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 thereon.

The audited financial statements and our report thereon

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial statements in our report dated 19 April 2023. That report also includes the communication of key audit matters. Key audit matters are those matters that, in our professional judgement, were of most significance in our audit of the financial statements of the current period.

Directors' responsibility for the summary financial statements

The directors are responsible for the preparation of the summary financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act and the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria Act.

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 Standard on Auditing (ISA) 810 (Revised), 'Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements'.

Report on other legal and regulatory requirements

In accordance with our full audit report, we confirm that:

i) we did not report any exceptions under the sixth schedule of the Companies and Allied Matters Act;
ii) the Bank has disclosed the information required by the Central Bank of Nigeria circular on insider related credits;
iii) the Bank paid penalties in respect of contraventions of relevant circulars issued by the Central Bank of Nigeria during the year ended 31 December, 2022.

INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF NIGERIA
ICAN
0074919

For: **PricewaterhouseCoopers**
Chartered Accountants
Lagos, Nigeria

Engagement Partner: Samuel Abu
FRC/2013/ICAN/00000001495

19 April 2023

FUTURE FORWARD BANKING

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PROVIDUSBANK

Innovation

Transparency

Prosperity

Trust

FUTURE FORWARD BANKING

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POLITICS

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INEC and Burden of Botched Electoral Coup in Adamawa

The failed electoral coup d'etat orchestrated by the Adamawa state suspended Resident Electoral Commissioner, Hudu Ari and the swiftness in which the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) acted to safe the day brought the just concluded 2023 general poll into focus again, **Adedayo Akinwale** reports

Yakubu

Ari

Okoye

The 2023 general election is done and dusted, but there was some mild drama that characterized the just concluded poll that will remain fresh in the memories of Nigerians many years to come. One of the major highlights of the 2023 election was the failed coup d'etat orchestrated by the Adamawa state Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Hudu Ari.

Interestingly, for the first time in a long time, President Muhammadu Buhari in a swift move approved the immediate suspension of Ari pending the completion of investigation by the Inspector General of Police on the Resident Electoral Commissioner's conduct/actions during the aupplementary election in Adamawa State.

The President also directed the immediate investigation and prosecution, if found liable of Ari, by the Inspector General of Police.

Buhari in a statement by Director of Information, Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Willie Bassey, further directed investigation by the Inspector General of Police, Director-General of the Department of State Services, and the Commandant General of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps, of the role of their officers in aiding and abetting the conduct/actions of Ari and if found culpable, appropriate disciplinary actions, to be meted out to them.

Ari created an atmosphere of confusion, uncertainty and chaos when last Monday he declared the Governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Adamawa state, Senator Aisha Dahiru Binani, as the winner of the supplementary governorship election while collation of ressult was far from being concluded.

In a swift reaction, however, INEC National Commissioner, and Chairman, Information and Voter Education, Festus Okoye, in a statement, described the action of the Resident Electoral Commissioner as usurpation of the power of the Returning Officer.

Subsequently, the commission suspended the collation of results of the supplementary election in the state and also maintained that the declaration of Binani as the winner of the election was null, void and of no effect.

In addition, the commission directed Ari to stay away from the commission's office in the state. The Secretary to the Commission, Mrs. Rose Oriran-Anthony, gave the directive in a letter titled, 'Commission's Directive to Stay Away From INEC, Adamawa State' dated April 17, 2023 and addressed to Ari.

Furthermore, the commission followed up the action by writing to the Inspector General of Police, Usman Baba, demanding investigation and prosecution of Ari.

At the end of the melodrama, the official results of Adamawa State Governorship poll released by INEC showed that Ahmadu Fintiri of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) scored 430,861 votes to beat Binani who polled 398,788 votes.

Nevertheless, Fintiri, while speaking with journalists after collecting his certificate of return alleged that there was external manipulation from Abuja. The governor admitted that the external influence made the just concluded election the toughest of his political career

To him, the election should have been done with since the 18th of March, but for the attitude of some individuals "among us that dragged the election more than necessary".

He said: "But thank God, INEC with very wonderful and excellent personnel has redeemed the whole process. They redeemed the image battered by so-called REC and today, Nigerians have cause to celebrate democracy. Going forward, we should learn from the lessons that we went through in the last one week so that we can continue to build on the process and on our democracy as stakeholders.

"One apology I have to make is what happened to the two excellent commissioners in my state. I take the blame, and I apologize. Sorry for what the hoodlums did for the mistaken identity."

Fintiri also admitted: "Yes it was my toughest election because of the external manipulation that was coming from Abuja. They were interested in seeing that they strangle democracy. And you can see to your dismay that even the security agencies that are supposed to protect our democracy were involved in strangling the democracy in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the military had to get involved to save the democracy in Adamawa. It is quite unfortunate.

"The REC from the beginning has been manipulating the election to give it to the APC but unfortunately because of the quantum of voting, he became confused and had to declare the election inconclusive believing that if he is given the second opportunity, he will be able to manipulate but God did not allow him.

"We won the inconclusive election again squarely and he had to do what he did disgracefully. I think INEC has taken steps and they are going to prosecute him, but I think the right place to prosecute him is in Adamawa because he committed the offence in my land and I am going to instruct the Ministry of Justice to ensure that he is prosecuted and taken to jail."

The governor stressed that he has become a veteran of inconclusive elections, adding that he has learnt a lot, saying, "I know that I won the election on 18 March, 2023 squarely from the beginning."

After thwarting the electoral coup, the electoral body had to deny allegations of partisanship in the recently conducted Adamawa Supplementary Elections.

Okoye in a statement issued said there was no discreet nocturnal meeting between its officials and any governorship candidate.

The clarification became imperative after some media reports accused Binani of offering the whooping sum of N2 billion as bribe to an official to be declared winner of the election.

Consequently, the National Commissioner stressed that ordinarily, the Commission does not join issues with partisan actors, particularly where no evidence has been provided, but stated categorically that there was no such meeting

He said: "The attention of the Commission has been drawn to a press statement by a candidate in the recently concluded Adamawa State Governorship election in which officials deployed for legitimate duty in the State were alleged to have undermined the electoral process after a discreet "nocturnal" visit to the Government House and ostensibly met with one of the candidates in the election who gave them a list of "collation and returning officers" deployed for the election."

"To set the record straight, no such visit or meeting took place let alone the compilation of any purported list of collation and returning officers. Such a meeting would have been contrary to the oath of neutrality that we all swore to."

Okoye noted that every conscientious observer would have noticed that the Commission appointed and retained only one Returning Officer for the Governorship election who also doubled as the State Collation Officer for the Presidential Election (SCOPE).

He explained that like all Returning Officers nationwide, he was issued with a letter of appointment by the Commission and the REC in Adamawa State was duly informed.

Okoye added that the list of Collation Officers was also forwarded to the State with every page of the list personally endorsed by the Chairman of the Commission well ahead of the arrival of the National Commissioners.

He emphasised that the same press statement created the impression that the national headquarters of the Commission specifically targeted Adamawa State in its deployment of National Commissioners and other officials with the sole intention of influencing the outcome of the supplementary election held on Saturday 18th April, 2023 and sidelining the REC, saying nothing could be further from the truth.

Okoye said for the record, it has been the standard policy and practice of the Commission to deploy National Commissioners, RECs and other staff from the headquarters or neighbouring States for supplementary or off-cycle elections where doing so was considered necessary.

He pointed out that in the case of Adamawa State where supplementary governorship election was held in 69 polling units, two National Commissioners were deployed, while for Kebbi State involving 142 polling units, three National Commissioners were deployed.

Similarly, the electoral body said one National Commissioner each was deployed to Sokoto, Zamfara, Imo, Rivers, Ekiti and Ogun States. This has been the standard practice of the Commission of which all RECs are informed in advance.

Therefore, Okoye pointed out that Adamawa State was not specifically targeted, adding that in all other States, the RECs worked cooperatively with the National Commissioners except in Adamawa State for reasons that are now obvious to all.

The Commission advised those behind the mischief to desist forthwith as such fabrications have endangered the lives of its officials – both ad hoc and regular - engaged in legitimate election duties. He said its expected of well-meaning citizens to act within the bounds of propriety and decency.

To the surprise of many, the electoral umpire last week disclosed that it has no information on the whereabouts of Ari.

Ari created an atmosphere of confusion, uncertainty and chaos when last Monday he declared the Governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Adamawa state, Senator Aisha Dahiru Binani, as the winner of the supplementary governorship election while collation of ressult was far from being concluded. In a swift reaction, however, INEC National Commissioner, and Chairman, Information and Voter Education, Festus Okoye, in a statement, described the action of the Resident Electoral Commissioner as usurpation of the power of the Returning Officer

NOTE: Interested readers should continue in the online edition on www.thisdaylive.com

A Time for National Unity

The initial recrimination over the general election must yield to reconciliation for national unity, writes **Segun James**

Nigeria is at a crossroads. The crossroads where a country becomes a nation; where the unity of the people determines the future of the country. This is where Nigeria stands today even as some of her citizens are beating the drums of war for the disintegration of the country. How did the nation get to this point?

Literarily, three persons ran for an election, one won, and the second-place holder convinced that he won, decided to go through the legal system, as required, to fight his case. But the third-place holder also claimed that he won and went to court. But if that is where it ended it would have been good. Instead, he and his supporters are now questioning the unity of the nation, pushing the country towards a precipice.

How did the country come to this? Who is calling the unity of the country to question? The BATified Supporters of Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressives Congress (APC), the ATIKUlate supporters of Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) or the OBIdient supporters of Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP)?

The destination was decided in February by a simple majority. Nigerians voted Tinubu as the next President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. However, the journey, since the election has been complex and perilous; beset by wrong turnings, and ethnic and religious problems.

In the Nigerian political field, the gulf between sentiment and reality is thin, very thin indeed. Geopolitical risks, such as the one being pushed by the Obidients who have become embattled over the election may plunge the nation into another fratricidal war if not quickly checked. Pushing lies such as a bloody attack against the Igbo people in Lagos and other parts of Nigeria is capable of sewing the seed of discord in the minds of people who may not be aware of the truth. With these lies being peddled, devastating damage may be done to the image and unity of the country.

Obi

Under intense pressure, the Obidients have unleashed political terror on the nation, with threats and many exhibiting extremist behavior capable of derailing the nation's democracy.

Obi needs to call them to order now. He knows as much as others that only the courts of law can change the already declared results, yet he chose to ignore this. How can he preside over a nation at war with itself if, perchance, he wins at the courts?

Before the election, many pundits had predicted that the race to become the next president will be an especially nasty one, fraught with ethnic and religious discords. They were not particularly disappointed. It began harmoniously enough with three contenders and their running mates chosen in accordance with acceptable political understanding in the country.

The frontrunner, Senator Bola Tinubu had chosen a northern fellow Muslim as his running mate, a move that was considered a no-no in a country evenly divided along religious lines.

Atiku Abubakar had chosen a southern Christian, and Peter Obi had also chosen a northern Muslim as their running mates.

While they all met the regional balance, the choice of Tinubu was seen as a slight by Christians, even though pundits see it as something that had to be done for political expediency. It worked for him as he was later voted in as president.

One thing that is generally agreed about the results of Nigeria's elections is that for the victors, it is a triumph that must be celebrated, but for the vanquished, it is a pyrrhic victory bought by money, rigged, and stolen.

This has always been the case since the coming of the 4th Republic. But all being well, May 29th will see the touchdown of a new government in Nigeria. It will be a testament to the deepening of democracy in the country.

Nigeria has made extraordinary strides in recent years. Despite the upheavals, it is still the largest economy on the continent, and its democracy has been advancing rapidly.

For better and for worse, Nigeria is an exception to the rule. The most populous country in Africa, the country has seen its share of crises. It has experienced political upheavals, yet it has continued to soldier on to the consternation of many who wonder how it has continued to survive in the face of so many odds.

Politics in Nigeria is never simple. It is too vast, too diverse, too argumentative, and too undemocratic for any problem created from it to lend itself to easy answers.

This is particularly so when a "simple" election is now threatening the unity of the country. This is because there is more to it than meets the eye.

Barely 35 days to the swearing-in of the new government, Tinubu is expectedly to begin work on managing the collapsed economy and the polarized political system.

His government must negotiate and work with the opposition. He must become a president of the people in the interest of national unity. He must face the new challenges of connecting with youth whose confusion, anxiety, and fear of the unknown all contributed to the apathy that followed the last election.

For a nation under so many social stresses with millions of unemployed and unemployable youths; with the widening gap between the rich and the poor, it is surprising that the country is yet to explode. While the apathy may have stopped the youth who are increasingly very bitter about the pathetic political situation in the country, he must find ways to connect with them and give them hope.

There's no doubt that Nigerians find the President-elect, Asiwaju Tinubu, fascinating. He is the focus of every political issue, and this is because he has remained relevant since leaving office as governor of Lagos State. Just as he has upped the stakes on the political stage in Lagos, it is hoped that he can do the same on the national stage.

This is the time for national unity; President Tinubu must stand to be counted.

Tinubu's Presidency and the Cost of Genuine Loyalty

Raheem Ajayi chronicles early political moves by President-elect Bola Tinubu which culminated in his life long ambition of becoming Nigeria's number one citizen.

After reading "Dreams from My Father", a book authored by Barack Obama, the 44th American President, I concluded, just before he was elected in 2008, that Obama made up his mind to become the US President as early as when he was just eight years old. His, was a trajectory evidently influenced by a conscious disposition of a man determined to fulfil his dreams.

Nigeria's President-elect, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu shares a similarity with Obama in this aspect of knowing what he wanted at an early age and pursuing it using everything humanly possible to accomplish his dream!

No wonder he said it has been his lifelong ambition to become the President of Nigeria. Typical of a man who knew what he wanted and the skills as well as exposure required to achieve it, Tinubu made sure he schooled at one of the most prestigious Universities in the World.

Armed with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration with Honours on June 22,1979 and majoring in accounting, Tinubu was ready to thread on the slippery political field. Jagaban, as he is fondly called, took the political space by storm winning the Senate seat of Lagos West on the platform of Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1992.

After serving as Governor for two terms of eight years, Asiwaju became entrenched politically.

He quickly became what you could call an "institution" in Lagos State, Nigeria's commercial nerve centre. He didn't just attain the status without some challenges but he was able to weather the storms.

Asiwaju brought in younger people who midwifed his vision for a new Lagos with latitude for individual creativity which opened the State for more opportunities.

Leaders of his party, Alliance for Democracy (AD), resisted his style of governance which was largely seen by the older generation as a way of relegating them. This led to a pseudo ideological struggle which climaxed into open hostilities.

I recall, with some nostalgia, an event which almost marred Asiwaju's visit to Lagos State University (LASU) in 2000 where he was billed to inaugurate some projects. Some anti-Tinubu forces had been mobilised to protest against him.

Tinubu

Some pro-democracy groups held a meeting prior to the day when news filtered out about the plan to humiliate Tinubu. The meeting was at the instance of Olusegun Mayegun who was a doctoral student at the University of York at the time during one of his visits.

As the Secretary General of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS Zone D), I was invited to the meeting. The meeting resolved not to allow Tinubu, who was part of our struggle for democracy, to be hounded and humiliated by anti-democratic forces.

I was asked to lead a team of students to forestall and neutralise the planned protest. When Jagaban got to LASU campus, he virtually held my hand while he was ushered into the venue of the event. After the event, we all went to Park Lane at Apapa for Pa Abraham Adesanya's birthday. Late Bola Ige who delivered the keynote address on that day had said that youth should wait for their time. When it was time for him to speak, Tinubu countered Ige saying if the youth were not asked to wait before fighting for democracy, they shouldn't be asked to wait for dividends of democracy.

As he was leaving the event, he spotted me on his way out. He stopped to thank me for what we did for him earlier. I have long known Tinubu as a man who doesn't shy away from acknowledging good even in a public arena. Tinubu went ahead to win election for a second term in office largely on account of legacy projects he initiated which changed the face of Lagos.

In fact, his performance during his first term in office made many of us in the pro-democracy groups to drum up support for him. Some of us played active roles in his re-election campaign team which was known as Independent Campaign Group (ICG).

Fresh from the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), I was appointed Planning, Research and Strategy Officer while Olusegun Mayegun and Kayode Ogundamisi were appointed the Deputy Director of the Directorate and Coordinator of Self-determination Groups respectively.

Following the defeat of all governors elected under the platform of AD except in Lagos State, Tinubu's political influence began to take firm roots across Yoruba land. He would subsequently become the rallying point for elections across the states of the southwest with his proteges and allies elected governors as well as legislators at the federal and state levels.

With Lagos firmly secured, Asiwaju's political machinery became impregnable and if not invincible; with consequential ripple effect across the Southwest. However, on February 25, 2023, Lagos invincibility was demystified and its impregnability shattered when Peter Obi of the Labour Party and his "Obidients" political movement defeated the entrenched structure of Asiwaju and APC during the Presidential election. The Labour Party scored 582, 454 while All Progressive Congress (APC) scored 572, 606.

No one would have imagined that a relatively new political party like LP could defeat APC in Jagaban's Lagos.

Why was APC able to rally round to win Lagos that it lost three weeks earlier in the gubernatorial election? I will get there in a jiffy. After Tinubu's loss of the Presidential election in Lagos; it now occurred to many that Asiwaju could not have achieved all he did without some committed men and women who put great sacrifices to ensure that Jagaban attained such an enviable status in Nigeria's political history.

One of such pillars of support behind Jagaban is the former two term Governor of Osun State and current Minister of the Interior, Rauf Aregbesola.

A man from Marxist-Lenin political background, Aregbesola was like the de facto "Prime Minister" to Tinubu. Though his portfolio was Commissioner for Works and Infrastructure during Tinubu's eight years as governor, Aregbesola was more of a coordinating Commissioner for the administration.

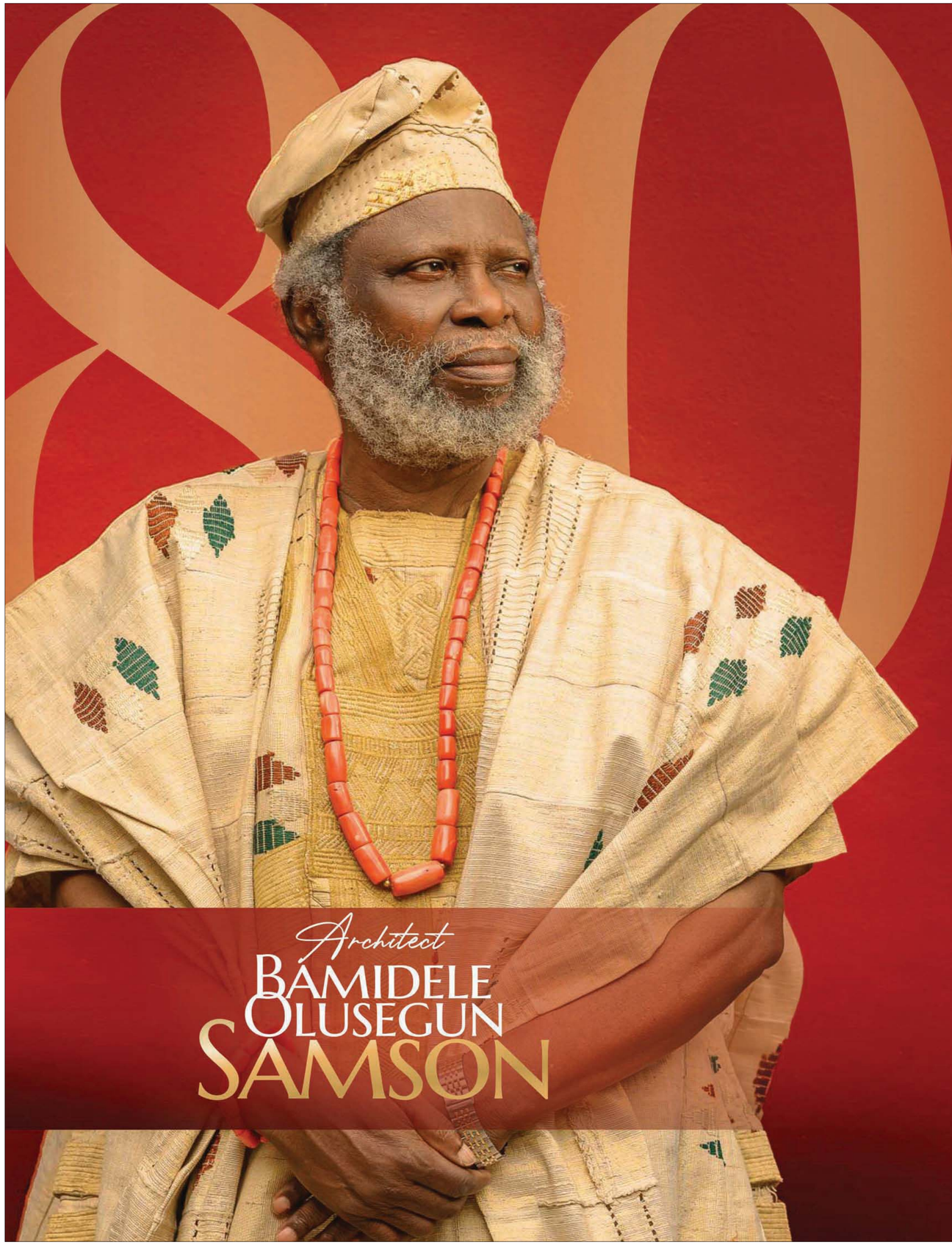
Aregbesola could be likened to what Nikolai Patrushev is to Vladimir Putin, the Russian President. Patrushev who has been secretary of the security council of Russia since 2008, a consultative body that works out the president's decisions on national security affairs, is the most powerful person in that cabinet.

However, the relationship between Aregbesola and Tinubu went sour shortly after Aregbesola left office as governor of Osun State in 2018. Gboyega Oyetola who served as the Chief of Staff to Aregbesola succeeded his principal but political differences became irreconcilable.

A "ghost" narrative which suggested that Aregbesola was reluctant to support Oyetola who is a relative to Tinubu emerged. This narrative was allowed to fester and a big wedge was created between Tinubu and Aregbesola on the one hand and Oyetola and Aregbesola on the other. Most of the narratives that have shaped political discussions and contests have largely derived their strengths from this subterfuge. Those who created that narrative obviously did a very good job because it became so popular. However, when lies become the horses that ideas ride on, such would only last a while even if they make some people comfortable. It was Liz Gilbert, an American journalist and author who retorted about this. "What is better: uncomfortable truth or comfortable lies?

-Ajayi writes from Imashayi in Yewa North LGA of Ogun State.

NOTE: Interested readers should continue in the online edition on www.thisdaylive.com



Alade mi,

Happy 80th Birthday!

Today, we celebrate your amazing journey through life, your unwavering love, and your steadfast faith in GOD! Your presence in my life is a gift, and I am grateful for the countless blessings you have brought to me and the children.

Mofolorunso, As you reach this remarkable milestone, I am reminded of Psalm 90:12, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

Over these 80 years, you have indeed gained wisdom, and your heart has been a guiding light for me and the children.

Your love for GOD and your devotion to His Word have shaped our family's foundation in ways that will continue to impact generations to come.

Alade, Proverbs 20:29 says, "The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray hair." Your splendor shines through in the legacy you have built, the lessons you have taught, and the love you have shared. Your gray hair is a testament to the years of experience, knowledge, and understanding that you have so generously shared with us all.

Bamidele, As we celebrate your special day, I am reminded of Isaiah 46:4: "Even to your old age and gray hairs, I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."

Today, we give thanks for the divine sustenance and protection that have accompanied you throughout your life.

Olusegun, The LORD continue to bless you with His presence, filling your days with joy, strength and peace. May His love encompass you always, and may you continue to be a beacon of faith and wisdom for our family.

Oko Abake, I am grateful to GOD for every moment we have shared, and I look forward to many more years and cherished memories together.

Happy 80th Birthday, Ololufe mi owon!

With all my heart,
Your dearest Abake

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OPINION

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EDITORIAL

TIME TO ERADICATE MALARIA

***TUNDE OLUSUNLE** reminisces on the wild Adamawa gubernatorial election*

GIDEON ORKAR, YUNUSA ARI AND RELATED MATTERS

It's truly, very sad to recall that Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, Nigeria's second democratically elected president of the fourth republic, set aside History from the curriculum of second school education, in 2009. The alibi was that students were avoiding the subject because there were few jobs for history graduates, and a concomitant dearth of instructors. He might have been correct about the challenges that graduates of some courses beyond history, encounter in a world gravitating towards science and technology. I was in the university at the same time with two brothers. We all graduated together, completed the mandatory one-year National Youth Service Corps, (NYSC), same year, and hit the streets job-hunting at the same time. I secured a teaching job after NYSC, fortuitously, because I studied English. One of my kinsfolk got a lecturing job in a polytechnic because he studied nuclear physics. The reality of shrinking opportunities for graduates of "non-core" subjects as they are referred to therefore, has been on for four full decades. But history remains very germane to our growth and progress as a nation. We must be clear about where we are coming from, to chart a path for our future. It is therefore heartwarming that the outgoing administration returned history to the curriculum of education at the lower levels, a few years ago.

Nigerians below the age of 40 will barely recall the botched military coup of April 22, 1990. It is a whopping 33 years ago and not many Nigerians who were seven years old at that time remember this critical highlight of our political odyssey. Definitely not many members of the #EndSARS generation. Not the murderous vagrants unsettling the nation's south east in the names of the "Eastern Security Network," (ESN), or the "Indigenous People of Biafra," (IPOB), and similar nondescript appellations. Yet, that attempted subversion of 1990, should feature prominently in the curriculum of history across levels, as a module on its own. It should be engaging the interest of research work for long essays, dissertations or thesis as the case may be, for historians, political scientists, sociologists, and so on, in our universities and research centres.

Dramas surrounding the recent gubernatorial election and rerun in Adamawa State, easily remind of the failed putsch staged to unseat Nigeria's former military president, Ibrahim Babangida, Sunday April 22, 1990. Coincidentally, the foiled 1990 episode, and the botched 2023 civilian equivalent calculated to steal the popular reelection of Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri, governor of Adamawa State, both occurred in the month of April! Gideon Gwaza Orkar, a Major in the Nigerian Army at the time, and his fellow dissidents, in the morning of Sunday April 22, 1990, seized the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, (FRCN), Lagos. The coast-draped megalopolis, was the

administrative headquarters of Nigeria, and the State House, *Dodan Barracks,* was in the upscale Ikoyi part of the city-state. While Orkar was announcing the dethronement of the Babangida government from FRCN, some of his colleagues marched upon the seat of power, ostensibly to arrest or neutralise the president. Aide-de-Camp, (ADC) to Babangida, the loyal-till-death Usman Bello, a Lieutenant Colonel, was taken out as he tried to rally troops to protect his principal.

Amidst the amateurish, slipshod, ragtag coordination of the coup by largely military green horns, Babangida's Chief of Army Staff, Sani Abacha, a ruthless General, speedily quashed the insurrection. Abacha himself survived assassination in that coup, by a hair's breath. His official residence was shelled by the coupists while thankfully, he was a few houses away. Orkar and his fellow mutineers, about 40 of them were arrested, tried under martial laws, convicted of treason, and summarily despatched. A shaken Babangida spontaneously accelerated work on the preparation of Abuja for physical occupation. The area had previously been designated the new federal capital by Babangida's older military predecessor, the enigmatic Murtala Ramat Mohammed in 1976. Babangida finally relocated to Abuja December 12, 1991 to a brand new *Aso Villa* or *Aso Rock* as the present State House is variously described.

Gideon Orkar who hailed from Benue State which has produced some of Nigeria's most elite and eminent military officers, was a member of the "Course 12" of the Nigerian Defence Academy, (NDA). Benue State gave Nigeria, John Atom Kpera, Samuel Victor Leo Malu, John Mark Inienger, David Alechenu Mark, Chris Abutu Garuba, Lawrence Onoja, Sunday Idoko, Charles Offoche, Gabriel Kpamber, Patrick Akem, and a host of other fine officers, and military chiefs. They all made the coveted ranks of General, and excelled in their core military tasks or assigned political responsibilities or international assignments as the case may be.

The political history of the Republic of Liberia for instance will be incomplete without the prominent mention of the exploits of Inienger and Malu. They very ably and professionally led the Economic Community of West African States Military Monitoring Group, (ECOMOG), at the acme of that country's tribulations, tempests and troubles, in the 1990s. That will be treatise for another day. John Malu, younger brother to Victor Malu, is a two-star General in the army, while the older Malu's son, Terlumun Malu, is a Colonel. Such is the quality of the professional human resource value which Orkar's Benue State has continually and consistently gifted Nigeria's military across time and aeons.

Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission, (INEC), a very unpopular institution which handling of recent elections has been anything but "independent," scheduled the nationwide gubernatorial elections for Saturday March 18, 2023. With an unassailable headwind of over 30,000 votes, it was not *Uhuru* as yet for Adamawa State governor, Umaru Fintiri, who contested to be reelected, on the platform of the opposition Peoples' Democratic Party, (PDP). He would have to go for a supplementary election with his closest opponent, Aisha Dahiru Ahmed, of the All Progressives Congress, (APC). A serving Senator, she is also popularly known by the nickname *Binani.* There were loud insinuations about the complicity of the "APC high command" in concert with a faceless *Aso Villa* enforcers to alter the course of the election. The rumour was that Aisha Buhari, Nigeria's First Lady, desired to be "honoured and gifted" Adamawa State, by ensuring that a woman emerged victorious in the election. This was presumably to privilege Mrs Buhari an honourable mention in Nigeria's political documentation, as the lady who produced the very first substantive female governor in Nigeria!

The supplementary poll was scheduled for Saturday April 15, and Mohammed Mele, a revered Professor of English from the University of Maiduguri, was designated as the "State Returning Officer," (SRO) of the process. Collation of the results was suspended before midnight that Saturday, until 11 am the following day, Sunday April 16, 2023. Two hours before the agreed continuation of the tallying of the results, however, Yunusa Hudu Ari, Adamawa State Resident Electoral Commissioner, (REC), breached the collation centre, coup-style. With heads of the security agencies in tow, Ari, against the run of play, in treasonable usurpation of the powers of the SRO, proclaimed Aisha Binani as the winner of the election. Reminds of Orkar and Company of April 22, 1990.

Ari and his co-conspirators never bargained for the backlash of that treacherous indiscretion. Angry youths took over. They pounced on the innocent and hapless SRO, Professor Mele who was described as a former university Vice Chancellor and stripped him almost naked.

Olusunle, PhD,
poet, journalist, scholar and author, is a Member of the Nigerian Guild of Editors, (NGE)

AHMED IBRAHIM urges the incoming administration to prioritise gas business in addition to mushroom farming to finance infrastructure

TINUBU SHOULD TAP UNEXPLORED REVENUES

With an ailing economy, dwindling resources, and an overwhelming percentage of revenue committed to debt service, the incoming government led by Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu must get cracking from day one. While appreciating that the task of the Tinubu administration is daunting, it should explore all previously untapped resources including striking a firmer deal with the private sector on project funding, in order to generate enough revenues to meet the country's infrastructural challenges and other pressing social welfare demands. Experts say Nigeria needs a whopping $800

billion cumulatively in 10 years to fix its infrastructural challenges. They maintain that the country needs an estimated $80 billion in financial commitment annually over 10 years to fix its infrastructure deficit.

Speaking at the national workshop of the Association of Business Editors in Nigeria (ABEN), with the theme: "Infrastructure Financing as Pathway to Sustainable Economic Development," former acting Managing Director/CEO of Bank of Industry (BoI), Waheed Olagunju, stated that there cannot be meaningful development without investment in infrastructure, which catalyses development in all sectors of the economy. According to him, "Nigeria needs $80 billion every year over the next 10 years to finance its infrastructure gap. And to address this, the government must partner with the private sector to provide funding for key infrastructure projects."

Olagunju, who was also the chairman of the occasion, said, realising how critical infrastructure like road and rail transportation as well as maritime and aviation sectors are, the federal government through the National Development Plan (2021-2025) expected the transportation industry to generate 15 per cent of such funding amounting to N52trillion of the over N300 trillion revenue target, into the economy, even as it expects 85 per cent of resources to come from the private sector through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

As a deft financial manager, Tinubu will be expected to rekindle the magic wand that transformed the economy of Lagos State which he laid as governor between 1999 and 2007. He surely needs to convert even stones to gold in different areas. The administration must not be close to several options. One area that the new government must focus on is upping the gas business. Nigeria has 180.490 million cubic feet putting her in the ninth position in the global ranking of gas reserves. But current production is just a little over three million cubic feet while local consumption is 664,628 cubic feet. However, what's cheering is its bigger prospects for crude oil sales.

According to a Businessday report, Nigeria's gas revenue outpaced its earnings from crude oil, the lifeblood of Africa's biggest economy, in the first quarter of 2022, in keeping up with a trend that first emerged in December 2020. Data obtained from the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC) showed that while crude oil exports fetched the nation $177.86 million over the three-month period, revenue from gas feedstock to Nigeria LNG Limited (NLNG) amounted to $387.72 million.

Oyinkepreye Orodu, head of the Department of Petroleum Engineering at Covenant University, said crude theft is killing Nigeria's oil business at historic levels, unlike Nigeria's gas, which is in high demand because buyers are switching more to long-term Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) contracts. "Thefts combined with export terminal and pipeline shut-downs are limiting Nigeria's ability to earn petrol dollars," he said.

A further breakdown of NNPC's data showed that in January 2022, Nigeria earned $75.88 million from crude oil, compared with the $84.45 million earned from gas feedstock to NLNG; in February, the country earned $13.05 million from crude oil, compared with $159.58 from gas feedstock to NLNG.

In March, Nigeria earned $88.93 million from crude oil while gas feedstock to NLNG fetched the country $143.69 million.

The NNPC data also showed that the trend of Nigeria's revenue from feedstock gas to NLNG surpassing crude oil earnings has been consistent in the last 16 months. Between December 2021 and December 2020, Nigeria raked in a total of $644.28 million from gas feedstock to NLNG while income from crude oil exports was $368.34 million.

Another area that should elicit Tinubu's ear interestingly is the cultivation of mushrooms that a Plant Scientist, Prof Sami Ayodele says can earn Nigeria N1trillion annually, positing that it can also generate a whopping 30 million jobs. He urged the federal government to create an opportunity for farmers to embrace mushroom cultivation to serve as alternative means of farming and income generation for the country.

Ayodele made the call in Abuja on Thursday while delivering the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) 22nd inaugural lecture with the topic: "Mushrooms: Friends or Foes?"

He said it was imperative for the government to sensitise citizens on the benefits of mushroom cultivation for wealth creation and poverty alleviation.

Ayodele, Professor of Botany, at the Department of Biological Sciences, Faculty of Sciences, NOUN, said the country could earn as much as one trillion naira annually if the sector is properly developed.

He noted that the mushroom sub-sector and its value chain could provide 30 million skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled jobs for the teaming unemployed graduates, vulnerable youths, and women.

He stated: "Mushroom cultivation could have great economic and social impacts by generating income and employment for both women and youths, particularly in rural areas of developing countries.

"For instance, in China, it was estimated that the export value of mushrooms was about $1.6 billion and the total employment in the mushroom industry was over 30 million people.

"Out of this population, only 10 per cent are actual mushroom farmers, others fall within sectors such as food, beverage manufacturing, trading and management, transport, marketing, retailing, export, and so on.

Ibrahim
is a development expert based in Abuja

Virucidine is a promising herbal therapy, but requires further tests, writes TUNDE OLOFINTILA

ABUAD HERBAL VIRUCIDINE

When Scientists from the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR) Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD), and other stakeholders converged in the hallowed bowel of the NIMR Auditorium on April 18, 2023, little did anyone know that it would be a day that would be greeted with different pleasant observations, effusive praises and commendable reactions. It is a fact that different people react to different stimuli in various ways, depending on their state of mind and/or their professional callings. This may have informed the way the Chairman of Lagos State Traditional Medicine Board, Prof. Adebukunola Adefule-Ositelu, reacted to the presentation of the ABUAD Herbal Virucidine Liquid. In her goodwill message after listening to the presentations by Prof. Babatunde Salako, Director-General of NIMR, Prof. Ayodele Ajayi, a member of the Board of Trustees in charge of Research, Prof. Olaposi Omotuyi, ABUAD's Director of Research & Development, Prof. Adefule-Ositelu simply went spiritual when she said: "With what Baba Afe Babalola

and his University have done to make this country proud, this is a day I can visualize the Almighty God smiling from heaven". Relating her pleasant and reassuring experiences with herbal formulations over the years which have kept her standing till today, she added: "I am so happy that this is happening before our very eyes today. With what we have seen here today, what we need is to collaborate, work together and begin to develop our various herbal formulations into effective medications. "This is the time for us to rethink and unite. This is the time we need to change our attitude and graduate away from our brainwashed position that using our herbal formulations is fetish and occultic. We need to promote our own because if we don't, nobody will do it for us. "This is the time for us to reconsider our parameters because we cannot continue to live by the standard of others. When those who colonized us came, they thought they would be seeing dead bodies everywhere on the streets. But they were shocked when they met life, peace and abundance in our midst which they later messed up. "We must appreciate from today that when we stand firm on our feet, we will remain unshakable because we know of a fact that we are not in any way inferior to any race or people, we are all born equal. However, we need to value ourselves because we are very valuable. Enough of colonialism. God has created us great".

Shortly after the deadly Covid-19 made an incursion into the world and ravaged the globe for a better part of 2020 and changed the educational, political and economic as well as the medical equations of the world, Scientists in ABUAD went to work and came up with the Herbal Virucidine Liquid which Medical Research Regulatory Authorities such as the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration & Control (NAFDAC), and NIMR have endorsed as safe, effective and tolerable against Covid-19. Earlier at the public presentation of the herbal formulation in NIMR on April 18, 2023, Salako urged the federal government to look inwards and exploit available expertise and collaborations towards developing indigenous solutions and producing effective products to tackle the country's numerous health challenges. The NIMR boss recalled that an independent evaluation of the safety and efficacy of the ABUAD herbal mixture which had earlier been approved by NAFDAC as a herbal immune booster and antioxidant, showed that it has potential to be registered as a treatment for SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). His words: "We want to make people aware of the success that we have made, especially as the drug that we are looking at is home-grown. So, it is like the Nigerian home-grown solution for a disease that has ravaged the world. "Even though we are at a preliminary stage, our findings show that this is very promising and what we need to do is to move on to the next stage which is to conduct the same study in larger number of people, and it is afterwards that the Regulatory Agency will be confident to register it as a treatment for COVID-19. "For now, we see it as a promising drug. What we can say today is that we have a herbal therapy that is looking promising and requires further tests. The Phase one and early Phase two trials were done here. What we have been doing in Nigeria is the Phase three trials because we haven't been developing our own drugs in the past years. Introducing the herbal product, the Director, Institute for Drug Research & Development (IDRD), S.E. Bogoro Centre, ABUAD, Professor Olaposi Omotuyi, said the ABUAD Virucidine Liquid was submitted for research in Traditional, Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CRTCAM) for acute and sub-acute toxicity study and also the NIMR for further testing. Giving details of the formulation, Omotuyi said the medication is composed of 85% Kalanchoe pinnata concentrate, traditionally used for the management of various ailments in South-Western Nigeria and reputed to have some antiviral activities, 5% Ethanol and 10% deionized water. According to him, the significance of the product is that Nigerian do not need to wait on the Western world to solve their problems, especially as it concerns healthcare. He said, "Everyone in the world is looking for a drug to cure COVID-19 and Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, in Nigeria, is one of the major universities that developed something for virus. We gave it to research institutes to test for us and that is what NIMR has done." He described the certification as a confirmation of the efficacy of research work ongoing in ABUAD, as he further assured that the university is ready to launch the production of the Virucidine Liquid on a massive scale. A Professor of Therapeutics & Pharmacology, Omotuyi said the ABUAD Virucidine Liquid could be safely taken by anyone. "Those who have been vaccinated can also take it for protection from any kind of sudden illness. Virucidine is just a tip of what can come out of ABUAD, this is telling the possibility and the capacity available and the federal government can come and partner with ABUAD for development in areas of indigenous solution."

Olofintila
is the Director, Corporate Affairs of ABUAD

Editor, Editorial Page **PETER ISHAKA**
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EDITORIAL

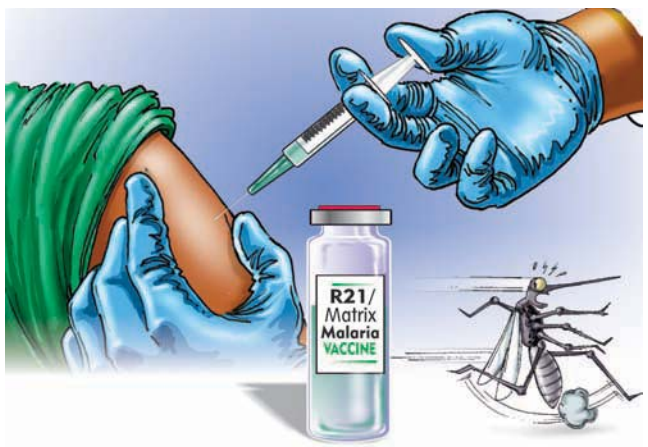
TIME TO ERADICATE MALARIA

The new malaria vaccine is welcome. But more should also be done to test the efficacy of traditional medicinal products on malaria

The provisional approval for the R21 / Matrix malaria vaccine developed by scientists at Oxford University is a step in the right direction. As stakeholders mark the World Malaria Day 2023 under the theme "Time to deliver zero malaria: invest, innovate, implement", any measure that would help in eradicating Malaria has both public health and socio-economic benefits for the country. "The brief on the approval of the R21 Malaria vaccine has been communicated to the minister of health and national primary health care development agency for appropriate actions toward immunisation in the respective population," according to the Director-General of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC).

However, as much as we commend the recommendation of this new vaccine, it is not a silver bullet. There have also been several programmes and initiatives to combat the disease. In 2000, the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) slogan was launched with fanfare. But the challenge persists. What makes the situation particularly worrisome is that there is a significant slowdown in global funding of anti-malaria campaigns and health budgets at both the federal and subnational levels may not be able to accommodate the amount of money needed for the new vaccines. Yet, to the extent that defeating malaria is critical to minimising poverty and improving maternal and child health, Nigeria cannot afford to lag in dealing with the scourge.

Since it is estimated that about 75 per cent of the populace still prefer to solve their health problems through traditional healers, a home-grown solution for the prevention and cure of malaria is important. Nigerian health authorities can do a lot more along this line to eradicate malaria. The National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD) should undertake scientific research to generate evidence for the safety, efficacy and quality of the traditional medicinal products and practices, particularly those on malaria. The NIPRD can also work with states that have established traditional medicine boards because what is needed now is stepping up action in "research and development" to modernise and standardise them.



Combating the disease requires multifaceted actions, and partnerships involving public and private, international, and civil society sectors

With the environmental conditions and associated ailments, which have all combined to make malaria a scourge for both the young and old, especially the millions of pregnant women and children under the age of five, the statistics of deaths from the disease remain startling high. For a preventable disease, the number of people who die annually from Malaria in our country is frightening. Nigeria, according to World Health Organisation (WHO), accounted for 31 per cent of Global Malaria deaths in 2021, with the ranking of the most afflicted. "Malaria is transmitted all over Nigeria; 76 per cent of the population live in high transmission areas, while 24 per cent live in low transmission areas," the report revealed. "The transmission season can last all year round in the south and about three months or less in the northern part of the country."

Malaria is a mosquito-borne infectious disease. Symptoms typically include fever, fatigue, vomiting and headaches. In severe cases, it can cause yellow skin, seizures, coma, or death, as it is the case in Nigeria. Experts believe the number of Malaria death could be reduced drastically if Nigerians stopped embracing the disease as part of their lifestyle. Preventive measures include keeping clean environment, removing stagnant water, consistent use of insecticide treated nets and proper diagnosis before treatment.

Given the revelation by the World Bank that over the past decade 11 African countries have reduced malaria cases by more than 50 per cent, the Nigerian authorities must understand that combating the disease requires multifaceted actions and partnerships involving public and private, international, and civil society sectors. That should be the new resolve as we mark the 2023 World Malaria Day.

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Letters in response to specific publications in THISDAY should be brief (150-300 words) and straight to the point. Interested readers may send such letters along with their contact details to **opinion@thisdaylive.com.** We also welcome comments and opinions on topical local, national and international issues provided they are well-written and should also not be longer than (750-1000 words). They should be sent to **opinion@thisdaylive.com** along with photograph, email address and phone numbers of the writer.

LETTERS

HUDU ARI AND THE INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION

The Adamawa State Resident Electoral Commissioner, Hudu Ari stirred the hornet's nest during the just concluded supplementary election conducted on 15 April. Ari controversially declared Aisha Dahiru Binani of APC as the winner of the election when collation of the results was ongoing. It took the intervention of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) headquarters, Abuja, to douse the tension that would have snowballed to political crisis in Adamawa State. The National headquarters described Ari's action as null and void and usurpation of the returning officer's duty. It later invited the REC to Abuja and subsequently ordered him to stay away from Adamawa State supplementary election. Since Ari's false declaration of the result, many political pundits have continued to question the rationale behind his actions. The questions begging for answers are: Did Ari receive an order from above to declarare Binani winner of the election? Was he financially induced to make such unconstitutional and illegal declaration? Interestingly, INEC calls for Ari's investigation will reveal the truth of the matter sooner than later.

With the various reforms INEC is undergoing in order to conduct free, fair and credible elections in the country, the likes of Ari are living in the moon to contemplate tampering with elections result. Hudu Ari who is a lawyer must have known the electoral laws and what his actions constituted. His declaration joke has come at a time when opposition parties expressed doubts about the outcome of the last presidential election in which Bola Ahmed Tinubu, won. Both Atiku Abubakar of PDP and Peter Obi of LP who rejected the result have taken their case to election tribunal. Little wonder, the leadership of the electoral umpire swiftly countered Ari's rude behavior in order to save its name. The unprofessionalism displayed by the former Adamawa REC should serve as a wake-up call to INEC to continue to monitor its officers. Some of its officers can compromise the system in anticipation of financial rewards.

The appointment of resident electoral commissioners RECs) rests on the shoulder of Mr President. The next president should appoint commissioners who are respectable, people without questionable character. There is the need to flush out the likes of Ari in INEC. Since 2015, the conduct of election has changed in the country. Whoever wants to drag us back to old INEC in which peoples' mandates are sold to the highest bidders should not have a place in the commission. Election is a serious business. People with dubious character should not be allowed to supervise elections. The action of Ari has nearly eroded the gains recorded by INEC in the last election. Let us have a credible electoral umpire.

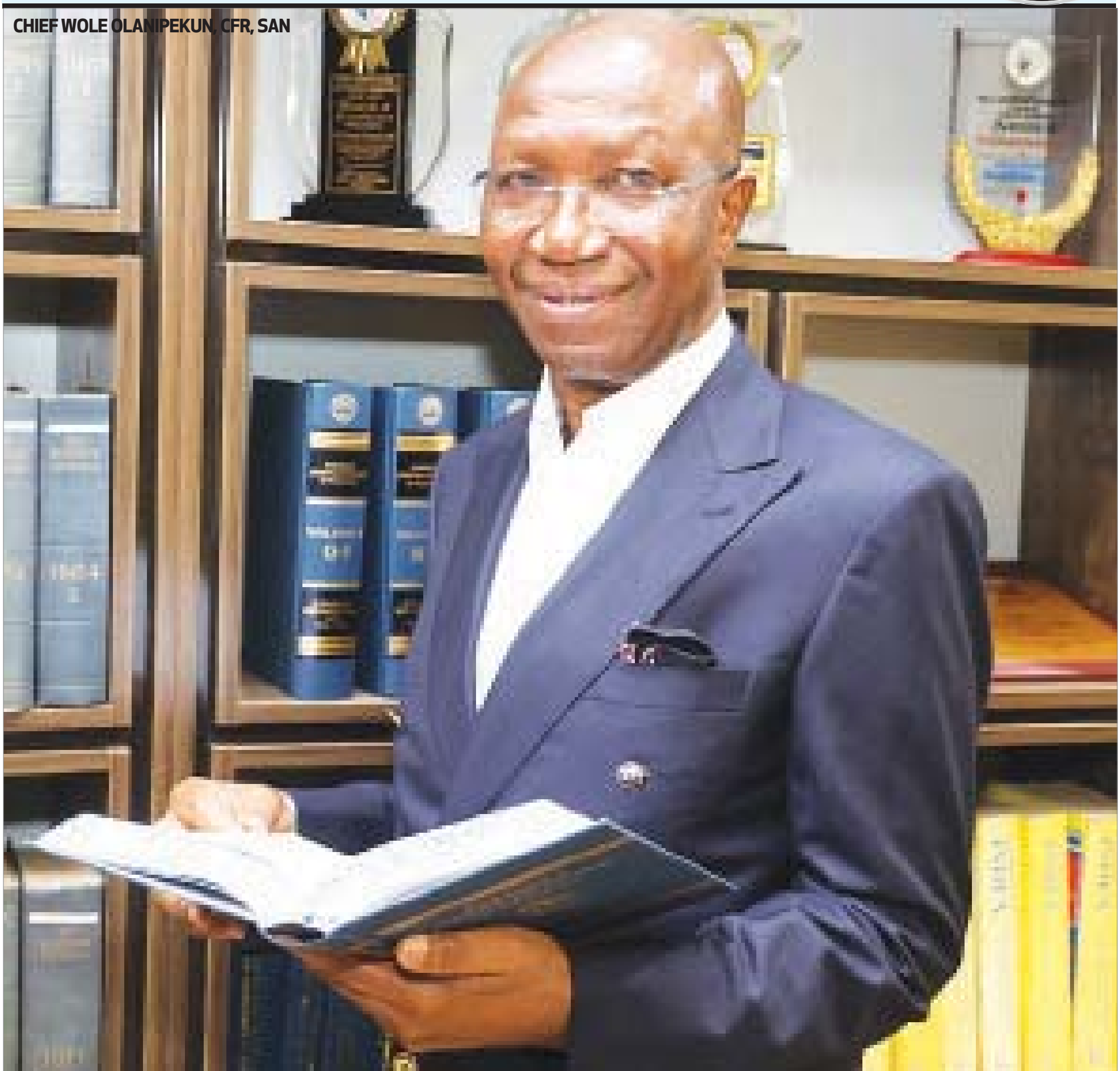
Ibrahim Mustapha,
Pambegua, Kaduna State

LAWYER

TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2023

A THISDAY WEEKLY PULLOUT

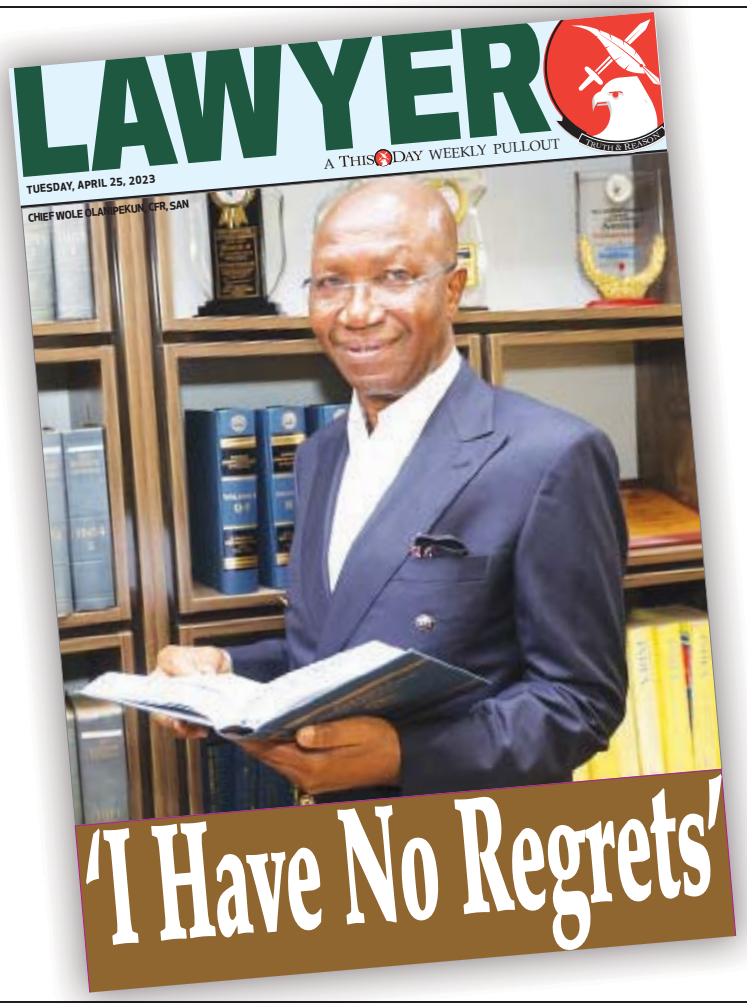
TRUTH & REASON



CHIEF WOLE OLANIPEKUN, CFR, SAN

'I Have No Regrets'

IN THIS EDITION



Resolution of Conflicting Oral Evidence before the Court by Documentary Evidence

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QUOTABLES

'I have lost a bit of confidence, in what the courts have been doing lately…. I don't have the sort of confidence that I used to have in the Judiciary….The Supreme Court is unpredictable.' ***- Dr Olisa Agbakoba, SAN, former President, Nigerian Bar Association***

Women and IP: A Toast to Women's Creative and Innovative Genus

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'Sitting Governors and a sitting President, could not deliver their States for their political parties. In spite of the challenges, a number of positive developments have been recorded for our country.' ***- Femi Falana, SAN***

THISDAY LAWYER

ONIKEPO BRAITHWAITE: EDITOR, JUDE IGBANOI: DEPUTY EDITOR,
PETER TAIWO, STEVE AYA: REPORTERS

2023 Polls: Between Emotions and Legal Provisions

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The Advocate

"But, in law, a fine is a punishment that may be given, as a result of being found guilty of committing an offence. This means that for an individual to be fined, he/she must be charged with an offence, found guilty and convicted…..The aforementioned attached court process doesn't list President-Elect Tinubu as a Defendant, let alone him being charged for any offence, convicted, sentenced or fined"

Happy 70th Birthday to the 'Entrepreneur of Entrepreneurs', Dr Michael Adenuga GCON

Before I go into the 'Word for Today', permit me to celebrate my dear Egbon (Big Brother), Dr Michael Adeniyi Agbolade Ishola Adenuga, CSG, GCON who attains the biblical age of 'three score and ten' on April 29, 2023. I met him about 40 years ago, just before his 30th birthday, and over the years, I have watched him evolve into 'A Shining Star of Africa' (not just Nigeria), a Banker, Industrialist, Telecoms Giant, one of the biggest players in Nigerian Oil & Gas, Real Estate, generally an 'Entrepreneur Par Extraordinaire', and a Philanthropist. Dr Adenuga is worthy of emulation; he is one of the largest employers of labour in Africa, one who has invested solidly in Nigeria, instead of engaging in capital flight, the hallmark of many wealthy Nigerians who make their money here and immediately proceed to invest it all in Dubai, Europe, etc, instead of reinvesting their funds in Nigeria. In any event, with all the negativity that is constantly being peddled about Nigeria, I decided that it would be refreshing to celebrate Dr Adenuga, a fine entrepreneur whose achievements serve as a positive ambassador for our country, one who President Macron of France, in honouring him with his country's highest decoration, referred to as "A true model for Africa". As we say in Yoruba, *"Ohun a ni l'an gbe larugè" (It is what we have, that we carry with high esteem).* Congratulations and Happy 70th Birthday Sir.

Election Controversy at its Worst

Since 1999, during the Fourth Republic of our dear country Nigeria, this 2023 election cycle seems to be different from the last six. It has been riddled with so much more controversy, bitterness and a feeling of unease, and sadly, misconceptions which have unfortunately been spread via social media by our learned colleagues and educated people, who seem to be driven more by emotions than the provisions of the law, and have contributed in no small measure to heating up the polity with their warped interpretations of the law and facts. A couple of WhatsApp forums which I aware of became so toxic, that some members chose to leave platforms which they had been a part of for years. Repeating here, some of the inappropriate posts that I have seen on WhatsApp, will be reducing myself to the level of those whom I am complaining about. Instead of promoting the Preamble of the **1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended)(the Constitution),** to consolidate unity amongst Nigerians and live in harmony, these mischief makers are causing disaffection, and counterproductively encouraging the isolation of ethnic groups from each other, by their utterances. This is so very wrong. I condemn it. We are all Nigerians, and *'in brotherhood we should stand'*.

I believe that since my page enjoys wide readership spanning different continents, it is my duty to try to correct some of the misinformation that has been disseminated. People can't just behave like Donald J. Trump did when he didn't get his way and wasn't re-elected, filling the people with resentment to the point where he subtly instigated his supporters to more or less attempt a 'Palace' coup, based on baseless insinuations which couldn't be proven, and had no grounding in law. There is a popular saying that: ***"The law is an ass"***; and according to the Cambridge Dictionary, it means that ***"the legal system or a particular law is wrong or not good enough, and should be changed"***. It is crystal clear that, in the case of the Electoral Act 2022 (EA) it is not good enough, and some of the provisions of the Constitution with regard to elections, particularly qualification and disqualification in order to contest for elective office, the aforementioned saying about the law being an ass is apt. Will the 10th National Assembly correct all the anomalies that have become apparent in the EA from its first outing in the 2023 elections, or will it be business as usual? If the latter is the case, our electoral process will never improve, and the courts will continue to be overwhelmed with pre-election matters and election petitions every election cycle. It is our hope that the 10th National Assembly will do the needful; for example, if an electronic voting process is most desirable, then the law must specifically provide for it, define what the process entails and make it mandatory.

Various Electoral Issues

During the two election cycles which have occurred since I became the Editor of this esteemed publication, I have dealt with various topics concerning different election issues which occupied the front burner of Nigeria's discourse; in fact, I'm almost an expert in election matters! From the sequence of elections debate during the 8th National Assembly, to inconclusive elections after the 2018 Osun Gubernatorial election; to dual citizenship with regard to an individual vying for elective office, and citizenship in general; to electronic transmission of results before the eventual enactment of the EA, definition of a Public Servant, Party Defection, Place Holders after the 2022 Party Primaries, and qualification and disqualification of candidates who intend to run for elective positions, particularly that of President, the different types of Forfeiture (in relation to the US matter concerning the President-Elect, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu), to mention but a few.

Following the conduct of the 2023 elections, I have also discussed several burning issues, like whether the issue of INEC's failure to transmit election results electronically in real time was fatal to the elections - I concluded that it isn't, having perused the EA which more or less provides for a manual electoral process; and that of Section 134(2)(b) of the Constitution and whether the provision could be interpreted to mean that 25% of the votes cast in FCT is a requirement for a Presidential candidate to be declared as the winner of an election. I concluded that it isn't, having studied the Constitution and case law including **Awolowo v Shagari & Ors (1979) LPELR-653(SC) and Ibori v Ogboru & Ors 2006 6 N.W.L.R. Part 920.** If you need 25% of 36 oranges and 1 lemon, and it is a requirement that the lemon be treated as an orange, then treating the lemon any different from the oranges, will certainly result in a different interpretation of the requirement. See Section 299 of the Constitution; **Awolowo v Shagari (Supra) and Buhari v Obasanjo 2005 13 N.W.L.R. Part 941 Page 53 at 205-206.**

Dual Citizenship & Forfeiture

The issue of Dual Citizenship and Forfeiture do not seem to have been laid to rest and remain topics of hot public debate; and it seems that are still some misconceptions which must be cleared, in order to prevent people from being misinformed. In **Ikengboju Dele Gboluga v Hon. Albert Akintoye & 3 Ors Appeal No. CA/K/EPT/NAS/286/2019,** the Court of Appeal held that a ***holistic reading of Section 66(1)(a) of the Constitution*** (in pari materia with Sections 137(1)(a)(President) & 182(1)(a)(Governor) of the Constitution) ***does not prohibit a person from holding the citizenship of another country or from contesting for electoral positions.*** Also see the case of **Ogbeide v Osula 2004 12 N.W.L.R. Part 886 Page 127.** The hullabaloo about the President-Elect being a Guinean citizen, diplomatic or otherwise, goes to no issue. It doesn't even make sense for the Constitution to allow dual citizenship, and then turn around to disqualify a Nigerian by birth who has dual citizenship from running for elective office - it would be contradictory.

In my piece of **29/11/22** titled ***'Forfeiture and Its Many Variants'***, I discussed different types of Forfeiture under American Law - Civil, Criminal and Administrative. Administrative forfeiture is an action in rem (against property), which allows an agency to seize property without judicial process, if there's probable cause to do so; and while I maintained that the three types of forfeiture all had criminal elements, I made a clear distinction between criminal and civil forfeiture stating thus: ***"Criminal Forfeiture obtains against a Defendant who is convicted of a criminal offence, and forfeiture in this regard, is part of the Defendant's sentence…..In the case of Civil Forfeiture, the difference is that no criminal conviction is required, and unlike criminal forfeiture in which the proceeding is against a person, civil forfeiture is proceedings against property which is derived from criminal activities or proceeds of a crime"***; in short, civil forfeiture is also an action in rem.

A Comparison with Woodbery's Case

Last week, we featured a news story about 'Woodbery', Hushpuppi's Partner-in-crime who pleaded guilty to a one count wire fraud charge in a US District Court of Northern Illinois. He entered into a plea agreement which includes the repayment of $8 million scammed from several companies, and the forfeiture of cars and watches to the US Government. I downloaded the Criminal Complaint brought against Olalekan Jacob Ponle aka Woodbery, where he was listed as the Defendant in the case. Even though Woodbery entered a plea agreement, he was charged, pleaded guilty to committing an offence and convicted.

If this scenario is placed side by side with the American court process that concerns President-Elect Tinubu which has made the rounds, it is obvious that the latter is an 'action in rem', as President-Elect Tinubu was not listed as a Defendant in that case, nor was he charged like Woodbery; it was the funds in various accounts held by him and two other companies that were listed as the Defendant, and referred to therein as 'Defendant Funds'.

Undoubtedly, it is shameful for one's name to be associated with crime or linked to narcotics, but the truth of the matter is that, fortunately or unfortunately (depending on which side of the divide one is), in the case of President-Elect Tinubu, his issue does not appear to meet the threshold for disqualification under Section 137(1)(d) or (e) of the Constitution. The issue of the law being an ass, again, is apt here, as the argument that what may qualify as being immoral or distasteful is not necessarily unlawful, fits the bill in this circumstance.

A perusal of one of the Presidential election petitions which attached the aforementioned American court process that it seeks to use to disqualify President-Elect Tinubu, referred to the forfeiture of $460,000 as a fine. But, in law, a fine is a punishment that may be given, as a result of being found guilty of committing an offence. This means that for an individual to be fined, he/she must be charged with an offence, found guilty and convicted, then punished. According to the online ***"lawdictionary"*** a Fine is defined thus: ***"To impose a pecuniary punishment or mulct. To sentence a person convicted of an offence to pay a penalty in money"***. The aforementioned attached court process doesn't list President-Elect Tinubu as a Defendant, let alone him being charged for any offence, convicted, sentenced or fined. As Lawyers, we know that doing something as simple as using the word 'or' instead of 'and', or inserting a comma where there shouldn't be one, can change the meaning of a sentence, let alone unilaterally changing the word in the American court process from 'Forfeiture' to 'Fine' in the election petition, where the American court process doesn't so state. They mean two different things! In **Buhari v Obasanjo (Supra)** the Supreme Court held that ***"In the interpretation of a statute, once the words used are clear, ordinary meanings of the words in it are given to them".*** I believe this literal rule of interpretation must be extrapolated, and used in this case of the insertion and misuse of the word 'fine' as a substitute for 'forfeiture'.

Conclusion

I call upon Nigerians, especially we the learned and educated ones, to resist the temptation of fuelling resentment amongst the people, especially based on the baseless. Of what benefit is it to any of us, if our country is needlessly plunged into disarray? The law is not what we want it to be, based on our emotions, preferences, ethnicity, religion etc. So, why mislead the people into believing so? When matters are then decided in accordance to the law, mischief makers have already set a stage for bringing the Judiciary into disrepute if final decisions do not go their way, as a result of the false narrative they have already spread. While freedom of thought and expression remain sacrosanct by virtue of Sections 38 & 39 of the Constitution, we must refrain from throwing all caution to the wind based on things which may at best be misinterpretation and fallacy, in the interest of public order (see Section 45 of the Constitution). It is obvious that a large number of people have lost some confidence in the Judiciary, which is the venue for the ventilation of electoral issues, and there is no time better than this, for the Judiciary to restore this confidence, by showing that Nigerians can depend on it to handle all election petitions, judiciously and judicially, without fear or favour.

Happy 70th Birthday, Dr Michael Adeniyi Adenuga, CSG, GCON

LAW REPORT

Resolution of Conflicting Oral Evidence before the Court by Documentary Evidence

Facts

The Appellant (as the Vice Chairman of the Akure North Local Government Council) was made the Chairman of the Planning Committee set up by the then Chairman of Akure North Local Government Council, to organise events to host the visit of the then Governor of Ondo State to Akure North Local Government Council. In furtherance of this purpose, the sum of N1,300,000.00 was approved and released to the Committee. The Appellant and another person were alleged to have misappropriated N70,000.00 and N90,000.00 respectively, out of the money disbursed for the Governor's visit. This was what formed the basis of a three-count charge, for which the Appellant was charged before the High Court of Ondo State. At the end of the trial, the Appellant was found guilty on all the three counts, and sentenced to five years imprisonment with an option of N2 million fine on each count.

While the Appellant paid the aggregate sum of N6million as fine, he filed an appeal at the Court of Appeal (the "lower court") challenging the decision of the trial court. The lower court allowed the appeal on counts 2 and 3 but upheld the conviction of the Appellant on count 1 of the charge of making false statement in respect of N70,000.00 belonging to the Akure North Local Government Council and received by him, by claiming that part of the money was disbursed to security agents of the Governor of Ondo State for the fuelling of their vehicles, contrary to Section 16 of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act 2000. Aggrieved, the Appellant filed a further appeal to the Supreme Court.

Issues for Determination

The Appellant submitted two issues for determination, which were adopted by the Respondent, for the Apex Court's determination, to wit:

1. Whether the lower court was not wrong in holding that the Appellant did not suffer miscarriage of justice or breach of right to fair hearing or fair trial, by the way the learned trial Judge wrote the judgement in this case?

2. Whether the lower court was not wrong to have affirmed the conviction of the Appellant on count one of the information in this case?

Arguments

Counsel for the Appellant submitted on the first issue, that the lower court erred in law when it held that the approach of the trial Judge to make damaging conclusions against the Appellant before reviewing the case of the parties, did not occasion a denial of fair hearing or miscarriage of justice. He cited **OSUAGWU v THE STATE (2013) ALL FWLR (PT. 672) at 1625-1626** in support.

In rebuttal, the Respondent's counsel contended that while there is a recommended style of writing judgements, the individual style of a Judge is not conclusive proof that the judgement is wrong. Counsel submitted that the Appellant was wrong to equate the manner the judgement was written with the premeditation of guilt and lack of fair hearing, in neglect of the weighty evidence against the Appellant. Respondent's counsel further argued that, the emphasis should be that the prosecution should prove its case beyond reasonable doubt. He relied on **IBEH v STATE (20010 2 ACLR at 386.**

On the second issue, the Appellant's counsel argued that the trial court failed to properly evaluate the oral testimonies of the relevant witnesses on count 1. His argument was that the Appellant signed Exhibit 6C or F in good faith, on behalf of the Chief Security Officer to the then Governor (PW2), Personal Assistant to the Governor (PW4) and Aide De-Camp (PW7) as acknowledgment that the money was delivered to them. Counsel further argued that the determinant factor of whether money was disbursed should have been the evidence adduced by both parties and since the evidence from DW2 and DW3 (the Appellant's witnesses) go to confirm that money was indeed disbursed to the Governor's aides, count 1 could not be said to have been proved beyond reasonable doubt. On this premise, he urged the Court to allow the appeal, discharge and acquit the Appellant.

Reacting to the foregoing, the Respondent's counsel submitted that the signing for another is indicated with "for" and as such, the person who signs for another assumes full responsibility for the implication of such document signed. He argued that by the Exhibit 6C or F which were meant to be signed by the beneficiaries of the disbursements as proof that they received the money, the Appellant had only signed on behalf of others who claimed that they did not collect their money. He submitted that it was not the law to debunk reliable evidence in a document, with contradictory oral testimonies. He cited **IKEM v VIDAH PACKAGING LTD (2011) ALL FWLR (PT. 601) 1506.**

Honourable Uwani Musa Abba Aji, JSC

In the Supreme Court of Nigeria
Holden at Abuja
On Friday, the 3rd day of March, 2023

Before His Lordship
Kudirat Motonmori Olatokunbo Kekere-Ekun
Uwani Musa Abba Aji
Ibrahim Mohammed Musa Saulawa
Adamu Jauro
Emmanuel Akomaye Agim
Justices, Supreme Court
SC/401C/2015

Between

GBENGA OJO — **APPELLANT**

And

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA — **RESPONDENT**

(Lead Judgement delivered by Honourable Uwani Musa Abba Aji, JSC)

Court's Judgement and Rationale

In determining the first issue, as to the style adopted by the trial court in writing its judgement by first coming to specific conclusions on the guilt of Appellant on counts 2 and 3 before a review and evaluation of the case of the parties, the Apex Court held ***that once a judgement complies with the constitutional provision and components/requirements of a valid judgement, the judgement cannot be attacked by a party on ground of style of writing, save where there is a miscarriage of justice. What is essential is that the Judge should show a clear understanding of the facts in the case and the issues involved, as well as knowledge of the applicable law, and from all this, he is able to draw the right conclusions and make a correct finding on the evidence before him. Once these essential elements are present in the judgement, it will not matter what method was employed in writing the judgement.*** The Court referred to its decision in **REVEREND KING v STATE (2016) LPELR-40046 (SC) PP.56 PARA. B.**

The Court held that ***although the trial court's approach may appear to be some sort of pre-judgement or premeditated conclusion which ought not to have been done by the trial Judge, it has not been shown to have occasioned any miscarriage of justice to the Appellant in any way. The "damaging conclusions" insinuated by the Appellant cannot affect the validity of the judgement delivered, except the Appellant has suffered some injustice therefrom.***

In its determination of the second issue, the Apex Court considered the veracity of the Appellant's testimony that he signed Exhibit 6C or F on behalf of PW2, PW4 and PW7 as proof that the sums were delivered to them because they were in a hurry to leave with the Governor, vis-à-vis conflicting evidence by the said PW2, PW4 and PW7 that they did not receive any money from the Appellant. The Court held that ***where there are conflicting or different versions of oral testimonies from the prosecution and the defence, it is documentary evidence that can resolve such a conflict; and similarly, where there are conflicts in documentary evidence, oral evidence is called to resolve same. In essence, where documentary evidence supports oral testimony, oral testimony becomes more credible.***

The Apex Court reasoned that given that the oral testimonies of PW2, PW4 and PW7 that the money was not disbursed to them by the Appellant, sharply conflicts with the oral testimonies of the Appellant's witnesses that the money was disbursed to them, it was only documentary evidence that could resolve the conflict. This is premised on the position of the law that, documentary evidence serves as a hanger from which to assess oral testimony. The Court placed reliance on its decision in **ODUNLAMI v NIGERIAN NAVY (2013) LPELR-20701 (SC) (PP. 32 PARAS C.** In the result, the Court held that ***an examination of Exhibit 6C or F clearly shows that the Appellant signed money for himself and not on behalf of the Governor's aides. The conflict in the oral testimonies before the trial court as to the purported disbursements must therefore, be resolved to the effect that the Appellant did not give the Governor's aides the money allocated to them as he claimed, based on the content and representation in Exhibit 6C or F. The court held further that in line with the principle that the burden is on the prosecution in a criminal charge to establish the guilt of an accused person beyond reasonable doubt, the evidence before the trial court showed beyond reasonable doubt that the Appellant made a false statement regarding the disbursement of money to those particular security aides for the fuelling of their vehicles.*** The Court of Appeal was thus, right, to affirm the Appellant's conviction on count 1 of the charge.

Appeal Dismissed.

Representation

Dr Olukayode Ajulo, Esq. with Tauyyib Kayode Shittu, Esq. and Patrick Emmanuel, Esq. for the Appellant

O. G. Iwuagwu, Esq., Chief Legal Officer ICPC, with Z. S. Oass, Esq. CLO ICPC for the Respondent.

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"….where there are conflicting or different versions of oral testimonies from the prosecution and the defence, it is documentary evidence that can resolve such a conflict; and similarly, where there are conflicts in documentary evidence, oral evidence is called to resolve same"

GUEST COLUMNIST

PROFESSOR ADEBAMBO ADEWOPO SAN

World IP Day 2023

Women and IP: A Toast to Women's Creative and Innovative Genus

Introduction

Once again, the global community marks World Intellectual Property (IP) Day tomorrow, 26 April, 2023. In marking this year's World IP Day, World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), UN Agency for IP, has turned the theme on the jewels of the world - Women. Significantly, WIPO's visions of IP have continued to explore the boundaries of creativity and innovation in the shaping of global order. One necessary site in the IP and development dynamics, is the concept of gender parity. The theme ***'Women and IP: Accelerating Innovation and Creativity'*** acknowledges women in a special way – a sustained realisation of the role of women in society. It is a concrete reminder of the integrity of our common humanity, that thrives in its diversity and completeness. Creativity and innovation know no bounds, neither do they have tribe, gender or colour. For the most part, the role of women in society is both historic and epic. Historic because the pages of history have always been written on women, of diverse backgrounds, who through their stories, are never to be forgotten for generations to come. Epic because the same history has revealed the catalog of women, who through their landmark creations, have contributed to the flourishing of society; women whose geniuses have changed the world in different fields of human endeavour - the arts and entertainment, science, technology, industry, and more.

Women's Achievements

Coming on the heels of celebrating the youths last year, this year, and appropriately so, recognises the global momentum and the gains that women have garnered since the beginning of the millennium, especially since Beijing. Clearly, the world's women have come of age – particularly from the industrial age to the present knowledge era. Since the first patent obtained by a woman over two centuries ago, women have steadily showed up in the arena of innovation, creativity and all facets of human development. Their voice has continued to resonate. Women have been champions of history, as they have been casualties of war and the inhumanity of mankind.

Focus of WIPO

The global debate on women and the pervasive culture of gender bias, needs more concrete action. In this regard, the focus of WIPO once again draws global attention beyond rhetoric. It reinforces existing global advocacy for gender inclusiveness and creates an 'opportunity to celebrate all talented women around the world' who continue to unleash boundless energyand ingenuity everywhere. Only last month, the UN Women, the global agency specially created for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, in the 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67), reaffirmed, among others, the 'role of technology and innovation, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women' This is indicative of the spirit of an inclusive and 'connected world for women and girls in all their diversity.'

An important factor also lies in the numerical strength of women, who account for about half of the global population, and by that, also account for a significant share of the global stock of talent. This has made the acceleration of women's ingenuity, even more compelling. Of the current world population of over 8 billion, the female population of about 3.9 billion represents about 49.5%. A similar global ratio is reflected in Nigeria with a female population of 107.5 million, representing about 50% of over 200 million. This numeral strength matters as it does in the weight of the number and its representation in the global ensemble of talents that exists around us. In different regions, the knowledge landscape is replete with women creators, inventors, and entrepreneurs who are making ground-breaking contribution and shaping the world through their 'imagination, ingenuity, and hard work.' From the invention of the dishwasher in homes (Josephine Cochran); the making of solar cells, fibre optic cables, portable fax machines, touch-tone telephones, caller ID and call waiting (Shirley Jackson); the development of Global Positioning System (GPS), a precursor to the navigation system we enjoy today (Gladys West); the first discovery of the DNA structure (Rosalind Franklin); to the development of stem cell isolation technique that has spurned advances in oncology (Ann Tsukamoto); and many other revolutionary inventions, women have always contributed to the uplift of the society and standard of living. Generations in the fields of art, music, film, and television have featured iconic women brands and characters too numerous to mention. Nigeria and Africa have consistently remained at the cutting of creativity. From the first Nigerian woman author, Flora Nwapa to Chimamanda Adichie and many others, the roll call is extensive. Prodigious talents in the ilk of Genevieve Nnaji, Omotola Jalade Ekeinde, Sade, Tiwa Savage, Asa, and a flourishing company of Nollywood and music thespians fill the contemporary global stage and screen. Entertainment business has produced the likes of Mo Abudu, Bolanle Austen-Peters, late Peace Ayim Osigwe, and Queen Ronke Ademiluyi-Ogunwusi, just to mention a few. Those are women of irrepressible genus, who have continued to make their marks and accelerate Nigeria's creative economy. Nigerian women have equally occupied the innovation space across different sectors - scientific, biotech, financial services and fintech, health, education, computing and frontier technologies, and more.

Professor Adebambo Adewopo, SAN

However, all the accomplishments are not without challenges. As WIPO has noted, women continue to face the 'challenges of accessing the knowledge, skills, resources, and support they need to thrive'. The challenge of access to knowledge is a global complex that has remained a test of intellectual property in its ability to maintain a strategic balance between protecting and accessing creativity and innovation and their associated bundle of legal rights. The pervasive culture of gender bias and the dearth of access to funding, infrastructure, information, education, and more particularly within the local communities due to its largely subsistent level and informal nature of trade have limited the creative and innovative capacity of women. In this dynamic, women are severely affected.

The rural women, for example, in faraway Damboa, Borno State, are constantly in search of new and better methods of harvesting, producing, or marketing their farm produce, or designing their handcrafts in order to support their families, while still living in the fear of Boko Haram terrorists. The young female innovators in the high-tech hub of Lagos or Nairobi are constantly writing new codes or researching new inventions at the edge of artificial intelligence (AI), while grappling with the uncertainty of IP protection for new technologies that are meant to bring reward to innovation. Women actors and performers are not left behind in the challenges of the IP system. Yet the IP institution has remained the cornerstone of protection and promotion of creativity and innovation on which creatives and innovators rely. Nonetheless, the complexity of the global IP system has not been completely supportive, even worse for women creators in the remote regions who are at the receiving end of lack of access to knowledge and technology, and other needs required to scale their talents and innovative capacities.

"An important factor also lies in the numerical strength of women, who account for about half of the global population, and by that, also account for a significant share of the global stock of talent. This has made the acceleration of women's ingenuity, even more compelling"

Copyright Act 2022 & Its Support

That is the reason law and policy reform are important source of support, where relevant IP system offers adequate standard of protection. The prospect of the new Copyright Act 2022, is germane in the context of women and IP in Nigeria's creative industry. For the first time in the history of copyright law in Nigeria, the Act, anchored on fundamental objectives, has effectively strengthened the legal framework for the promotion of the creative economy and repositioned Nigeria's core cultural industries through enhanced rights and access in the digital environment. For women, that support is vital to achieving access and the incentives access brings to accelerating their intellectual enterprise. The support is not limited to law alone. It extends to other important initiatives such as training, mentoring, workshops, technical assistance, and providing information and useful tools that will help accelerate women's creative and innovative capacity. For the indigenous peoples, basic information on the relationship between traditional knowledge (TK) and traditional cultural expressions has become germane to the understanding of maintaining access to knowledge and to the just reward for their intellectual efforts. The various initiatives combine with the law to help in building the capacity of women innovators, creators, and entrepreneurs in local communities, tech hubs and SMEs to make strategic and effective use of IP Rights (IPRs).

Conclusion

In conclusion, not only do we recognise creators and innovators, but we also recognise those who are responsible for protecting, educating, and promoting their IP. May I, in this wise, single out four women forerunners of IP law practice and teaching in this clime - Marlies Alan, Uwa Ohiku, Professor Jemila Nasir and Professor Joke Oyewunmi - among the vibrant company of IP women, who have continued to accelerate IP for the present and future generations of IP lawyers and academics. When women are supported, the benefits are enormous; from the family to children who are the next generation of creatives and innovators, and to society at large. They are the natural candidates for unleashing Africa's largely informal sector and this makes supporting women creatives and innovators more compelling and profitable for society. With their increasing role in different spheres of life, they deserve to be celebrated in the aspirations of accelerating innovation and creativity. It is certain that women will continue to make their mark in their timeless creations that have not only provided solutions to social problems but in offering of their talents that have been used to improve the human condition, bringing succour and happiness to people of the world. In a world faced with rapid social, economic, technological, and political changes more profound than the industrial revolution of the last century, women in their innate capacity and instinct can nurture an orderly, ethical, and humane value on the paths of global sustainability. Women are the heartbeat of human race, and in a certain way, they truly make the world go round with their divinely endowed nature, passion, compassion, and genius. They are man's crowning glory and indeed the jewel of the world. We use this occasion of World IP Day to offer a toast to their tenacity and acceleration in the genres of creativity and innovation.

Professor Adebambo Adewopo, SAN, former Director General, Nigeria Copyright Commission; distinguished IP Chair at the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies and Partner, L & A Legal Consultants

Chief Olanipekun and Children

'I Have No Regrets'

When the history of the Nigerian legal profession is written, **Chief Wole Olanipekun, CFR, SAN** will undoubtedly occupy an enviable position in it. In his almost five decades at the Bar, he has left indelible imprints on the profession. He was Attorney-General of the old Ondo State in the military era, as well as President of the Nigerian Bar Association (2002-2004), leaving impactful legacies in both places. As he successfully concluded his tenure as the 50th Chairman of the Body of Benchers on March 30, 2023, the blazing Advocate opened up to **Onikepo Braithwaite and Jude Igbanoi** on his exciting journey through the labyrinths of a rather enchanting legal practice, his passion for education and uncommon philanthropism, as well as other topical issues

Having spent almost five decades at the Bar, what, from your perspective, are the highlights of your practice of law? Do you have any regrets? What would you have done differently?

I was lucky to be one of about three hundred of us that were called to the Bar in **July, 1976.** To all of us, it was a new dawn; a new beginning; a 'birthday' of sorts; and if you like, a day of open heavens. The **Chairman of the Body of Benchers,** who chaired the ceremony, was **Honourable Justice G. S. Sowemimo, GCON.** As a young lad, I particularly looked at the array of eggheads in the profession who lined out to call us to the **Bar,** they included **Honourable Justice Adetokunbo Ademola, GCFR,** former **CJN, Sir Danley Alexander,** former **CJN, Honourable Justice Augustine Nnamani, SAN,** former JSC, who was then the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, **Honourable Justice Mohammed Bello, GCON, Chief Toye Coker, SAN, Chief Dr. G. C. M. Onyuike, SAN, Chief T. O. S. Benson, CFR, SAN, Hon. Justice Atanda Fatai-Williams, GCON, Chief R.O.A. Akinjide, CON, SAN** and **Hon. Justice A.G. Irikefe, GCON. The likes of Alhaji A. G. F. Abdul-Razaq OFR, SAN, Hon. Justice Kayode Eso, CON, Chief F. R. A. Williams, CFR, QC, SAN** and **Hon. Justice Mamman Nasir, GCON,** were also in attendance. Right there, I gazed at the array of the potentates of the legal profession therein assembled, and inside me, I fervently prayed to God that come one day, I would be like them.

After we were called to the Bar, I proceeded therefrom to enlist for NYSC, and was subsequently posted to Ilorin, Kwara State. I did my primary assignment at the then Kwara State College of Technology (now Kwara State Polytechnic), where I lectured Accounting and Business Law Students in Company Law, Business Law and Legal Methods. It was after this service year, in July, 1977, that I forayed into legal practice, as a junior counsel in the Chambers of **Alhaji Akanbi Oniyangi & Co. at No. 107, Emir Road, Ilorin.** I was the first junior counsel to be employed at the Chambers, and my Principal, the late **Alhaji Akanbi Oniyangi,** treated me like his nephew, while I took him like a big uncle. I enjoyed my stay with him, as he gave me a free hand to explore the practice of law. The very first day he led me in court, we appeared before the **Honourable Justice Gilbert Obayan** in a divorce matter, **Okin v Okin.** By 9.00am, the court sat and there was a call over of the cases for the day, in the process of which Obayan J. stood down our case till 12 noon for definite hearing. My Principal, **Alhaji Oniyangi,** asked me to wait in court, while he drove back to the office, with a promise that he would be back by 11.30am so that he could lead me in the hearing of the matter at 12.00 noon. By 12.00 noon, when the case was called for hearing, my Principal was unable to make it back, as he had to leave Ilorin for Benin shortly after he left the court in the morning on an impromptu, very urgent assignment. He sent a message to me that I should plead with the court to adjourn the matter, and so I did; but, the Judge would not take such a plea from us, as he insisted that the matter must go on. As you can imagine, I was nervous and had the shakes. I informed the Judge of my being a green horn, having just been called to the Bar, but he insisted that the case must go on that day as it had been on the cause list for too long. In those days, oral advocacy was in its primacy, unlike now when written addresses are prepared and merely adopted at the address stage. I had no choice, but to conduct the trial. Before adjourning the matter for judgement, the Judge applauded my performance and encouraged me to keep it up. That was the tonic I needed to dive into active legal practice, without any further trepidation.

By the time I was three years at the Bar, I started appearing at the **Court of Appeal, Kaduna Judicial Division,** then sitting at the **Lugard Hall,** with **Uwais, JCA** (as he was then) presiding. At my first appearance, **Chief J. B. Majiyagbe** led my Principal and myself in an appeal involving **Ijesha United Company Limited. Chief Olisa Chukwura, SAN,** was counsel on the other side. I remember driving to Kaduna from Lokoja, where I had appeared in a Magistrate Court, and I had a ghastly motor accident at a village on my way to Kaduna, and almost lost my life. The villagers noticed the accident, rushed to the scene, extricated me from the vehicle that had somersaulted.

By the time I was eight years at the Bar, my presence was visibly known at the Court of Appeal, particularly in Kaduna, Ibadan, Lagos and Benin Judicial Divisions, while at 10 years at the Bar, I started

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appearing on my own at the Supreme Court. I can still recall the drama in the celebrated case of **J. K. Randle v Kwara Breweries Limited (1986) 6 S.C 1,** where I appeared before a full panel of the Supreme Court for the respondent, although the Law Reports wrongly record me as appearing for the appellant, leading **Saka Isau,** then a counsel in Chambers, and now a **Senior Advocate of Nigeria.** Due to one reason or the other, our Brief of Argument was not filed on time, and the Supreme Court was minded to take the appeal on the appellant's brief alone. **Prince J. O. Ijaodola,** counsel for the appellant, leading **R. A. Lawal-Rabana, Esq.** (now a Senior Advocate of Nigeria), adopted his brief and urged the court to allow the appeal as, according to him, it was not resisted, since we did not file any brief. The court was almost convinced, until I rose on my feet pleading that I should be allowed to address the court orally, hinging my application on a particular rule of the court. I can remember that it was **Oputa, JSC,** who asked me what recondite point of law I wanted to address the court orally on, and I instantly responded that it was on the absence of the certificate of incorporation of the defendant/respondent before the court, as it was never tendered in evidence. I further addressed the court that right from the High Court, through to the Court of Appeal and up to the Supreme Court, the plaintiff/appellant did not sue a juristic person. Ex tempore, I addressed the court for about fifteen minutes on this issue, after which the court got persuaded. All of a sudden, the tide changed, the mood of the court also switched, and the court beckoned on Prince Ijaodola to address it on the issue which was considered jurisdictional and very fundamental. His strongest response was that the court could and should take judicial notice of an incorporated company, to which the court unanimously rejected. The court retired to chambers for about an hour, came back later to deliver its judgement, dismissing the appeal based on that oral submission of mine. That case stands as a leading authority today on the subject. Since then, I got myself endeared to the Justices of the Supreme Court, and most of them, at that time, addressed me by my first name, Wole.

You asked me of the highlights of my practice life. Most humbly, the highlights are numerous and almost ad infinitum. Let me reiterate that right from my Call to the Bar, I have taken law as a way of life; a ministry in its own realm; and a call given to me by God. You may wish to ask the hundreds of counsel who have passed through our chambers, how I work. I have no other focus except law; everything else is peripheral and ancillary to law. I give it my whole concentration and attention; my dedication to the practice of law does not allow for diversions or distractions; it is either law or nothing. Even while I am now on the seventh floor, I have neither derailed nor got discounted in terms of my commitment to the law. On Easter Saturday, I and some junior colleagues in chambers, were holed up in the office, working from midday to the wee hours of the following morning, which was the Easter Sunday. The highlights can be summarised in one sentence, that through grace, I feel fulfilled and content. Without being immodest, when you look at our law reports in the past **37 years,** and also comb our law literature and jurisprudence within the same period, you see my imprimatur in diverse areas of law and legal practice, winning some of the cases, and also losing some. No good Lawyer wins all his cases. It is impossible. Part of the highlights of my practice is also the grace of God for the wisdom, knowledge and maturity to lead multiple of counsel, both from the Inner and Utter Bar, in a plethora of cases, a feat only executed by very few senior counsel in the country, dead or alive. I have had the fortune, or let me call it the grace, of leading over 90 counsel in a single matter, and in some other cases, being at the head of a legal team or consortium of legal practitioners of over 60 senior counsel. In all these situations, we have always worked seamlessly, without any friction or bickering howsoever, and on occasions where we have won, victory has always been dedicated to all of us.

In my almost five decades in active legal practice, I have never disrespected or been discourteous to any Judge, and no Judge has been disrespectful or discourteous to me, although I must confess that, I and other senior counsel encountered a most unfair and embarrassing treatment from the Apex court on a particular occasion, when we were damnified for doing nothing wrong. That was the case of **Degi Eremienyo v PDP (2021) 16 NWLR (Pt. 1800) 387.** It was a case where two separate applications were filed by two sets of senior counsel on behalf of their clients, praying the Supreme Court to set aside/vary its earlier decision based and founded on the facts of the case and precedents of the Apex Court itself in similar circumstances, including but

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not limited to **Jev v Iyortyom (2015) 15 NWLR (Pt. 1483) 484** which was/is on all fours with our respective applications. These applications were not brought in vacuum, as they were supported by relevant precedents. Yet, we were called to question for asking the Supreme Court to set aside its previous decision. Good enough, the same Supreme Court was not as strict or not strict at all on counsel who brought similar applications like ours the following week, particularly in **APC v Marafa (2020) 6 NWLR (Pt. 1721) 383** and **Uzodinma v Ihedioha (2020) 5 NWLR (Pt. 1718) 579.** Interestingly, the same Supreme Court has now held in its recent decision in **David Edebvie v Oborevwori Sheriff, Francis Orohwedor & Ors (2022) LPELR-58931(SC)** that its decision in **Degi Eremienyo v PDP (Supra)** is no longer the law, but that was the decision the court damnified counsel on. Coincidentally, the Supreme Court of England, almost at the same time counsel was being damnified in **Degi Eremienyo v PDP (Supra),** held in **R v Secretary of State for the Home Department (2022) UK SC 7** that ***"finality of a court cannot extinguish a clear legal right, as the desiderata of finality and certainty cannot impeach on that inevitable result".*** In fairness and with deference to our own Supreme Court, it has always not minded setting aside its own decisions in appropriate cases, and, acknowledging in writing on appropriate occasions, that it erred in its earlier decisions, as it did in **Egboghonome v State (1993) 7 NWLR (Pt. 306) 383 at 418**, where the Court, per **Bello CJN** held that: ***"Having regard to the plethora of the authorities on the matter, I am now convinced that the decision of the court in Oladejo's case was made per incuriam and the court erred in law in adopting it in Asanya's case".*** The Supreme Court also towed the same line in the case of **Adisa v Olayiwola (2000) 10 NWLR (Pt. 674) 116 at 172** where it held that: ***"In this case, there are compelling reasons why the decision in Oyeniran v Egbetola should be overruled and departed from."*** Even after its decision in **Degi Eremienyo v PDP (Supra),** our Supreme Court acceded to similar applications as ours, particularly in **U.B.N. Plc v Petro Union Oil & Gas Co. Ltd (2022) 7 NWLR (Pt. 1829) 199** and **GTB v Innoson (Nig) Ltd (2022) 6 NWLR (Pt. 1825) 35.** To me, it may appear as if this particular jurisprudence was strange to a lot of people at the time of our reliance on it. Apart from this isolated experience, I have never been ruffled in all my practice years, and I want to repeat or reemphasise that even in that instance, counsel did no wrong in the case, neither did they provoke the court, and the court did not hold that their presentations on the substantive applications were wrong or not in line with the authorities cited. The court did not also fault the facts, as presented in the applications.

Looking back, and in relation to your question as to whether I have any regrets, and situating it against the background of the embarrassment and strictures on counsel in **Degi Eremienyo v PDP (Supra),** particularly when that decision has always been singled out by my adversaries and traducers to taunt, harass and embarrass me (recall there were ten counsel for the two sets of applicants in the matter, eight senior counsel and two from the Utter Bar; the court awarded cost 'against counsel', without singling out any of the ten counsel; it has been only me that has been mischievously sued by a non-party to the action, for not paying the cost awarded; and it has always been only me that is being regularly referred to as the one 'found guilty' by the Supreme Court in the matter, even recently, by a certain figure in the legal profession).

My unequivocal response will still remain that I have no regrets filling the type of application, and I venture to add that before the Apex Court itself, I had done it successfully on two previous occasions. One of them is **Dingyadi v INEC (No. 10 (2010) 18 NWLR (Pt. 1224) 1 at 54.** Thus, if the occasion permits in the future, I will do it again. Law is about scholarship; law speaks to industry; law knocks at the door of diligence; law beckons to research; law does not permit or encourage timidity or cowardice on the part of any counsel; and my plea is that both the Bar and the Bench should not do anything that would amount to discouraging any of these beatitudes of our profession. For the first time, may I, on behalf of all counsel for the two sets of applicants in the matter, publicly appreciate the fatherly role and intervention of the immediate past **Chief Justice of Nigeria, Honourable Justice Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad, GCON** in the matter. I do not want to say more on that for now. As far as the practice of law is concerned, I thank God for the grace of a successful career, self-fulfilment and self-satisfaction.

Having served as Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Ondo State, in the past, do you believe that the office of the Attorney-General and Commissioner or Minister for Justice should be split into two as some are advocating? What are the reasons for your position? Is there any conflict between the two roles, that prevents the occupier of the position from performing both roles optimally?

Whether at the State or Federal level, the position of the Attorney-General is the only cabinet position created by the **Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended),** vide Sections 150 and 195, respectively. It is an ancient and powerful cadre of office, saddled with some sacred responsibilities. To my mind, the occupier might be the appointee of a politician, but upon ascendancy to that office, ought to assume some measure of an apolitical stance. At the micro level, I served as the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice of the old Ondo State for two years. I had already taken the Silk before my appointment. Perhaps, that might have explained the respect which the Governor and colleagues in cabinet accorded me. An Attorney-General must not plunge himself/herself into the murky waters of politics, he should not put on the garb and toga of a politician. He should be very learned, sober, humble, retrospective and introspective. Whilst he has a duty to his employer, that does not mean he should discount his complete and utter fidelity to law and justice. It is a delicate situation, which he must manage to balance (no offence to the women, as the AG could be female). As Attorney-General of old Ondo State, God gave me the grace to manage it. If we have a round peg in a round hole as Attorney-General, people will repose confidence in that exalted position.

My take is that there is no need for separation of the office of Attorney-General and Minister of Justice. Assuming there is a separation, will the Attorney-General not remain the Chief Law Officer of the Federation or of the State? Will he still not be the one who has the power of nolle prosequi? During the Obasanjo regime, he appointed a Minister of State in the Ministry of Justice, but it did not work; rather, it created much confusion. We need an Attorney-General who is sure footed, who is sound in law, logic and general knowledge. An Attorney-General who knows his onions, must always be prepared to personally go to court to appear for the Government that he represents, or serve in topical and constitutional matters. We claim to have borrowed the present constitution from the USA. Over there, the Ministry of Justice is christened the Department of Justice under the leadership of the Attorney-General. Institutions like the FBI and CIA etc., report to the Department of Justice. The point being made is that, the office of Attorney-General be depoliticised for effectiveness.

Congratulations on the commissioning of the Body of Benchers' Complex in Abuja last September during your tenure as Chairman. We understand that construction had gone on for a number of years. How were you able to achieve the completion during your tenure? Did you achieve any other notable milestones while in office? You successfully ended your tenure as Chairman of the Body of Benchers on 31st March, 2023; what challenges did you encounter and how did you surmount them?

One of the high points of my tenure as the 50th Chairman of the Body of Benchers was the commissioning of the Body of Benchers complex by **President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR,** on **29th September, 2022.** It was a project which commenced thirty years before then, and I must confess that every Chairman and member made infinite contributions to its achievement. I have learnt one prime lesson in life, and that is giving credit to, appreciating and honouring my predecessors in office. In my speech on that august occasion, I paid tribute to all my predecessors in office, particularly right from 1992 when the idea of having a Benchers' complex was mooted. It is a complex that consists of a 3000 capacity auditorium, a 240 capacity meeting room, a 1000 capacity banquet hall, a 1000 capacity multi-purpose hall, a committee meeting room, offices for Secretariat staff, a fully equipped library, amongst others. For the first time in the history of the **Body of Benchers**, we started using the complex for our Call to Bar ceremonies, first, in **July, 2022,** and later, in December, 2022. In all, **6,215** new Lawyers have been called to Bar in the complex. It was a collective achievement, and it pleased God that the commissioning should come to pass during my tenure as the **50th Chairman.**

The complex defines the architectural beauty of the entire area, and **President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR** could not hide his feeling of ecstasy on sighting the complex. In his speech on that day, he particularly commended me for my passion and commitment in championing the cause of the welfare of judicial officers in Nigeria. This was in relation to the setting up of the Judiciary Advisory Committee under my leadership, with the objective, amongst others, of constantly interfacing with members of the Bench, in order to take up their concerns and frustrations with appropriate authorities, and also to put in place an acceptable package, salary and

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"….. there is no need for separation of the office of Attorney-General and Minister of Justice….. We need an Attorney-General who is sure footed, who is sound in law, logic and general knowledge"

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welfare-wise, for Judges of our superior courts of record. Through the Committee, we were able to persuade the President to direct the release of the Report of the Committee on the Review of Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service, set up by President Muhammadu Buhari's administration as far back as August, 2018, for implementation as an interim measure. The Committee also commissioned the Financial and Accounting firm of Ernest and Young (E&Y) to carry out, amongst others, a comprehensive review of the conditions of service and emoluments of judicial officers across all cadres of superior courts of record in Nigeria and peer review of the conditions of service of the said judicial officers in Nigeria with other African jurisdictions such as Ghana, South Africa, Kenya, and Rwanda, as well as common law jurisdictions such as the United Kingdom and Australia. The firm submitted its report to the Body of Benchers, the Body also carried out an elaborate review of the Report. I forwarded the final report/recommendation to Mr. President on **15th February, 2023.** In Mr. President's address on **29th September, 2022,** he emphatically stated that he was earnestly looking forward to the completion of the peer review being undertaken by **Messrs. Ernst and Young,** as it would assist his government to review the welfare packages of judicial officers. The professional fee of Messrs. Ernst and Young was settled by my humble self and another distinguished life Bencher, **Price Lateef Fagbemi, SAN.**

To me, leadership is about sacrifice in all ramifications, including dipping your hand into your pocket for the execution of lofty ideas and goals for ideals greater than one's self. A Body of Benchers Complex Management Committee was also put in place. In **May, 2022,** we organised two professional lectures and dinners for **1,883 law graduates of National Open University of Nigeria,** who came for their remedial courses at the **Nigerian Law School.** Through interface with the **Honourable Minister of the Federal Capital Territory,** we got all the access roads leading to the **Body of Benchers Complex** tarred. For the first time in the history of the **Body,** we interfaced with all Justices of the Supreme Court, when it appeared that there were some complaints from the Justices about their welfare and conditions of service. I led the team to the meeting, after writing each Justice of the Apex Court, pleading for forbearance. All the major components, roads and crescents within the complex have been named after some leading members of the **Body of Benchers,** notably past Chairmen, and the pioneer **Secretary of the Body.** We also inaugurated a Regulations Committee under the Chairmanship of **Yusuf Ali, SAN.** The Committee is charged with the responsibility, amongst others, of preparing regulations under the jurisdiction vested in the Body by the Legal Practitioners Act, for the profession. The initial Draft Regulations meant to checkmate the notorious forum shopping practice among Lawyers were elaborately debated, and the Body advised itself that same should be passed to the General Council of the Bar.

I must place it on record, that I enjoyed the unalloyed and unflinching support of the members of the Body during my one year tenure. Most of them displayed love, affection, loyalty, fidelity and utmost respect for my person and the office I occupied. The final send forth on the evening of 30th March, 2023 was unprecedented; very elaborate, colourful and humbling. The applause and commendations were emotion laden.

You have further asked me what challenges I encountered, and how I surmounted them. Truth be told, I did not encounter any challenge, problem, opposition or disagreement from within the esteemed Body of Benchers and/or its highly distinguished members. May it be noted that, the Body is statutorily composed of practitioners of the highest distinction in the legal profession in Nigeria. On the **Body,** you have all past Chief Justices of Nigeria who are living, **Justices of the Supreme Court, President of the Court of Appeal** and all **Presiding Justices** of the different divisions, all Chief Judges in Nigeria as well as all the Attorneys-General in the country, Life Benchers etc. Therefore, one expects nothing short of decency, maturity, discipline, orderliness, decorum and deep introspection in the **Body.** I can say it for free that since its inception, the **Body** has been run and managed seamlessly, without any rancour amongst members. The **Body** has its own regulations titled **"Body of Benchers Regulation"** which came into effect on 7th March, 1983. It is a Bye Law by itself, and it makes provisions for membership, meetings, standing committees, discipline of members, etc. The positions of Chairman and Vice Chairman are rotated between the Bar and the Bench, that is, if a member of the Bar is the Chairman in a particular year, a member of the Bench will be the Vice Chairman, as it was between myself and Hon. Justice Peter-Odili; and once a Chairman vacates office, the Vice Chairman automatically steps in as Chairman, while a new Vice Chairman will emerge from the Bar, as it is now between **Hon. Justice Peter-Odili** and **Chief Adegboyega Awomolo, SAN.**

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It is necessary to clarify that the word "Bar" is not the same as in the Nigerian Bar Association, the "Bar" represents the institution to which all Nigerian Lawyers are called, and within that "Bar", you have the Inner and Utter Bar within that "Bar". In any court in Nigeria, that "Bar" is always there, properly designated. It is also in the context of that institution, that the Chairman of the Body of Benchers is conferred with the powers under **Section 4 of the Legal Practitioners Act** read together by the Regulation 16 of the Body of Benchers Regulation to admit newly qualified Lawyers into the Bar. We have Call to Bar ceremonies, and every Lawyer in Nigeria today has passed through the ceremonies or rites. Between 1992 and 1999, the NBA was comatose, and it almost went into extinction, but the Body of Benchers was alive to its responsibilities, and always rotated the position of the Chairman and Vice Chairman as between the Bar and the Bench. But, for the efforts of the Body and some leading members of the profession, the NBA would not have resurrected in 1999. Whenever it is time to make nomination for the appointment of a Vice Chairman from the Bar, a member of the Bar makes such a nomination, and he is seconded by a member of the Bench. Since 1999, when the NBA resurrected, more often than not, if the NBA President was present at a meeting where such nomination was to be made, preference would be given to him to make such a nomination, but in doing so, he must keep to the tradition of the Body by merely nominating the most senior Bencher amongst the members of the Bar. I am not unaware that **Chief F. R. A. Williams** was the one who made the nomination of **Mrs H. A. Balogun** as the **Vice Chairman in 1998**, while **Chief T. O. S. Benson, SAN,** was the one who made the nomination of **Alhaji Ibrahim, SAN,** in **2000**. In making such a nomination, the nominator would have been properly advised by the Secretariat of the Body of Benchers as to who the most senior person is. This is usually done about two weeks to the time of change of baton. This tradition is very sacrosanct, and like I stated emphatically, both in my Call to Bar speech of 6th and 7th December, 2022 and Valedictory speech of 30th March, 2023, we do not canvass for votes at the Body of Benchers, we do not jump the queue and we do not do anything or take any step to disrupt our cherished precedents or the equilibrium. Every Life Bencher waits for his or her turn, praying to God to spare his or her life.

There was the attempt by the NBA to foist a nominee on the Body for the position of Vice Chairman, when I was about leaving office. The NBA President sent a letter to the Body, attaching the resolution of NBA-NEC meeting held at **Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State on 23rd March, 2023**, resolving that **Mrs Funke Adekoya, SAN** should be presented as NBA nominee for the position of Vice Chairman. I have been on the Body of Benchers since 1992 when I joined as a statutory member, being the then Attorney-General of Ondo State, and I cannot recall any instance when the NBA has sent such a resolution to the Body. I was very conscious and cautious of the fact that it was not just enough for me to perform well in office and be applauded, but that my succession or handing over should be free from any rancour, disputation, acrimony and the like. The media space was already awash of the NBA resolution, even before it was formally sent to the Body. When we got to the item on election of Vice Chairman on **30th March, 2023,** and I informed the meeting that there was a letter from the NBA President, the consensus of opinion, particularly among leaders at the high table with me (and by leaders I mean Chief Justice of Nigeria, former Chief Justices of Nigeria, former Chairmen of the Body of Benchers and the Vice Chairman) was that there was no need for me to call on him (NBA President) to present the letter as it was unprecedented, and that I should just call on anybody from the floor to nominate the most senior Bencher from the Bar as the Vice Chairman. I pleaded with them that we should allow the NBA President make his presentation, and I then called on him to so do. After making the presentation and his nomination, he was taken up by several members as to what the NBA was up to, and why **Chief Adegboyega Awomolo, SAN** who was/is the most senior member from the Bar, and who has undoubtedly contributed so much to the profession should be jettisoned. It was after all this that I called on a member from the Bar to formally make the nomination as per the tradition of the Body and **Chief Adegboyega Awomolo, SAN** was duly nominated and seconded, with thunderous and overwhelming applause. There was no objection and there could not have been any. On this note, I thank God that I handed over in a peaceful manner, in line with the traditions of the **Body.**

Along the line or during the year, a counsel in our office sent out an unauthorised, unsolicited, unapproved, uncharacteristic and unilateral email to a company purportedly soliciting for instruction for a case that had been completed about four months earlier, and also making very funny and laughable presentations. Paradoxically, the email was sent to the client of no other person or colleague than that of a highly respected and long-standing friend, **Mr. H. O. Ajumogobia, SAN.** Let me state straightaway, and/or repeat what our office has said: the e-mail was unauthorised and could not have been authorised; the contents of the email are untrue and could not have been true; we did not have any knowledge of the email and we could not have had knowledge of it. Let me say with every sense of responsibility that we were completely unaware of what the lady counsel did, and we were also taken aback by the avalanche and rapidity of comments and critiques that attended her action, more particularly against our office and my person. Although we have been criticised without being heard, the fact remains that the case at the heart of the matter is what is described in legal parlance as res extincta, as, by 20th June, 2022, when she sent the email, the case was not in existence, having been already decided and closed. The email made references to some cases for instance Shell Petroleum Development Company cases, as inferentially having been influenced by us; whereas both at the Supreme Court and the High Court of Rivers State, we painfully lost some of the cases, one of them is reported as **S.P.D.C.N. Ltd v Agbara (2021) 7 NWLR (Pt. 1775) 356,** where the appeal was dismissed at the stage of application for leave to appeal. In this matter, I led a team of eminent Lawyers from four different Chambers to appear for Shell. It would amount to an act of gross professional misconduct and unfathomable for any counsel to influence a court, particularly the Supreme Court, to give judgement against his client! Reference was also made to the MTN tax dispute as having been influenced by us. It is common knowledge, that the case was settled out of court. Before trial commenced in the case after filing of pleadings, on behalf of MTN, we filed Notice of Discontinuance on **14th January, 2020,** whilst the case was formally struck out on **28th January, 2020.** All of these are matters of public record. I led a team of counsel from about four other leading law firms for MTN in the matter. It would be a weird assumption for anyone to assume, claim or allege that a matter which was settled out of court without any judicial pronouncement except a striking out order consequent upon a motion for discontinuance, was influenced by counsel. The other case alleged to have been influenced was that of **Statoil (Nig) Limited v Inducon (Nig) Limited (2021) 7 NWLR (Pt. 1774) 41.** I came into the matter at the Supreme Court, Statoil having lost at the trial Court and the Court of Appeal. Again, I led a team of eminent senior counsel from four different Chambers for the appellant at the Supreme Court, and the appeal was won purely on robust legal presentation, rooted and anchored on precedents of the Apex Court. The law report is there, for anyone to read. By the way, different/other counsel and chambers had represented Statoil at both the High Court and the Court of Appeal. All the cases the email referred to were conducted and completed by our firm, before the counsel that wrote the email joined our firm. They were also completed before I assumed office as Chairman of the Body of Benchers. So, she did not participate in the cases, and it cannot be correct that the office of Chairman of BOB had any impact on the outcomes of those cases.

When the email was brought to our attention, the firm's internal disciplinary measures were immediately activated. Perhaps, some people were expecting us to shout at rooftop that we had crucified her. That is not our style. As for me, I am also a father, apart from being a mentor, shepherd and counsellor. Even in the face of the storm, we made no public comments on this aspect, as it is our belief, for good reason, that media trials are antithetical to the traditions, ethos and pathos of the legal profession. Our profession is one that requires the highest level of circumspection and reasoning. It was incumbent on us, despite the weight of the moment, to keep within the best practices of the profession. We also kept on reminding ourselves that we should not lose our humanity, despite the barrage of attacks mounted against us. More importantly, short of abolishing official e-mails, there really and truly was no way we could forestall or have forestalled the unfortunate and unexpected occurrence. That is why I found, and still find the comments from certain quarters quite strange. How many employers, if any, can vouch or state on oath that apart from clearly stating and consistently communicating company values and rules for correspondence, they can control the e-mails emanating from their staff with a 100% certainty, or that those values or rules will not be violated under any circumstance by all employees? If that standard is impossible for everyone, how

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"For the first time in the history of the Body of Benchers, we started using the Complex for our Call to Bar ceremonies, first, in July, 2022, and later, in December, 2022. In all, 6,215 new Lawyers have been called to Bar in the Complex"

'I Have No Regrets'

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was it then foisted on our firm? In any event, it was another learning point that even when, at times, you put in your best and do the right things, wrong outcomes still manifest. From my perspective, it was rather curious that even very senior counsel, who could be confronted with the same problem that we were faced with, seemed to be very certain that we should have been omniscient.

Without wanting to mention names, I state in all honesty that I have seen, witnessed and experienced a lot of blunders by some (junior) counsel from other law offices. When the matter was brought to my attention, I virtually sank, and two of my Secretaries had to revive me. When I recovered, I decided to treat the issue like a regular case, and with that, we could then see ten to twenty steps ahead. Everything that happened since then, and those yet to happen, have now come within our perspective, and we are ready for them.

One of the things I always harp on to young Lawyers, is that a Lawyer must be able to think on his feet when representing clients. In this situation, we were our own clients, and our vision was very clear. There was no doubt in our minds about our values, ethos and pathos, so no matter what came, we stood firm, supported by our pedigree. Those who tried to capitalise on the unfortunate circumstances, to further one agenda or the other, were, to me, not thinking deeply enough about it. In the same way they feel it could never happen to them, I also felt it could never happen to us. However, it also reminded all of us in our firm of the status God has placed us to achieve and the high expectations from us with nearly a zero margin for error allowance. In all modesty, we have enough to cope with in our office; we do not struggle for briefs; we do not fight over briefs; as a firm rooted in professionalism and ethics as well as the fear of God, we do not compromise justice or attempt to compromise it in any form howsoever, and we have always frowned at this unwholesome practice. As for me in particular, God has been so merciful to me over the years, and I always appreciate His grace in my life, family and career. He has blessed me bountifully, and I cannot, while I am now on the seventh floor, make a backward detour to be struggling for or soliciting for briefs, a practice which I did not indulge in, in my teething years as a Lawyer. It is in appreciation of God's grace in my life that I insist on attaching the 'imprimatur' 'God's Grace' to a good number of properties where we operate from across different States in Nigeria, right from our law office at No. 130 University Road, Ilorin built in 1995.

I am not unmindful of **Joseph Goebbels' notorious theory** of the negative effect of continuous repetition of falsehood. Recall Goebbels was the popular propagandist of the Nazi movement, during the days of Adolf Hitler. He surmised thus: "If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.... the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie...." Arising from this, let me make this little revelation to you, in furtherance of your question, that on Tuesday 5th July, 2022, **Mr H. O. Ajumogobia, OFR, SAN** and myself met in company of other respected Nigerians in respect of the email, and thereafter, we sorted things out and embraced ourselves. **Mr Ajumogobia, SAN** stated that he was convinced that I was not, and could not have been complicit in the matter. By the way, Henry and myself have been friends for years, and we have mutual respect for each other. I have acted as a Lawyer for our mutual **Church, the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion),** representing both the Church and himself as our esteemed Chancellor in a host of cases.

While we truly believed that the matter had been put behind us, on 5th July, 2022, another warfare emerged, and the warfare was waging almost relentlessly. As a leader, I do not want to say more, other than let the public know that to date, no one amongst our critics and traducers, has cared to ask us any question about the matter, or even put a mere telephone call across to us to make enquiries as to what transpired. No one amongst them cared to find out when the lady Lawyer in question joined our office. She only joined us in January 2022, while the unauthorised email was sent out on **20th June, 2022,** less than six months after joining our firm. She was not with us when the three cases she referenced were handled by the chambers; and in fairness to her and her highly respected and illustrious father, they repeatedly harped on the fact that we were not complicit, either before, during or after the issuance of the email.

I can lay a humble claim to having served, and I will continue to serve our profession and the NBA with my all; and let me, without being immodest, say that at a most critical period in the life and practice of our profession, when Lawyers were being challenged and intimidated by the inhibiting provision of **Section 5** of the **Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2011,** it was my humble self the then NBA President, **Okey Wali, SAN** pleaded with, and invited to come and lead a team of other Lawyers to challenge that provision of the Act, and we successfully did that at both the Federal High Court and the Court of Appeal.

Chief Wole Olanipekun, CFR, SAN

Let me make an open confession, that we have learnt a lot of lessons from the unfortunate episode; and God has opened our eyes to a lot of secrets and mysteries of life. Despite the fact that we have handled a lot of cases for our clients in defence of their rights to fair hearing, and notwithstanding the fact that I was involved in the celebrated and locus classicus case of **Oyeyemi v Commissioner for Local Government (1992) 2 NWLR (Pt. 226) 661,** a leading authority on the subject of fair hearing in our jurisprudence, it was only during this incident that I came to appreciate how fatalistic the denial of fair hearing to anyone could be. We have come to know and appreciate a good number of our friends and admirers, whilst we have come to appreciate the gulf of difference between these two similar words: 'friends' and 'fiends'. No wonder Shakespeare posited in Macbeth that: "there is no art to judge the mind's construction in the face!" But, to our friends who stood by and supported us, who prayed along with us, who offered us supplications and who vouched and continue to vouch for our high esteem and professional integrity, we say God bless you/them all. And to those who, for one reason or the other, have decided to vilify us for what we knew next to nothing about, we say may God forgive all their trespasses. They should be assured that. we mean no harm towards them.

It is written that in all things and situations, we should always give glory to God. In the past year as well, God has been so gracious and benevolent to me. **The Federal Republic of Nigeria honoured and decorated me with the third highest National Honour available in the land; Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic (CFR).** God also enabled us to build, equip and donate an ultra-modern Court Complex to the Ekiti State Judiciary, Ikere Judicial Division. On **18th February, 2023,** the **Federal University, Oye-Ekiti** conferred on me the third honorary doctorate degree of Constitutional Law (coming after the University of Ibadan, Ibadan – LL.D., and Redeemer's University, Ede - D.Litt,) and also appointed me as a Visiting Professor of Legal Practice, the first of its kind in Nigeria.

Your tenure as President of the Nigerian Bar Association (2002-2004) saw the creation of Sections of the Bar for the first time in history of the Association, looking back with hindsight, how would you assess these Sections today? Would you say they have so far achieved the purpose for which they were created?

Yes, the NBA executive that I led between 2002-2004 created the Sections on Business Law and Legal Practice. The minutes and records are there to see or verify. Our Enugu Annual Conference of 2003, was used as the first conference for the takeoff of the two Sections. I remember the late **Andrew Ayamene, SAN** and **Debo Akande, SAN** applauding the unprecedented initiative at the Conference. We appointed George Etomi and Yusuf Ali, SAN as the respective Chairpersons of the two Sections.

You asked me how I feel about the two Sections now, my feeling is one of significant satisfaction, because, over the years, the Sections have grown and expanded, attracting more people to the NBA, including notable persons who never participated in the NBA affairs before, and have now come to the Association, exploring the very unique opportunities which the Sections provide, particularly SBL & SLP, to not only make inroads to the Association, but to also assume leadership. Even those who have chosen to feign ignorance of how the Sections evolved, cannot deny the fecundity of the vision and innovation that led to the creation of those sections.

My advice is that we should continue build and improve on the original ideals that prompted the creation of the two Sections, as well as the Section on **Public Interest and Development Law (SPIDEL)** which was created when **Olisa Agbakoba, SAN,** was President. The Sections should continue to be developed, for the benefit of the collective.

But, let me quickly add for record purposes that our executive initiated several other ideas which have become part of NBA's traditions and history. It was our executive that introduced 'The State of the Nation' item into NBA agenda at our first NBA NEC meeting in Makurdi in October, 2002. The idea behind it was that, while on the first day of NEC meeting we would discuss NBA matters extensively, on the second day, we would focus on the state of the nation generally, and thereafter, issue a comprehensive communique. It was also our Executive that started the first Nigerian Nite at the IBA Conference in Durban, 2002. I personally made funds available to organise it. It was then organised in honour of **Chief (Mrs) Sena Anthony,** who was exiting as the Chair of International Bar Association (IBA) Section on Energy, the first African, and indeed, the first black to hold that position. She is still alive to corroborate this story. The likes of **Dele Adesina, SAN, Chief Richard Omo Ahonaruogho, SAN, Chief R. A. Lawal-Rabana, SAN, Chief Kunle Uthman,** etc., are still there to corroborate this.

It was also on the heels of the 2003 general elections that we constituted the first ever NBA Election Monitoring Committee headed by the late Blessing Ukiri, who was then the third National Vice President of NBA. We designed special T-shirts for them; and INEC as well as other local and international observers gave them recognition. At the end of the exercise, they submitted a comprehensive report which was presented at a special national officers meeting summoned for that purpose, and after a thorough consideration, a communique representing the NBA's position on the election was issued.

It was also part of my manifesto while campaigning for the NBA presidency that if elected, I would incorporate the Association under Part C of the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA), bearing in mind the Supreme Court decision in **Fawehinmi v NBA (1989) 2 NWLR (Pt. 105) 494,** to the effect that NBA was not a juristic person. I fulfilled this electoral pledge by getting the Association registered, and the Registered Trustees were properly inaugurated. I personally led some leading members of the Association to collect the certificate of registration from the Corporate Affairs Commission office, before I left office.

Your philanthropic disposition has been described as boundless. You built a full hospital wing in your hometown, Ikere, Ekiti State, ultramodern lecture auditoriums at the University of Ibadan, a radio station in your hometown, a Bar Centre for the Ikere Brach of the NBA, and recently a full High Court edifice also in Ikere, Ekiti State, with 21st Century equipment, library and books. What motivates you?

The legendary Nelson Mandela stated that "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others, that will determine the significance of the life we lead". Let me repeat the truism which I have always keyed into, that no man is remembered for the depth, height or expansion, vertical or horizontal, of the wealth he acquired whilst on this side of the divide, but for how meaningfully, beautifully and positively he impacted on humanity. The Bible also tells us that nothing has been acquired by us, that has not been given. Therefore, it is by grace that we have what we have, that we now call our possession. It is incumbent on any sane person, to touch lives meaningfully and positively. I always pray every day, that God should give me the enablement to impact on life positively.

You have mentioned some of the things and structures God used me to achieve, aside the Scholarship Scheme that we put in place since 1996, through which hundreds of graduates in different disciplines have been produced, I was at the Federal High Court, Lagos, sometime in October, 2022 and a young Lawyer came to the Inner Bar to pay his respect to me. He introduced himself as being one of the beneficiaries of my Scholarship Scheme, and that but for the Scheme, he would not have been called to the Bar. Instantly, in the courtroom, I started thanking and blessing God for the enablement, as well as the life of the Lawyer who was, as at then, about ten years old at the Bar.

Recently, a cousin of mine went to one hospital in Ekiti State and the doctor who attended to her, having glimpsed her particulars, whispered to her that he was one of the beneficiaries of Wole Olanipekun Scholarship Scheme. When I was twenty years at the Inner Bar, I created an endowment fund for young Lawyers in the Lagos and Ilorin Branches of the NBA. Taiwo Taiwo was the Chairman of the Lagos Branch at the time (now retired Justice Taiwo Taiwo). He used the money to buy units of computers for junior Lawyers. I was almost moved to tears when I was delivering the Gani Fawehinmi lecture at the Ikeja Branch of the NBA last year, and the compere stated that the computer he got from that initiative was the seed device he started his law firm with and the firm has now grown to over 15 Lawyers. As for the Ilorin Branch, they bought cars and distributed them among junior Lawyers based on a raffle draw. I did not know anyone of them except that when one of the beneficiaries drove his own vehicle to the house of one Engineer Tunji Ijaya, and informed him that he was a beneficiary of my endowment fund. Engineer Tunji Ijaya placed a call through to me, and started praying for me.

I am not limited to Ekiti State as I strive to make my moderate impact felt anywhere I go, reside or practice, including when I was in Ilorin, Akure and now Lagos. During the COVID-19 pandemic, apart from outright cash donations, we supported the Lagos and Ekiti State Governments with ventilators donations. Most humbly, I made moderate funds available to all the branches of NBA in the Southwest Zone of Nigeria, including the Lagos and Ikeja branches, while additional provisions were made for the supply of foodstuff to the three branches of NBA in Ekiti State. Ditto for both at University of Ibadan and Ajayi Crowther University, where I respectively served as Pro-Chancellor. I did not take a dime as allowance, and instead, I strived to leave lasting legacies for the institution, and also endowed scholarships for their students.

You asked me what is the motivation? The answer is simple, that is, one does all these things

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"I also stand to be corrected, that there is no supreme court in the world that is half as involved in murky and volatile electoral causes as Nigeria…The idea of a constitutional court is something the National Assembly should consider seriously"

'I Have No Regrets'

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in appreciation of God's grace in his life. I repeat that I am a child of abundant grace and mercy from the God that I serve, and while doing some of these things, one is also appreciating God.

About the High Court Complex at Ikere, Ekiti State, let us recall that Dorothy De Rothschild donated the Building housing the Supreme Court of Israel; Andrew Carnegie donated the East Orange, New Jersey Municipal Court for the United Nations; the same Andrew Carnegie also donated the World Court Peace Palace, in Hague, Netherlands; the Rockfeller Family donated the building housing the United Nations General Assembly in the USA; Yusuf Ali, SAN donated a High Court Complex at his hometown, Ifetedo, in Osun State, while he also singlehandedly refurbished the old High Court building in Ilorin, Kwara State. As we speak, Lawyers are currently putting together funds, in order to actuate a rebuilding of the Lagos State High Court Complex, Igbosere, which was caught up in the **#EndSARS** imbroglio. Accordingly, I was surprised and taken aback when a particular respected colleague started criticising our humble and innocent donation of an ultra-modern High Court Complex to Ekiti State judiciary, calling for the head of the State Chief Judge for consenting to the donation. With much respect to this cerebral colleague, he got it all wrong. We should stop assuming that what we do not know does not exist, as none of us has the monopoly of knowledge. Where my wisdom ends, that of the person contiguous to me starts.

For the Cathedral in my home town, I donated it to appreciate God who has been with me since my youth, and who, like it is stated in the fourth stanza of that beautiful song, "Amazing Grace" by John Newton "The Lord has promised good to me, His word my hope secures; He will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures". On **28th February, 2020,** when the Church was dedicated, I rendered my 'Be**atitudes'**. Many Nigerian leaders, led by General Yakubu Gowon, honoured me with their presence on that day, and General Gowon held the audience spellbound when he gave testimony about me, having known me since my Student Union days in the University of Lagos. He was then the Head of State, and we had direct encounters with him at Dodan Barracks.

Your law firm has produced Senior Advocates of Nigeria, including your sons, who were admitted to the Inner Bar at the unprecedented young ages. Kindly give the young lawyers a few tips on how to reach the peak of their legal career?

It is still part of the grace we are talking about, that my two sons are Senior Advocates of Nigeria. Dapo was born in 1981, and he took the Silk in 2015, at the age of 34. Bode took the Silk thereafter at the age of 35, and I dare say both of them took the rank on merit, and they are there in the public domain as 'exhibits' to be assessed. As a father, I am very proud of them, and I continue to thank God for His grace upon their lives. Amongst the alumni of Wole Olanipekun & Co. who have taken the Silk are Adebayo Adelodun, Saka Isau, Roland Otaru, Akin Osinbajo, Titilola Akinlawon, Dayo Akinlaja, Anthony Malik and Adeola Omotunde. Several others are doing well, and riding high in diverse areas of human endeavour. They are also there in the public domain to testify to our character and what we stand for.

I am very conscious of my peculiarities, hence I try as much as possible to mind my business; not gossiping, not indulging in carrying tales, not engaging in backbiting or backstabbing, not running down my colleagues or seniors, and taking guidance from the admonition of **F. H. Bradley** that **"the propriety of some persons seems to consist in having improper thoughts about their neighbours".**

You asked me to give tips on how to reach the peak of the legal profession to young Lawyers. I have done this over the years, and my charges at the three call to Bar ceremonies that I presided over contained tips ad infinitum. Hard work, honesty, industry, scholarship, dedication, fidelity to the profession, humility, self-esteem, fear of God, respect for colleagues at the Bar and the Bench, consistency self-discipline, self-denial, amongst other are some of the tips I will give to young lawyers. May I also admonish them not to join the league of Lawyers who nowadays stay glued to social media commenting, criticising and passing judgement on processes filed by other colleagues and judgements of court they have not seen? It is becoming the in-thing nowadays. Lastly, let me repeat the evergreen charge I gave to the newly called to Bar colleagues on 6th and 7th December, 2022 that: "Do not engage in strife, blackmail, mudslinging, campaign of calumny, treachery or any attempt to run or pull anyone down. Flee from envy like a plague, for envy breeds hatred and unjustified contempt for others. Appreciate your colleagues and peers, as well as senior members of the profession who have received God's benevolence, and pray that your own time will come".

Chief Wole Olanipekun, CFR, SAN

Again, Nigeria has just concluded elections into various political offices, including the Presidency. As what has become the norm after every election cycle, there is a deluge of election petitions, and you are lead counsel to the President-Elect, Bola Ahmed Tinubu's legal team. There have been suggestions and calls for the creation of a Constitutional Court or Special Court to handle election matters, which would free our High Courts from the burden of taking so many State High Court Judges away from their duties, thereby making litigants suffer and rendering the already slow paced wheels of justice almost stagnant? Do you support this call?

In a lecture I delivered at **Oxford University, United Kingdom, on 28th February, 2019** titled **"Electoral Law, Election Petitions and the Future of Democracy in Nigeria",** I traced the trajectory of our democracy, particularly from **1999,** against the background of the torrents of election petitions attending to each of the election regimes, graduating in geometrical proportions on a four year basis. I complained that my research has not led me to any country in the world that is more litigious than Nigeria when it comes to election matters, whether it is pre or post-election.

Before then, every right-thinking Lawyer, including my humble self, who is worried about how some people have tried and are still trying to scandalise the Nigerian judiciary and bring it to a state of opprobrium in view of their almost daily involvement in high profile election or election related matters, is of the view that a constitutional court be inaugurated to handle all election related matters in Nigeria. It is not a new suggestion, as it is one of the novelties created by **Abacha Constitution of 1997/1998.** I can still remember that a President had already been identified for the Constitutional Court, in the person of **Honourable Justice Dahiru Musdapher, GCON**, while the **Hon Justice Timothy Oyeyipo** was to be the **Vice President of the Court.** The idea of a constitutional court, is something the National Assembly should consider seriously. With the way things are going and the deluge of harsh criticisms against the judiciary, care must be taken that that sensitive arm of the government is not brought down.

I also stand to be corrected, that there is no supreme court in the world that is half as involved in murky and volatile electoral causes as Nigeria. There is the warning in Halsbury's Laws of England that except in very rare cases, it is not the place of the judiciary to substitute its own verdict for the corporate wish of the electorate as demonstrated through the ballot box. That was the position in Nigeria pre-1999, and essentially during the first republic.

It is also nauseating and indefensible that at regular intervals, Judges of our various High Courts proceed on sabbatical from their jurisdictional bases to other States to contend with and adjudicate on election petitions, subordinating their primary assignment in their respective States to the whims and caprices of pre-election matters and petitions. Again, I am not aware this worrisome practice occurs in any other judiciary, globally. This pre-supposes that the Nigerian judiciary must, willy-nilly, be involved in election matters, and unfortunately, it has become the mindset of most Nigerians that after election, the court then takes over, or that a winner of an election is not known until the court makes a pronouncement. This has not been the case in India, which is reputed to be the largest democracy in the world; it is also not the case in the United States, from where we purportedly borrowed the present Constitution. Let us recall the 44th quadrennial presidential election of the United States of America held on **8th November, 1960**, where **Senator, John F. Kennedy**, having garnered **34,220,984 votes,** defeated the incumbent **Vice-President – Richard Nixon** of the **Republican Party,** who closely garnered **34,108,157 votes. 50 States** participated and the threshold for victory was **269 electoral votes.** In the United States presidential election, Kennedy's popular vote margin was the second narrowest in the history of the country. **Richard Nixon** restrained himself from going to court to challenge the victory of J.F. Kennedy, despite the traces of malpractices in the thin margin of J.F. Kennedy; however, he opted out of a challenge on the ground that he did not want to ridicule/scandalise the American Presidency.

In recent years, the only topical political case the American Supreme Court was saddled with was that of **Al Gore v George Bush, 531 U.S 98 (2000).** After the decision of the **U.S. Supreme Court, Al Gore** was quoted as saying **"Although I do not agree with the judgement of the Supreme Court, I will abide by it".** The last snap election in **Great Britain** was also **'too-close-to-call',** and, indeed, the ruling **Conservative Party** did not have the requisite number of Members of Parliament to form a government; but, within hours, concessions were made here and there, and based on democratic traditions which had evolved in that country for centuries, **Queen Elizabeth II** (of blessed memory) invited **Theresa May** to form the government. **Jeremy Corbyn** of the **Labour Party** did not approach any election tribunal or court, to stop Theresa May from so doing. In the past few years, the United Kingdom has produced three Prime Ministers in quick succession, the last one being **Rishi Sunak,** a gentleman of Indian extraction. No member of either the opposition Labour Party or the ruling Conservative Party has gone to court to ask for an injunction to restrain the Queen from recognising any of the Prime Ministers.

The way out is to demonetise political offices in Nigeria, and instead, to make the office holder realise and appreciate that leadership is about service and self-sacrifice. In addition, there are so many bad losers among our politicians who belong to the do or die school of politics.

Be that as it may, all lovers of democracy should frown at the call from some quarters, for the institution or inauguration of an interim national government. I do not support it, because as a Lawyer, I do not know where to hang it within the framework of our present Constitution, despite its glaring imperfections. It still represents the law as it is, while some of us are advocating for autochthonous constitution, which is the best for our peculiar situation. I am surprised that the DSS and other security outfits have not named names, despite their several warnings. What the agitators are calling for is a coup or change/takeover of government, otherwise than as provided by the Constitution. Within the context of the present constitutional architecture or organogram, the call is treasonable. That is the position of the law. We should all remind ourselves of how the inauguration of an Interim Government, even by a **Military Decree No. 61 of 1993** which paved way for the emergence of **Chief Ernest Shonekan,** precipitated the emergence of the **Abacha** military junta, a regime that plunged Nigeria into near darkness. I can take a bet that if there is any disrupt of the equilibrium of present democratic structure in the country today, it will come as an ill wind which will blow nobody any good, including the callers and agitators who will end up among the first set of casualties.

Do you agree with the call by many lawyers for the 1999 Constitution to be jettisoned completely, in favour of a completely new one to replace it?

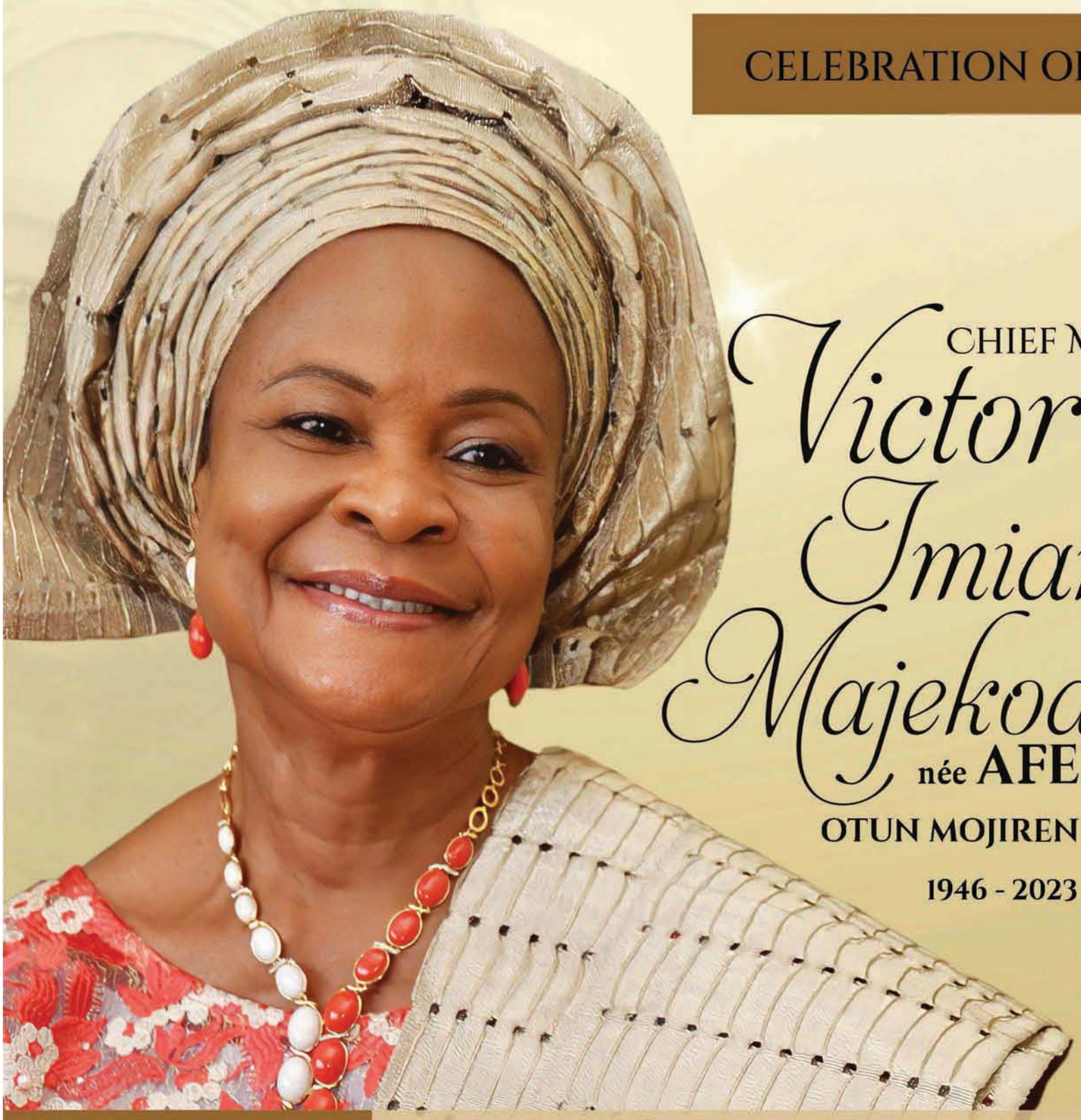
My reservations about the **Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999,** have been over flogged, and I have virtually become a broken record in my presentations. We just have to operate true federalism, and in doing that, the present Constitution needs overhauling. I am not unaware of the tokenisms contained in the recent **Fifth Alteration (No. 16) and Fifth Alteration (No. 17) Acts** signed into law by the President that moved Railways from Exclusive to Concurrent Legislative List, and enabled Electricity distribution by States. Apart from defence, currency, citizenship, customs and excise, foreign affairs, most, if not all the items on the Exclusive Legislative List should be on the Concurrent Legislative List. We should all note that in the USA, each State regulates how it will proceed with the election of the President, and that was what led to the series of cases filed by Donald Trump challenging the exercise of power by the Secretaries of some States regarding the modalities for the conduct of the last presidential election between him and President Joe Biden. It is in the interest of all of us, to go back to true federalism.

How would you rate the performance of the outgoing Buhari administration, particularly with the regard to its three main campaign promises – fighting insecurity and corruption, and revamping the economy, and a fourth promise to restructure Nigeria? What are your expectations from the incoming administration?

Permit me to leave chroniclers of Nigerian history to commend the performance of the outgoing Buhari administration. This notwithstanding, may I sound a note of admonition, that Nigerians of today deserve more care, more sympathy, more empathy, more consideration, more attention and a fairer deal in terms and in areas of security, the economy, education, welfare, health, housing, good roads, basic things of life, etc, than they are getting from governments in all strata in the country. The way to go about it is to make the provisions of **Chapter 2** of the **Constitution** titled **"Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy"** dealing with, amongst others, fundamental obligations of the government, the government and the people, political objectives, economic objectives, social objectives, educational objectives, environmental objectives, etc., justiciable. To my mind, all the enshrined provisions of the in **Chapter 4** titled "Fundamental Rights" are meaningless, if the provisions of Chapter 2 are non-justiciable. In the alternative, the provisions of **Chapter 2** should be merged with those of **Chapter 4** under Fundamental Human Rights of the citizens, and in the new constitution being advocated, the non-justiciability encumbrance attached to the provisions of **Chapter 2** as enshrined in **Section 6 (6)(c)** of the **Constitution** should be deleted.

Thank you Sir.

"…. all lovers of democracy should frown at the call from some quarters for the institution or inauguration of an interim national government…..We just have to operate true Federalism, and in doing that, the present Constitution needs overhauling"



CELEBRATION OF LIFE

CHIEF MRS

Victoria Imiamiye Majekodunmi

née AFE

OTUN MOJIREN EGBA

1946 - 2023

SHE IS SURVIVED BY

HUSBAND
ARC CHIEF OLUFEMI MAJEKODUNMI,
LUKOTUN EGBA

CHILDREN
OLUFUNKE AND CHRISTIAN IDEHEN,
AYODEJI AND TENIOYE MAJEKODUNMI,
ADEFOLARIN AND PAMELA MAJEKODUNMI,
AKINTUNDE MAJEKODUNMI

GRANDCHILDREN
TOBIAS, JEROHAM, JOSHUA, AKINDELE, ELI,
MAKINDE, VICTORIA, ALERO, MAXIMILIAN,
FREDERICK

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

WITH GRATITUDE TO GOD
FOR A LIFE WELL SPENT,
WE REGRET TO ANNOUNCE THE DEATH OF OUR
BELOVED WIFE, MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER AND
SISTER ON MONDAY, 6TH MARCH 2023

SERVICE OF SONGS
AND NIGHT OF TRIBUTES
6PM THURSDAY 27TH APRIL 2023.
HARBOUR POINT, EVENT CENTRE,
VICTORIA ISLAND, LAGOS

FUNERAL SERVICE
11AM FRIDAY 28TH APRIL 2023,
AT OUR SAVIOUR'S CHURCH,
TAFEWA BALEWA SQ. LAGOS

INTERMENT

PRIVATE FAMILY CEREMONY,
IMMEDIATELY
AFTER FUNERAL SERVICE

RECEPTION

HARBOUR POINT EVENT CENTRE,
VICTORIA ISLAND,
IMMEDIATELY AFTER INTERMENT

ASO-EBI/DRESS CODE

SERVICE OF SONGS/ NIGHT OF
TRIBUTES: SHADES OF PURPLE

FUNERAL SERVICE & RECEPTION:
SHADES OF CORAL, PINK OR PEACH

THISDAY

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EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2023

IMAGES

Photo Editor Abiodun Ajala
Email abiodun.ajala@thisdaylive.com

Group Managing Director, TechnoOil, Mrs. Nkechi Obi (left), receiving the NIES 2023 Lifetime Oil and Gas Achievement Award from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum Resources, Gabriel Tanimu Aduda (right), at the Nigeria International Energy Summit held in Abuja...recently

L-R: Senior Manager, Community Relations, Pipeline Infrastructure Nigeria Limited, Richard Ngida; Advisory Consultant, Mr. Seleake Alamieyeseigha; General Manager Community Relations, Mr. Akpos Mezeh; and Security Manager, Patrick Onogwu; at the community engagement by Pipeline Infrastructure Nigeria Limited in Port Harcourt, River State...recently

Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Idowu Owohunwa (right), and Commander 651 BSG Air Force Base, Ikeja, Air Commodore Olasunkanmi Abayomi Abu (left), during the visit of the police commissioner to the Air Force Base in Ikeja, Lagos...recently

L-R: Director, Internal Assurance, Airtel Nigeria, Ngozi Akamelu; acting Chief Commercial Officer, Airtel Nigeria, Femi Oshinlaja; Chief Executive Officer, AXA Mansard Health, Tope Adeniyi; and Chief Customer and Marketing Officer, Customer Engagement and Marketing, AXA Mansard, Jumoke Odunlami, at the press briefing to announce the Airtel and AXA Digital Health partnership held at the Airtel headquarters in Lagos...recently

L-R: Director of Operations and Maintenance, Lagos State Emergency Agency (LASEMA), Olatunde Akinsanya; Director of Admin and Human Resources, LASEMA, Mrs. Olaide Osifeso; Director-General, Nigerians Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB), Akin Olateru; Permanent Secretary, LASEMA, Dr. Olufemi Oke-Osanyintolu; and DGM, Engineering, NSIB, Alao Oluponmile, during a courtesy visit by Akin Olateru to LASEMA head office in Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos...recently

L-R: Bride's father/Zonal Superintendent, Foursquare Gospel Church, Ishaga Missionary Zone, Rev Biodun Adeyewa; groom's mother, Mrs. Celestina Ogundele; little bride, Batya Tanzako; couple, Mr. Joshua Oladel, his wife, Tolulope; groom's father, Pastor Oladele Ogundel; flower girl, Demilola Ipinlaye; and bride's mother, Mrs. Mobolaji Adeyewa, during the wedding of Tolulope Adeyewa and Joshua Oladele at the Foursquare Gospel Church, Ishaga Missionary Zonal headquarters in Mushin, Lagos...recently

PHOTO: ABAYOMI AKINYELE

FEATURES

Group Features Editor: Chiemelie Ezeobi
Email: chiemelie.ezeobi@thisdaylive.com, 07010510430

Addressing Leadership Deficiencies in Public Service

For ages, lack of quality leadership has remained a clog in the wheel of Nigeria's development - but the conscious and persistent efforts by the AIG-Imoukhuede Foundation in mentoring competent leaders even beyond the shores of the country could make a lot of difference in governance, **James Emejo** writes

L-R: Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede, Executive Vice-Chair, Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation; Segun Adeniyi, former Editor, Thisday; Professor Darlington Ewaen Obaseki, winner, AIG Public Leaders Programme Capstone Project; Professor Chris Stone Co-chair Blavatnik School of Government at the closing ceremony of the AIG Public Leaders Programme class of 2022

L-R: Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, Chairman, Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation; Abubakar Mahmoud, Member, Aig-Imoukhede Foundation Leadership Council; 'Dere Awosika, Chairwoman, Access Bank Plc; Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede, Executive Vice-Chair, Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation; Professor Attahiru Jega, Former Vice Chancellor, Bayero University, Kano; Professor Chris Stone, Co-chair, Blavatnik School of Government; Thami Mseleku, High Commissioner of South Africa to the Federal Republic of Nigeria at the closing ceremony of the AIG Public Leaders Programme class of 2022

As aptly captured recently by former Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Attahiru Jega, quality leadership remains a critical ingredient of success or failure for Nigeria's development objectives.

According to him, there are quality deficiencies in public sector leadership compared to what obtains in other sectors in the private sector even though the latter had also shown cracks in terms of integrity, professionalism and efficiency in the delivery of services in recent times.

Yet, the former INEC boss believes that in spite of several attempts aimed at reforming the public sector since the mid-1980s, it has experienced a "decomposition, reflected in the nature and character of the state structures, institutions, and processes as well as the orientation, character, and disposition of those leading it".

The eminent African novelist and critic, here addresses Nigeria's problems, aiming to challenge the resignation of Nigerians and inspire them to reject old habits which inhibit Nigeria from becoming a modern and attractive country.

The late Nigerian novelist, poet, and critic, Chinua Achebe in his book, "The Trouble with Nigeria" which was written over two decades ago, rightly demonstrated that rather than being a blessing, the country's set of leaders – political and otherwise have largely contributed to the current challenges that have bedevilled the entity.

Achebe wrote that "The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership" – a position which had been supported by many and remains evident in virtually all spheres of the economy.

However, speaking on "Public Sector Leadership in Times of Crises" during the closing ceremony of AIG - Imoukhuede Public Leaders Programme in Abuja, Jega pointed out that, the "Nigerian public sector has, for long, been in dire need of re-composition" in order to efficiently and effectively deliver public goods and services and to re-establish capacity of the Nigerian state to play one of its key roles, which is the deployment of state resources for the satisfaction of citizens' needs and aspirations, through the delivery of public goods and services that promote, protect and defend human security.

He expressed regrets that the Nigerian government had paid inadequate attention to addressing the poor leadership challenge but expressed confidence that the timely interventions by the AIG-Imoukhuede Foundation, would serve to sensitise governments at various levels and begin to make them alive to their responsibilities.

Jega said African countries need to pay considerable attention to increasing the capacity, competence, and effectiveness of leadership in the public sector, so as to reposition it for greater roles and impact beneficial for economic growth and socioeconomic development.

L-R: Segun Adeniyi, former Editor, Thisday; Ofovwe Aig-Imoukhuede, Executive Vice-Chair Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation; Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, Chairman, Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation; Zukiswa Mqolomba, Participant. AIG Public Leaders Programme; Thami Mseleku, High Commissioner of South Africa to the Federal Republic of Nigeria; Professor Chris Stone, Co-chair, Blavatnik School of Government at the closing ceremony of the AIG Public Leaders Program class of 2022

According to him, nurturing and sustaining high-quality public sector leadership remained both a panacea for stable societal development, as well as a proactive strategic preparation for the successful resolution of crises that may arise.

Building New Generation Public Sector Leaders

Today, it is believed that those who are at the helm of affairs do not even understand the purpose of public service or being in a position to lead.

This was why the AIG-Imoukhuede Foundation had taken the lead to reorientate current and intending public officers their primary responsibility to the people and the country in general.

The AIG Public Leaders Programme (PLP), offered by the Aig-Imoukhuede Foundation and the University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government, is an executive education programme that provides high-potential African public servants the opportunity to acquire the skills needed to create cultures of excellence, effectiveness, and integrity in their organisations.

The 2022 PLP class, which included its first international participant from South Africa, was made up of 52 public servants, carefully selected from government ministries, departments, and agencies.

Delivered through a blend of rigorous online and in-person classes, the programme equipped the 52 programme graduates with the knowledge, tools and conceptual frameworks they need to meet the challenges of public sector leadership in a fast-changing world.

The programme consisted of months of intense and demanding sessions, engaging participants through classroom discussions, simulations, practical exercises and a capstone project, leading to the closing ceremony.

In his remarks, Chairman of the foundation, Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, pointed out that as part of its multi-billion Naira commitment to facilitate the transformation of the public sector, the foundation was committed to building a new generation of public sector leaders to drive change across their various organisations.

According to him, the foundation's partnership with the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford was a means of ensuring that these future public sector leaders had access to world class training, which would give them the skills and knowledge they need to be effective leaders.

While congratulating the graduates, he urged them to use the learnings they had gained from the programme in their various places of work, adding that the private sector must recognise the important role the public sector plays in national development and encouraged more support for the reforms of the public sector.

The AIG Public Leaders Programme is a seven-week executive education programme for African public servants, delivered via synchronous and asynchronous methods with two live teaching weeks in Abuja.

Participants, all of whom are offered fully funded scholarships to attend the programme are taught a range of vital leadership skills, conceptual frameworks, and practical tools that will empower them to be more effective as they lead their departments and organisations through the challenges of an increasingly complex and dynamic world.

On the expected outcomes from participants, Aig-Imoukhuede in an interview with THISDAY, said, "52 Africans have been through a four-month programme that involves residential teaching, virtual teaching; they've been through case studies and they've worked on capstone projects which are meant to solve problems either in their place of work or any sphere of public activity and taught by a world class faculty from the university of Oxford and Blavatnik School of Government.

"We interacted with leaders in the public and private sectors in class and I don't think it gets any better than that. My own vision for this class and the class before it is that it was at a programme just like this at Harvard that the whole idea of Access Bank was hatched.

"When you get together with peers with like minds, driven to excel and succeed, very interesting things happen in such groups and in such classrooms."

He said, "So, I hope that just as I attended a programme like this well over 20 years ago in Harvard – Nigerians and other public servants who are attending this programme will make Access Bank happen in the public sector."

Asked whether there were efforts to ensure that Nigerian politicians and other public officials benefit from the programme as they take up higher responsibilities, Aig-Imoukhuede said, "I wish we had infinite capacity but we don't and we have to start somewhere but it is something that we are thinking about and eventually we would get there."

African countries need to pay considerable attention to increasing the capacity, competence, and effectiveness of leadership in the public sector, so as to reposition it for greater roles and impact beneficial for economic growth and socioeconomic development

Promoting Sustainable Environment through Effective Waste Management

Under its Go-recycling Project, Sahara Group Foundation, Lagos State Employment Trust Fund and Wecyclers, a recycling social enterprise, recently launched the first of its 12 recycling hubs in Isolo. Under this partnership, **Precious Ugwuzor** reports that these recycling hubs will be rolled-out across several local government areas across the state

Sahara Group Foundation, the corporate sustainability vehicle for Sahara Group; Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF), an agency under the Lagos State Government for job and wealth creation, and Wecyclers, a recycling social enterprise, have launched the first of its 12 recycling hubs (under the partnership) to be rolled-out across several local government areas in Lagos State.

The hubs, the first of which was launched at Isolo local government area, Lagos, aim to promote a sustainable environment, create jobs and empower the people of Isolo community to adopt recycling as an effective waste management practice with some financial reward, with the potential to support a movement of environmentally conscious Lagosians.

Speaking at the launch, Ejiro Gray, Director, Sahara Group Foundation said; "Today's launch event is a testament of our commitment to continue to impact lives and livelihoods across diverse communities. Today, together with our partners - LSETF and Wecyclers, we have brought to life a sustainable initiative capable of spurring a favourable and widespread behavioural change where Lagosians will reimagine their waste management practices and adopt recycling".

Gray further stated that the project will contribute to the development of a circular economy in Lagos and reduce the amount of waste generated in the city significantly.

Gray concluded by urging the people of Isolo to take advantage of the Go-Recycling project and help transform their lives and communities positively by making a commitment to promote a cleaner, healthier and thriving community for today and future generations.

L-R: Oluwayemisi Lawal, COO, Wecyclers; Samson Bola Akinbami, General Manager, Isolo LCDA; Ejiro Gray, Director, Sahara Group Foundation; Omolara Adewunmi, Director, Programme, Lagos State Employment Trust Fund at the launch of the recycling project between Sahara Group Foundation, Wecyclers and LSETF tagged 'Go Recycling' held at Isolo LCDA, Isolo, Lagos.... Recently

Also speaking at the event, Omolara Adewumi, Director of Programmes and Coordination, representing the Executive Secretary, LSETF, Teju Abisoye, said: "Through this initiative, we hope to empower the Isolo residents by providing them with an opportunity to earn while also contributing to a greener future.

"We believe that this recycling hub will not only benefit individuals but also have a positive impact on the community as a whole. We are excited to partner with Sahara Foundation and Wecyclers, organisations that are leading the way in building a sustainable future for Lagos State."

Addressing guests at the launch, the Chief Operating Officer, Wecyclers, Oluwayemisi Lawal, said "At Wecyclers, we believe that waste is not a problem, but an opportunity. Our partnership with Sahara Foundation and LSETF has enabled us to take this opportunity and turn it into a sustainable business model.

"The Go-recycling project will help us to reach and empower more individuals to take action towards a cleaner Lagos, and we believe that it will inspire others to join us in our mission to build a better world for generations to come."

The Go-recycling project rollout is set to positively influence the recycling narrative in Lagos, with all 12 hubs set to be launched before the end of the year.

Sahara Group Foundation, the corporate sustainability vehicle for leading energy and infrastructure conglomerate, Sahara Group, is committed to building sustainable societies by helping to improve access to energy and promote sustainable environments through strategic investments, programs, and partnerships that support widespread development across operating countries.

The Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF), on the other hand, was established by The Lagos State Employment Trust Fund Law 2016 to provide financial support to residents of Lagos State for jobs, wealth creation, and tackling unemployment.

LSETF focuses on promoting entrepreneurship by improving access to finance, strengthening the institutional capacity of MSMEs, and formulating policies designed to improve the business environment in Lagos State.

Fostering Food Security and Environmental Sustainability

Ashish Pande

Addressing climate change is key to maintaining harmony in the symbiotic relationship that exists between man and nature. This is because that vital relationship is being threatened by the wider depletion of natural resources as well as the release of harmful substances across business operations and human activity.

Consequently, severe nature responses in the forms of extreme weather conditions, flooding, drought, and landslides amongst others continue to cause glitches in the food value chain, stoke poor health conditions in our cities, widen scarcity of water, increase desertification across regions, disrupt communities, and ruin valuable social infrastructure.

For instance, the United Nations (UN) reported that an estimated 55 million people around the world are affected by drought every year. According to the UN, within the next three decades, a quarter of the globe would be impacted by these severe climate reactions. The global body also revealed that the earth is presently about 1.1 °C warmer compared to previous centuries.

It also said greenhouse gas concentrations comprising carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and certain synthetic chemicals are at their highest levels and rising faster. It warned that emissions must be put in check to achieve a 7.6 percent drop per year going forward to ensure the global temperature does not escalate to a level that is unbearable for everyone.

In the food value chain, the effects of climate change are telling. They lead to soil degradation which impacts crop yields adversely. Poor soil conditions and low harvests contribute substantially to food insecurity. Food production levels dive. Food prices subsequently skyrocket leaving many households short on valuable nutrients. The World Food Programme (WFP) has even tagged the year 2023 another year of extreme jeopardy for those struggling to feed their families. This gruesome theme cast a shadow over the world as 345.2 million people are projected to be food insecure somewhere in the year.

The onus is on governments and businesses to act fast to avert this looming calamity. Investment in innovation that would stave off the realization of the scary extreme temperature and food insecurity projection is critical at this point. Olam Agri is a leading agribusiness transforming food, feed, and fibre, and we are taking measures to ease the pressure being piled on the global food system and the environment to ensure a safer and prosperous world for all.

Pande

As a leader in agriculture, we are investing in various innovative projects that can reduce carbon emissions and help preserve our environment. A fine example of our efforts to curb carbon emissions is the bold step taken towards sustainability at Olam Agri in Nigeria's new office building.

Located in the heart of Lagos' bustling industrial zone, we recently installed solar panelling at the new office to increase the share of renewable energy, promote the corporate goal of de-carbonisation as well as obtain green credits for the edifice.

Of course, solar panelling harnesses the power of the sun to generate electricity, provide clean energy and reduce operating costs. Currently, our building solar infrastructure generates an estimated 50 KW. It takes care of about 15% of the total energy required to power the office building. By installing the panelling infrastructure at the office to support our energy consumption rate, we are significantly reducing the building's carbon footprint and contributing to a greener environment.

In addition to reducing carbon footprint, our Lagos office building will also be able to obtain green credits. These credits are awarded to companies and organisations that take steps towards sustainability and reducing their carbon emissions. The credits can be traded to offset the carbon emissions of other Olam Agri facilities in the country.

More, we are making a lot of progress in improving access to food and nutrition, farmers' lives, and sustainability practices, especially in lower-income and emerging countries in Africa. Early in the year, we partnered with the Nanyang Technological University, a leading global research college in Singapore, to craft innovative, sustainable strategies targeted at raising the resilience level of Nigeria's food value chain.

Through that partnership, we are sponsoring the Singapore Business Case Competition (SBCC) X African Challenge 2023. The competition featured 34 teams comprising 135 undergraduates from over 11 universities which made presentations on climate-smart strategies to Olam Agri with a focus on how to improve Nigeria's agriculture sector, tackle climate threats, and address the topographic and systemic challenges impeding the achievement of food security. The winners of the contest won a $1,500 prize in addition to an all-expense paid trip to Nigeria to implement their solutions.

As well, we have developed an industry innovation targeted at utilising agri-waste to produce a heat source useful for bakery operations. The innovation which is called 'the Gasifier', is a palm kernel oven which utilises palm kernel waste i.e., palm kernel shells to produce heat that powers baking ovens. This innovative biofuel provides a cleaner, greener environment.

All the sustainability efforts form an additional arm of the Olam Agri Seeds for the Future (SFTF) project, a signature corporate social sustainability vehicle. The SFTF also focuses on supporting farmers and farming communities, enabling wider education & skill development for young people in Nigeria, upskilling women bakers, promoting health & nutrition, and reducing carbon emissions in our operations.

Another example of our environmental sustainability effort is our strategic partnership with leading Nigerian university, Bayero University Kano (BUK) and the Kano State Government, where we donated 5,000 tree saplings to BUK as part of a tree planting campaign geared towards offsetting carbon emissions and conserving biodiversity.

This was an important climate action aimed at achieving carbon neutrality and the net-zero targets on a larger scale and to ensure that the fuel emissions created by our fleet operations are to a large extent offset from the ecosystem.

Precisely, the reforestation, installation of the solar panelling at our office, the investment in the SBCC X Africa Challenge, and the conception and development of the gasifier, amongst others, are a clear demonstration of our commitment to sustainability. We are hoping that this move will inspire other organisations to take steps towards making our environment liveable.

-Pande is the Country Head of Olam Agri in Nigeria, a leading agribusiness, transforming food, feed and fibre with a global origination footprint, processing capabilities and deep understanding of market needs built over 33 years. With a strong presence in high-growth emerging markets and products across grains & oilseeds, animal feed & protein, rice, edible oils, specialty grains & seeds, cotton, wood products, rubber and commodity financial services, Olam Agri is at the heart of global food and agri-trade flows with approximately 40 million MT in volume traded annually. Focused on transforming food, feed, and fibre for a more sustainable future, it aims at creating value for customers, enable farming communities to prosper sustainably and strive for a food-secure future.

PROPERTY & ENVIRONMENT

UPDC to Create Quality Homes in Middle Income Market

Bennett Oghifo

UPDC Plc., the foremost real estate development and management company in the country, has a lot of premium homes in its portfolio. For the over two decades of its existence, it had built all shades of luxury homes in the up-market.

But now, the seasoned builder has seen an exciting niche in the middle income market where it has decided to lead a formidable charge by rendering some high-quality but competitively priced housing products.

The Chief Executive Officer of UPDC Plc., Mr. Odunayo Ojo did not mince words about this delft move the company is making in his presentation of their scorecard and 2023 outlook to journalists recently.

The CEO said for about 25 years, UPDC has been operating as a standalone company and continues to be the foremost real estate development company, institutional investor, and has done a lot of developments across the country.

"We have about five different business lines, the first one being property development. So we build houses, we create real estate projects, we build communities and if you see some of the landmark buildings around Lagos and other parts of the country, you will see our footprints. For instance, KPMG is renting one of the properties from UPDC and the next building to it also on Bishop Aboyade Cole Street, Victoria Island, is also one of our properties among other developments. Festival Mall just across from this (Festival) hotel was also developed by UPDC and so on.

"We have a lot of landmark projects across the country. We have built in Abuja, Port Harcourt, in Calabar, in Asaba, in Ibadan; so we are a true national heritage company and that continues to be our legacy."

He said the company is also involved in development management and Asset Management. "These are advisory services that we render to our clients where if you are an investor and you want a strong project manager or a strong partner, UPDC can do that for you.

"We are in the facility management business. We have a standalone company known as UPDC Facilities Management Limited. It's a separate company that does facility management for all our estates and we are into hospitality. This hotel, the festival hotel, is one of our companies.

"We all knew it as Durba hotel many years ago, then it became Golden Tulip, now, it has been rebranded to Festival Hotel. These are the things that we do as a business.

"Also, as part of our track record we've built thousands of houses, we've built retail, we've built offices, we have over 35 different estates that our facility management company manages. The hotel is the second largest in Lagos after Eko Hotel; it's a huge facility. We have a lot of rooms for conferences, this is something that we are very proud of and we are still strong in terms of our asset base as a business."

L-R: Head, Sales and Marketing, UPDC Plc, Mr. Damola Oguntoyinbo; Chief Executive Officer. UPDC Plc., Mr. Odunayo Ojo; Chief Commercial Officer, Mr. Priye Johnson; and President/CEO, PR Africa International, Mr. Adedapo Adelegan, at a Press Briefing on UPDC's Projects and the company's 2023 outlook held at the Festival hotel FESTAC, Lagos...recently PHOTO: ETOP UKUTT

Ojo said there is a huge prospect in the middle income market and that UPDC is well positioned to tap into it. "Everybody needs a home, but not everybody can afford a home so we decided to tackle the middle income housing segment first. Where if you have a job, you work in a good organisation, you earn a salary, you should ideally be able to own your home. That's what happens in any part of the world. Why is it different in Nigeria? We don't have mortgages, we don't have the credit system, but as developers, it's one of our responsibilities to address the shortage of housing.

"So we started moving away from the luxury product and started to move toward the middle income product on our way to get into the affordable housing sector. Last year, we walked on two major projects and we are going to be doing more during the course of this year.

"One of them is our Pinnock prime project. We started it and we had a groundbreaking ceremony around May last year and it's a community. It's a site and service scheme where people can buy land and you can build either your own home or build for commercial purposes; to sell or to lease."

Govt High Taxes, Developers' Greed Unhealthy Cocktail in Housing Sector, Says BCPG

Bennett Oghifo

Building Collapse Prevention Guild (BCPG) has appealed to the government to reduce preliminary fees charged home developers to discourage them from cutting corners and cheating.

The Guild also advised housing developers to engage professionals in their projects and to adhere to building regulations at all times.

Disturbed by the frequent collapse of buildings in the country, BCPG in a statement, 'Appeal to Developers', signed by its National President, Tpl. Sulaimon Yusuf, and Honorary General Secretary, QS. Adenike Ayanda, said, "We hereby appeal to developers to abide by the building regulations and engage the appropriate professionals in the pre-construction, construction and post-construction stages of building. They should consider the risk involved in building construction more than the gains.

"Developers embarking on multi storey building construction should desist from direct labour method and engage the services of reputable construction companies. It is a clever way of mortgaging risk. Saving costs at the expense of human life could result in huge financial losses, chorusing the foolhardiness of 'penny wise pound foolish'.

"We equally appeal to the government to lessen the burden on developers by reducing the high development fees and taxation. Expensive preliminary costs incurred in building plan approval etc tempt developers to cut corners/cheat.

"Greed is the major weakness of most developers. We pray to God to help them overcome this evil spirit. Investment in the housing sector is a pertinent developmental contribution that provides appreciable returns. However, investment in buildings that will not stand the test of time, endangering the life of occupants is an investment in futility. Every developer should endeavour to deliver a building with the heart and intention of occupying it by himself or herself.

"Any developer that is in doubt of the stability or quality of building(s) already constructed by him or her should have the courage to contact us for remedy. Keeping quiet might spell an imponderable disaster for many.

"It is pertinent to seize this opportunity to remind those handling building projects for their relations and friends in the diaspora to bear in mind that God has a way of rewarding sincere people that do not engage in the diversion of project funds to the detriment of building production quality. Morality and ethics can help raise the bar for our entire building industry.

"Those who invest rightly are considered wise developers. May the developers in this clime become wise and lessen the fears of incessant building collapse."

The Guild said, "When the 7-storey building collapsed at Banana Island, Ikoyi, Lagos on April 12, 2023, the holy month of Lent/Easter and Ramadan/Eid-El-Fitri seemed desecrated.

"However, for this incident to have occurred around this sacred period, an auspicious time to intensify the evangelism against building collapse and stir the conscience of those who are currently the dominating factor in the Nigerian Housing Sector is now!

"Real estate and housing development have become an alternative booming business for investors following the collapse of the stock exchange and manufacturing in Nigeria. So many business oriented people, who possess nil training in building construction have flooded the nation's construction sphere with little respect for professionalism and due process.

"When there are no eligibility criteria, requirements or qualifications that restrict admission into a sensitive and critical sector, the consequence will endanger the much cherished life and property. And in 'all comers affair' , where professional advice is hardly adhered to as profiteering is elevated above safety, compromise becomes the order of the day.

Building Collapses Whenever it Ought to

Charles Maduka

'Negligence is the trust of the soul, that corrodes through all her resolves' – Owen Feltham. Whenever caution is thrown to the wind, humans become prone to avoidable misfortunes.

Whenever caution is thrown to the wind, humans become prone to avoidable misfortunes. On Wednesday 12th April 2023, the news of the collapse of a seven-storey building under construction located at the highbrow First Avenue, Banana Island, Ikoyi Lagos was received with shock and trepidation. Questions being asked were; Why! How! In Banana Island of all places! These questions were being asked because of the exclusive nature of the Island and the presume high standard of construction and environmental punctilio on the Island. It is an island for the rich and the bourgeoisie. The collapse is certainly one too many.

Similarly, in November 2021, a Twenty -one Storey building located at No 44 Gerard Road, Ikoyi Lagos collapsed under questionable circumstances. It was reported that the building's density and setback on the site showed a gross violation of the Lagos State Building Regulations. The collapse was at the end of the day attributed to Structural design errors.

There were other reported incidents of building collapse in various parts of the nation in recent times which are beyond the remit of this piece. There had been submissions and essays by professionals and concerned stakeholders in the construction industry on the incessant building collapse in Lagos and other parts of Nigeria.

At present, in the front burner is the seven – storey collapsed building under construction at First Avenue, Banana Island Ikoyi. What could have caused the collapse of the building? Is it the same as that of 44 Gerard Ikoyi? Coincidentally, both collapses occurred within the Ikoyi area of Lagos Island.

Furthermore, is it a misapplication of physical properties and sound engineering theories? Too many questions! Whilst, it may not be appropriate to jump to a conclusion, ahead of the report by the investigating team set up by the Lagos State Government to unravel the remote and immediate causes of the unfortunate incident; It might be pertinent to assert that in a society where corruption and compromise have become a way of life, such a nation can hardly make an enviable advancement among the comity of nations.

According to reports, Lagos is a low-lying metropolitan city with flat topography and having many areas at or below sea level and an average elevation of 1.5m only above the sea level. Besides, Lagos is a wetland. The Mainland and the Island make up the City of Lagos. Most of the Lagos Island is reclaimed land from surrounding bodies of water. What a delicate place to site high-rise buildings and skyscrapers. Paradoxically such is the situation.

The 160m- tall- 32 floor Nigerian External Communication (NECOM House) building located precisely at 15 Marina/Cable street Lagos is the tallest building in Nigeria. The Union Bank Tower and one the tallest buildings in Nigeria is also located in Marina, Lagos. The soil compositions, coastal characteristics, topography, microclimate, and unusual climatology make Lagos a delicate place to stand a high-rise building without adequate professional know-how.

Banana Island is a man-made island. The 15-floor Lucrezia at a height of 65m is probably the tallest residential building in Banana Island. Anchored at a height of 45m below ground level by a chain of 94 piles of 900mm diameter, the building is unlikely to be harmed by the wind adversity.

Banana Island is said to be at sea level but a study of Amsterdam, Netherlands shows that the city is about 2m below sea level. Why are the buildings located there not sinking one may ask? Sound design, Precision Engineering, Construction, and Integrity; No cutting of corners. It might be of interest to state that the tallest building in Amsterdam is the 150m tall- 36- floor Rembrandt Tower. It is anchored on a chain of piles of sizes, 56m deep and 2m in diameter. It was designed by a group of architects that included the famous architectural firm- SOM of Chicago.

-Maduka, an Architect, writes from Lagos

BUSINESSWORLD

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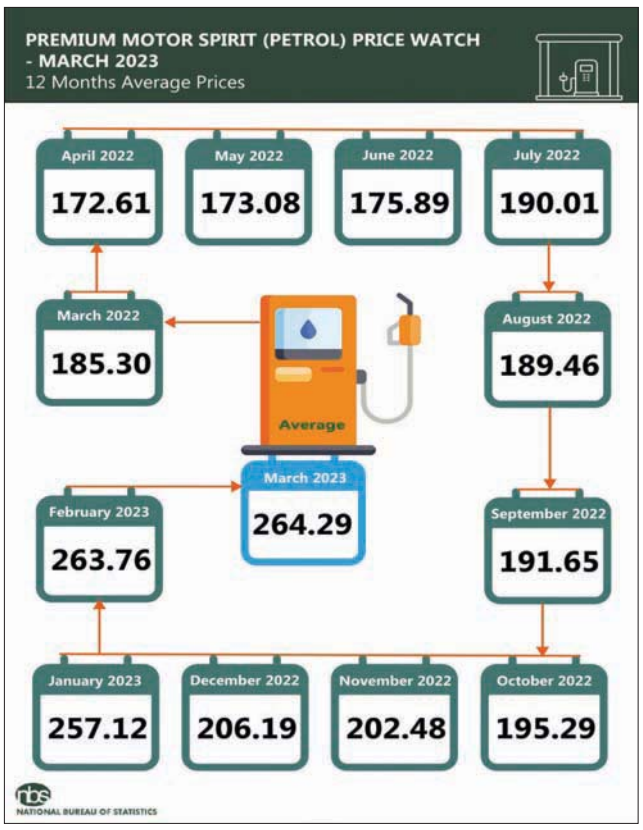
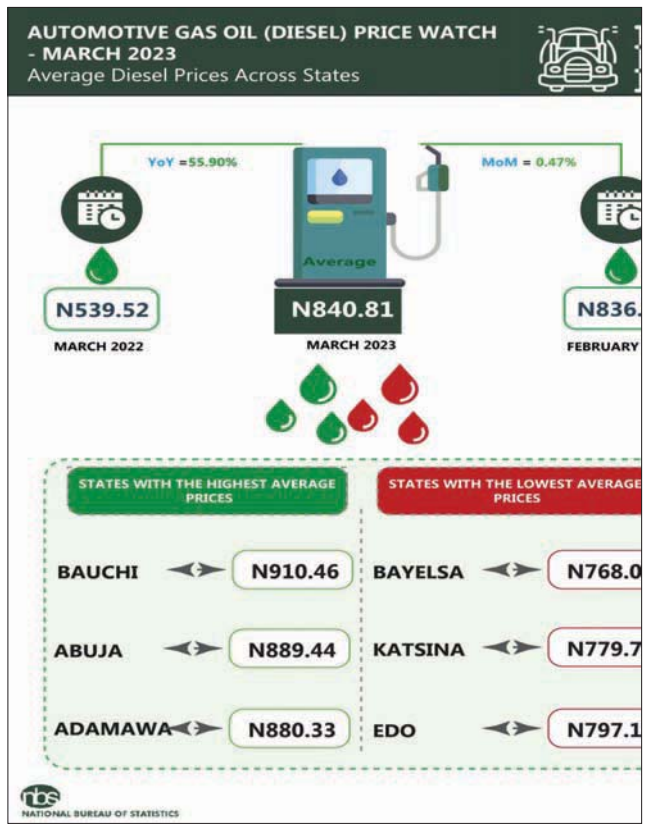
RATES AS AT APRIL 24, 2023

MONEY MARKET		REPO		S & P INDEX		S & P INDEX		EXCHANGE RATE
OPR	11.25%	CALL	19.12%	INDEX LEVEL	611.31%	1/4 TO DATE	-0.07%	N462.50/1 US DOLLAR*
OVERNIGHT	11.50%	1-MONTH	16.25%	1-DAY	0.03%	YEAR TO DATE	0.48%	*AS AT LAST FRIDAY
		3-MONTH	15.75%	MONTH-TO-DATE	-0.7%			

Manufacturers Groan as Diesel Price Jumps 55.9%, Petrol Up 42% in One Year





Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The pump prices of diesel and petrol increased significantly to 55.9 per cent and 42.6 per cent respectively between April 2022 and the same period in 2023, new data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has indicated.

The average retail price of diesel also called Automotive Gas Oil (AGO) paid by consumers rose from a lower cost of N539.32 per litre recorded in the corresponding month of last year to a higher cost of N836.81 per litre in March.

Nigeria's rising energy costs have resulted in the country's jumping inflation and contributes significantly to costs borne by manufacturers in the country. For instance, last month, the NBS said Nigeria's headline inflation rate increased to 22.04 per cent on a year-on-year basis.

It was 6.13 per cent higher than the rate recorded in March 2022 at 15.92 per cent, with energy costs on electricity, gas and other fuels contributing significantly.

Recently, manufacturers said surging diesel prices will force them to cut jobs, curb operations and raise prices.

In addition, power, which is largely unstable normally accounts for as much as 40 per cent of factories' costs in Nigeria, according to the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN).

However, on a month-on-month basis, the latest NBS data showed that an increase of 0.47 per cent was recorded from N836.91 in the preceding month of February to an average of N840.81 in March 2023.

Looking at the variations in the state prices, it stated that the top three State with the highest average price of the product in March 2023 included Bauchi (N910.46), Abuja (N889.44) and Adamawa (N880.33).

Furthermore, the top three lowest prices, it noted, were recorded in Bayelsa (N768.04), Katsina (N779.78) and Edo (N797.14).

According to the NBS, the zonal representation of average price of diesel shows that the North-east zone has the highest price of N856.42 while the South-south zone has the lowest price of N816.92 when compared with other zones.

Manufacturing accounts for about 13 per cent of output in Nigeria. Before the astronomical rise in diesel prices, Nigeria was among the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa, according to data available. At now over N800 naira, it would be among the highest on the continent.

In the same vein, the NBS March figures indicated that the average retail price paid by consumers for Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) or petrol in March 2023 was N264.29, indicating an increase of 42.63 per cent relative to the value recorded in March 2022 of N185.30.

Likewise, comparing the average price value with February 2023, the average retail price increased by 0.20 per cent from N263.76.

On state profile analysis, Imo state had the highest average retail price for petrol with N332.67, followed by Taraba with N330.00 and Borno with N324.55.

On the other hand, Benue recorded the lowest average retail price for the product, with N195.00, followed by Plateau with N196.79 and Nasarawa with N197.50.

In addition, analysis by zone showed that the South-east recorded the highest average retail price in March 2023 with N306.00, while the North-central had the lowest with N205.10.

About an estimated 40 per cent of Nigeria's population that's connected to the country's deteriorating national electricity grid endures lengthier power outages than usual and have had to depend on the fuel to power their generating sets and others.

Continued on page 26

IRENA: $35trn Needed in Transitional Technologies to Limit Climate Change

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has stated that bout $35 trillion in transitional technology funding is needed by the end of the decade to limit global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius

In a report, IRENA said renewables must account for over 10,000 GW by 2030.

It warned that the world was currently off track to meet its climate goals and prevent the worst impact of the climate emergency. IRENA said that significant work would need to be done to redirect the course of the existing track.

Not only will this require more ambitious climate policies from countries worldwide, it said, but a significant boost in investment will be needed as well as global support for a green transition in lower-income countries.

The report found that an extra $35 trillion of funding will be needed in transitional technologies by the end of the decade to reduce global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius, as stated in the Paris Agreement targets.

The organisation acknowledged the progress of recent years, mainly in the power sector where renewables now account for 40 per cent of installed power globally. However, the green energy pipeline is far below the amount required to stick to the 1.5oC limit, it said.

To achieve the targets required to limit climate change, renewable energy deployment levels must increase from some 3,000 gigawatts today to over 10,000 GW by 2030, it added.

Most of the progress to date has been concentrated in a few specific regions, with China, the European Union and the US accounting for two-thirds of all new green energy in 2022.

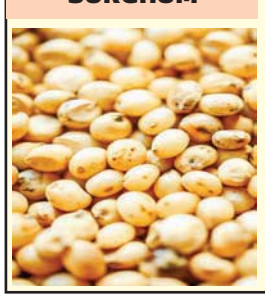
Many developing economies

Continued on page 26

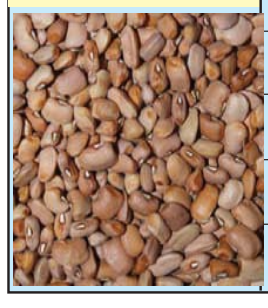
FOOD COMMODITIES PRICE TODAY

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	STATE	PRICE
RICE	100KG	ABUJA	N35,000 – N45,000
	50KG	OYO	N35,000 – N45,000
	50KG	PLATEAU (JOS)	N32,500 – N42,000
	50KG	KWARA	N24,000–N27,000
	50KG	LAGOS	N35,000 – N45,000
	50KG	RIVERS	N36,500 – N46,500
	50KG	SOKOTO	N60,000 – N70,000

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	STATE	PRICE
SORGHUM	100KG	JIGAWA	N30,000
	100KG	BENUE	N32,000
	100KG	KADUNA	N32,000
	50KG	ENUGU	N24,000
	50KG	LAGOS	N26,000
	100KG	DELTA	N35,000
	100KG	ABIA	N36,000



NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	STATE	PRICE
BEANS	50KG BAG	MAIDU GURI	N22,000 – N30,000
	100KG	LAGOS	N36,000
	100KG	KANO	N35,000
	100KG	DELTA	N36,000
	100KG	ABIA	N35,700



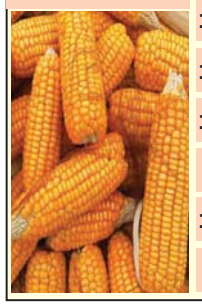
FOOD COMMODITIES PRICE TODAY

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	STATE	PRICE
PALM OIL	25CL	LAGOS	N20,000-N35000
	25CL	PH	N24,000-N35,000
	25CL	IBADAN	N22,000—N35,000
	25CL	IMO	N24,000-N36,500
	25CL	EDO	N20,000-N35,000
	25CL	ABUJA	N25,500-N35,000

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	STATE	PRICE
GROUNDNUT	100KG	KANO	N20,500
	100KG	BENUE	N27,000
	100KG	LAGOS	N32,000
	100KG	DELTA	N34,000
	100KG	ABIA	N27,000
	100KG	ENUGU	N23 000

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	STATE	PRICE
ONIONS	100KG	IBADAN	₦60,000
	100KG	KANO	₦30,000
	100KG	BENUE	₦65,000
	100KG	PLATEAU	₦45,000
	100KG	DELTA	₦50,000
	100KG	LAGOS	₦60,000
	100KG	ENUGU	₦45,000

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	LOCATION	PRICE
MAIZE	100KG	OYO	₦10,000
	100KG	ENUGU	N16,500
	100KG	DELTA	N14,000
	100KG	ABIA	₦11,000
	50KG	LAGOS	N9,000
	100KG	KANO	₦9,400
	50KG	BENUE	N6,000



PETAN: Current Mega Projects in Oil Industry Raise Doubts about Meeting Local Content Targets

Peter Uzoho

Chairman of the Petroleum Technology Association of Nigeria (PETAN), Mr. Nicolas Odinuwe has expressed doubts about the ability of ongoing mega projects in the Nigerian oil and gas industry to convince local oil service companies that the local content targets of the projects would be met.

Odinuwe stated that PETAN receive complaints regularly about local content targets not being met by most of the players in the industry, adding that the operators and tier-1 contractors have not helped matters and that more needed to be done to achieve their local content targets as set.

The PETAN chairman made the assertions in his keynote presentation during the local content session at the just concluded sixth Nigerian International Energy Summit (NIES) in Abuja, with the theme: "Global Perspectives for a Sustainable Energy Future".

Speaking on the topic: "Local Content Investment and Sustainable Energy Future," urged all stakeholders including contractors and the local service companies to gear towards achieving those targets set in the Nigerian local content Act.

He said the tendency of industry players to cut corners in defiance of legal provisions, because of what the shareholders would get, negates the essence of achieving an energy future and making headway.

Odinuwe stated: "So with the environment at the forefront of what we do, we should continue to gain traction in the sector, and current mega projects in the oil and gas space are yet to convince the local service companies that local content targets set can be met.

"All of us are in this space right now and as PETAN chairman, I can tell you that we receive complaints every now and then about local content targets not being met by most of the players in the industry.

"The operators and tier-1 contractors have not helped and more needs to be done to achieve their local content targets as set. I know that each time there is a local content conferences, points are made about achieving those targets as set. Let us hope that all of us including the contractors and the local service companies gear towards achieving those targets set in the local content Act.

Energy transition: NMDPRA Reaffirms Commitment to Driving Sustainable Gas Utilisation

Peter Uzoho

The Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) has restated its commitment to ensuring sustainable growth of natural gas exploitation and utilisation in Nigeria.

Chief Executive Officer of NMDPRA, Mr. Farouk Ahmed, stated this in Lagos at a one-day stakeholders engagement on: "Gas Utilisation in Nigeria", explaining that it had become important that companies and homes embraced the utilisation of gas as an alternative to fossil fuel.

Ahmed, who was represented by the Executive Director, Distribution, System, Storage and Retailing Infrastructure, NMDPRA, Mr. Ogbugo Ukoha, enjoined Nigerians to massively adopt the usage of gas as against diesel and petrol for their daily energy needs.

He said that this would reduce the nation's carbon footprint, tackle global warming as well as climate change.

"It will also help to reposition the economy for sustainable growth and accelerate job creation since gas is believed to be the future of the nation's economy", he said.

Ahmed noted that the essence of the engagement was to encourage large consumers of petroleum products to become aware of the comparative advantages between the different fuels, particularly gas, which he added had been designated as Nigeria's transition fuel.

He explained that to promote gas usage and investment, the federal government had various initiatives and policy frameworks which included the National Gas Expansion Programme (NGEP) and the Decade of Gas Programme.

NCDMB: NOGOF 2023 to Expand Focus to Linkage Sectors, African Countries

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The fourth edition of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Opportunity Fair (NOGOF) 2023 will explore emerging opportunities in the oil and gas industry, linkage sectors as well as the entire African continent, the Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), Mr. Simbi Wabote, has said.

He spoke in Abuja in a media parley convened ahead of the biennial NOGOF scheduled to hold at the NCDMB Conference Hall in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, on May 18 and 19, with delegates registration and a welcome cocktail planned for a day earlier.

He explained that NOGOF was conceptualized in 2016 as part of the board's strategies to develop the oil and gas industry and provide a platform to showcase the various opportunities available in the oil and gas industry and foster necessary partnerships in the sector.

Wabote expressed regrets that Nigerian oil and gas service companies missed out on several opportunities in the sector prior to the introduction of NOGOF because no fora existed to showcase forthcoming projects and give them ample to prepare themselves and acquire requisite capacities.

Managing Director, Jake Riley, NOGOF project consultant, Mrs. Funmi Ogbue noted that: "with the incorporation of the linkage industry and the reach beyond Nigeria to other African countries, the stakes are even higher to ensure collaboration and success."

Also, the Director, Monitoring and Evaluation, Mr. Akintunde Adelana recalled that although the 2021 edition of NOGOF was held virtually, it still recorded a huge success and had 700 delegates online, with 600 persons participating actively in the sessions.

Halliburton Nigeria Oil Production Facility Reaches 10m Barrels Milestone

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

Halliburton Testing and Subsea (TSS) Nigeria has celebrated two significant milestones, including an Early Production Facility (EPF) and processing of its 10 millionth barrel of oil as well as reaching the milestone with zero lost-time incident (LTI) days.

The journey to the milestones started in 2019, World Oil reported, with a customer needed to fast track its oil production from two drilled wells and two planned wells.

"With support from the TSS Nigeria and global EPF team, TSS engaged with the customer and developed a practical solution to meet the requirement for accelerated oil production.

"The solution: Halliburton built, operated, and maintained an EPF in a remote and difficult-to-engineer area in the Niger Delta. This project was the first of its kind for Halliburton Nigeria due to its complexity and scope," it added.

Chad Recalls Envoy to Cameroon as Dispute over Exxon's Asset Sale Escalates

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

Chad has recalled its ambassador to neighbouring Cameroon in the latest escalation of a dispute over the sale by Exxon Mobil of its oil assets in both countries to Savannah Energy, Reuters reported.

Chad said in a statement that the president of the landlocked Central African state decided to recall its ambassador due to "entrenched disagreements" over the sale.

Exxon closed the sale of its operations in Chad and Cameroon to Africa-focused oil and gas producer Savannah in a $407 million deal in December. But the Chadian government has challenged the agreement saying the final terms of the deal were different from what had been presented to it.

Chad has nationalised the assets on its side of the border, including Exxon's share of the over 1,000 km (621 miles) Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline.

Chad said in the statement that it had reached out to Cameroon to raise concerns about "unfriendly actions" by some Cameroon officials that were contrary to the interests of Chad in the board of the pipeline company, but did not get any response.

"Chad finds itself once again in the obligation to defend its interests and its respectability and denounces the repeated actions of Cameroon and its representatives which undermine, relations between the two countries," the statement said.

MANUFACTURERS GROAN AS DIESEL PRICE JUMPS 55.9%, PETROL UP 42% IN ONE YEAR

Aside manufacturing and small businesses, the prices of diesel and petrol have also impacted the transportation sector, resulting in higher fares and contribution to the cost of living.

In February, the NBS stated that air transport fares increased by 66.36 per cent in the last one year, although the average fare paid by air passengers on air travel for specified routes single journey decreased by 0.18 per cent on a month-on-month basis from N74,702.70 in January 2023 to N74,571.62 in February 2023.

Also in the report, NBS explained that the average fare paid by commuters for bus journeys within the city on a year-on-year basis, rose by 26.07 per cent from February 2022.

Meanwhile, the average retail price for refilling a 5kg Cylinder of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Cooking Gas) increased by 0.22 per cent on a month-on-month basis from N4,600.57 recorded in February 2023 to N4,610.48 in March 2023.

But on a year-on-year basis, this rose by 22.03 per cent from N3,778.30 in March 2022. On State profile analysis, Kwara recorded the highest average price for refilling a 5kg cylinder with N4,962.87, followed by Abuja with N4,940.00, and Adamawa with N4,915.00.

On the other hand, Rivers recorded the lowest price with N4,204.45, followed by Abia and Anambra with N4,220.15 and N4,232.75 respectively.

Also, the average retail price per litre of Household Kerosene (HHK) paid by consumers in March 2023 was N1,142.46, indicating a decline of 2.68 per cent compared to N1,173.89 recorded in February 2023.

On a year-on-year basis, the average retail price per litre of the product rose by 102.37 per cent from N564.55 in March 2022, the new NBS report stated.

IRENA: $35TRN NEEDED IN TRANSITIONAL TECHNOLOGIES TO LIMIT CLIMATE CHANGE

are falling behind, and many continue to rely on fossil fuels as their main source of energy.

Experts worry that too much money is still being pumped into fossil fuel projects, with the risk of leaving stranded assets as the world transitions to green.

The IRENA report came shortly after the publication of a landmark UN Synthesis Report last month, which urged governments to act more radically on climate change.

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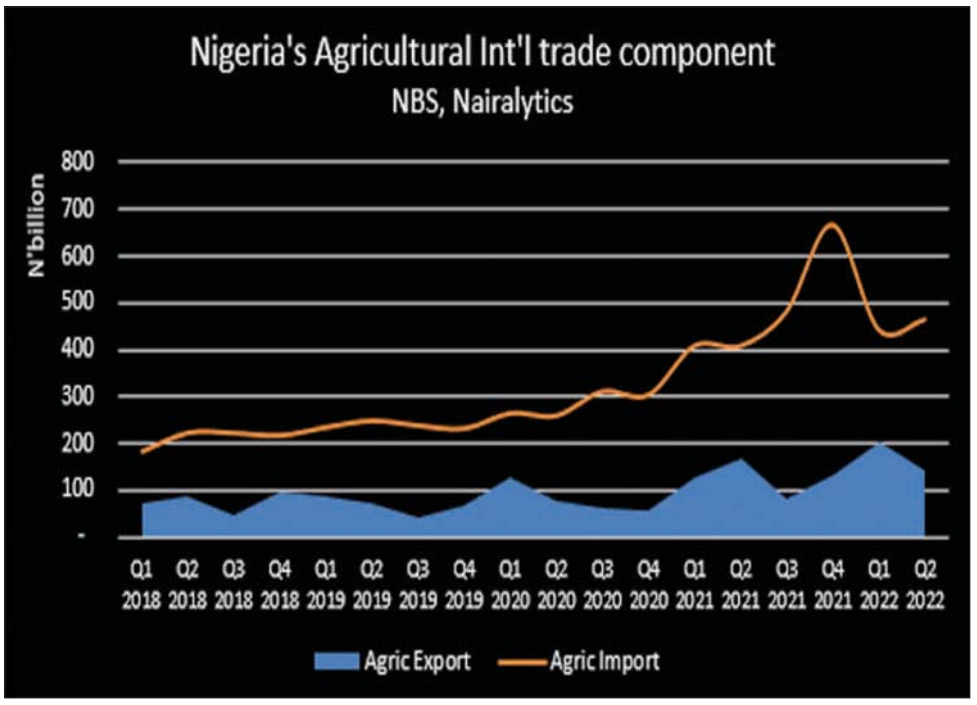
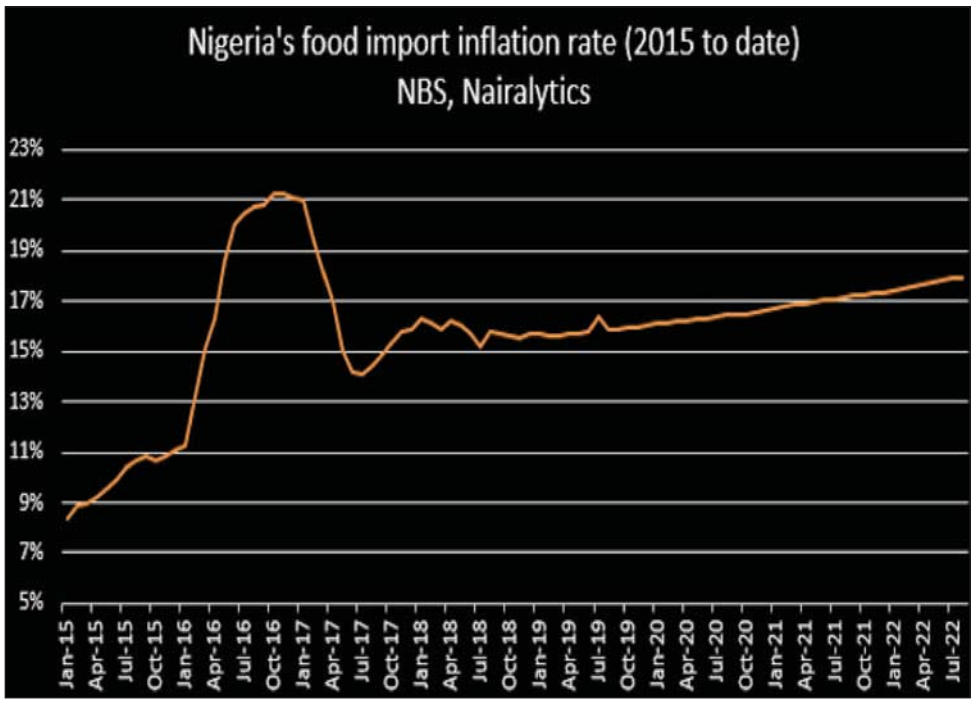
Checkmating Nigeria's Rising Food Imports

Nigeria's over-dependence on food imports is putting lots of pressure on the nation's foreign reserve, **Gilbert Ekugbe**, examines farmers' role to reducing food importation.





Undeniably, the reason behind Nigeria's dependence on food imports cannot be far-fetched as successive governments who lacked visionary leadership qualities have failed to put the agricultural sector on the right path of growth. In the 1960s agriculture was the mainstay of the nation's economy before the discovery of oil and since the discovery, a lot has changed and certainly not in favour of the food sector. The agricultural sector over the years was substituted for immediate cash from crude oil which has put the sector in doldrums.

Nigeria spent a staggering amount of N464.5 billion in the first six months of 2022 to import food products amid all efforts by the federal government to achieve food security.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the value of food imports in the second quarter of 2022 stood at N464.45 billion, an increase when compared to the value recorded in the first quarter of 2022 N443.36 billion

On a year-on-year basis, the value increased by 4.76 per cent and by 13.70 per cent when compared to the value recorded in the corresponding quarter of 2021. The total food import accounts for 8.55 percent of the total imports for the period.

Sadly, the federal government has failed to ensure the safety of lives and property for farmers across the country. Most of the farmers who are the real actors to attaining food security have fled their farms as a result of the rising insecurity concerns especially in the North-eastern part of the country. In a country where millions of people fall into hunger net on an annual basis, priorities must be placed on empowering and encouraging farmers to produce more even as climate change is having a toll on food production across the globe.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), world's smallholder farmers produce around a third of the world's food where five of every six farms in the world consist of less than two hectares, operate only around 12 per cent of all agricultural land, and produce roughly 35 per cent of the world's food.

Although, smallholders' contribution to food supply varies enormously between countries, China has 80 per cent and Brazil and Nigeria in the low single-digits.

Disheartening to say that present day 2023, only a handful number of farmers have access to tractors or modern farm equipment to drive the federal government's tractorisation programme in its efforts to boost production.

Relatedly, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. Mohammad Abubakar, said that the ministry is collaborating with the Bank of Agriculture (BOA) to make tractors with implements available to farmers at a concessionary deferred payment terms where farmers are expected to make 40 per cent down payment while the balance of 60 per cent would be spread over a period of three years.

The move, according to Abubakar, is targeted at achieving improved quantity and quality of food per person, reduce drudgery of farmers in Nigeria as well as increase productivity of farmers. But the question is do these farmers have the 40 per cent down payment? If yes, will the tractors eventually get into the hands of the farmers or be used as negotiation tools for top key government officials to satisfy their personal interest?

COST OF FARM INPUTS

The high cost of farm inputs has been identified as a major challenge hindering farmers' productivity on the continent. The invasion of Ukraine over a year ago has increased the cost of farm inputs to the detriment of farmers and Nigeria's quest to attain food security.

According to FAO's global input price index, which covered seeds, fertilizers, energy, feeds and pesticides, reached record high with these increase largely traced to rising energy prices. Some fertilizers are derived from fossil fuels and feed and seed production is highly dependent on fertilizer and fuel.

This trend began before 2022, but the invasion of Ukraine added additional upward pressure on prices for natural gas and fertilizer, of which Russia and Belarus are major producers. These inputs are critical to food production. The urgent need to make farm inputs available to farmers at a subsidised rate cannot be over flogged.

The President, All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), Mr. Kabir Ibrahim, recommended that to bolster production, processing, distribution, storage as well as marketing agricultural produce especially food, the federal government must provide incentives to the small holder farmers, who he described as the engine room of production by allowing them to access low interest credit, rapid and affordable mechanisation, subsidised fertilizers, good seeds and other inputs including access to STI (science, technology and innovation) as well as enable them to embrace year-round production by improving irrigation facilities.

Ibrahim also stated the need to improve power supply, transportation and marketing by consolidating commodity exchange platforms.

Recently, the minister of FMARD, pledged to support Imo State University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Umuagwo, with farm equipment, accessories, grants to enhance economic growth, food and nutrition security amongst others, such initiatives should be replicated in many of the food producing States in the country.

OPERATION FEED THE NATION

The OFN programme that was implemented between 1976 and 1980 sought to increase local food production and reduc Nigeria's dependence on food imports. With the objectives to mobilise the nation towards self-sufficiency and self-reliance in food production and encouraging the sector of the community relying on food purchase to grow its own food, it appeared that resources were not provided, farmers were skeptical of new methods and administrative officials did not do the job expected of them.

Also, the manpower to expand farming operations did not materialise and project managers also lacked necessary motivation to see the programme through. The urgent need to revisit this initiative is vital to Nigeria's quest to addressing the nation's alarming food import rate. The impact of climate change is having untold hardship on Nigerian farmers who still depend on rain fed agriculture.

According to the Cocoa Farmers Association of Nigeria (CFAN), irrigation is almost non-existent as far as cocoa industries are concerned, maintaining that presently, there is no cocoa farm that is irrigated in Nigeria. According to reports, out of the 3.14 million hectares of farmland with irrigation potential in Nigeria, only 88,950 hectares have been developed, leaving millions of hectares of farms to depend majorly on rainfall for crop production.

ENCOURAGING YOUNG FARMERS

There is an urgent need to phase out Nigeria's ageing farming population especially with the nation's population growing faster than the economy. Report say the West African nation's population is expected to soar even more, from 216 million people this year to 375 million, the United Nations says, making Nigeria the fourth most populous country in the world after India, China and the United States.

Nigeria is among the eight countries that the UN says will account for more than half the world's population growth between now and 2050 - along with Congo, Ethiopia, and Tanzania, among others, hence the move to get more active and vibrant hands to boost food production is not out of place.

The federal government must create an enabling environment to attract more youths in the sector. Rural-urban migration has been identified as one of the major reasons youths are shying away from farming. In love with white collar jobs, many youths see agriculture as an unprofitable venture and would rather seek opportunities in fast money spinning sectors.

Other factors include limited access to land, inadequate access to financial services, insufficient access to knowledge, information and education, difficulties in accessing green jobs, limited access to markets, and limited involvement in policy dialogue.

To address this debacle, the federal government should ensure that farm equipment is offered at subsidised prices to young individuals. Farm machinery such as ploughs, ridgers, tractors, cultivators, and so on should be offered at extremely low prices to encourage young people to get involved in agriculture.

Fabian Ajogwu and Paradox of Corporate Governance

Law Mefor

Over the weekend, Prof. Fabian Ajogwu, SAN, resigned from the Board of Directors of Seplat Energy PLC. This piece would not have been necessary if the Learned Silk and Nigeria's first Professor of Corporate Governance had quietly moved on after his Seplat fiasco. But his publicists went to town misleading Nigerians on the Seplat crisis. He forgot that when he points a finger, the rest will naturally point back at him; more so when a cursory look at the crisis in Seplat today, boils down to two things: a staggering failure in crisis management gross abuse, and failure of Corporate Governance, which largely falls on his shoulders as the Chairman of the company's Nomination and Corporate Governance Committee (NOMCO).

The writer predicated Ajogwu's resignation on alleged "deliberate external interference that have prevented him from continuing the discharge of his fiduciary and statutory duties as an independent non-executive director to the highest standards of corporate governance as he has widely published and subscribed to over the years". The supposed acts, according to the piece, manifested in: "Ex parte injunction issued by the Federal High Court in Lagos, which was subsequently set aside after weeks; a similar case filed at Federal High Court Abuja, which analysts have described as potentially abusive of court processes; framing the CEO (Mr. Roger Brown) as a 'racist' without any due process of court or fair hearing; an unwarranted charge filed against Seplat and its Directors by the Nigeria Immigration Service on 6th April 2023 and withdrawn hours later on the same date by a Notice of Discontinuance of the same dated 6th April 2023; (and) efforts by these same forces to mislead agencies of the Federal Government (FG) and the courts, to frustrate the lawful business of Seplat, destroy shareholders' investments and harass and intimidate independent non-executive directors on baseless allegations".

WAS ROGER BROWN FRAMED AS A RACIST?

It is recalled that some Nigerian employees of Seplat Energy petitioned the Ministry of Interior in January this year, leveling serious allegations against their CEO, Mr. Brown. They accused him of racism, intimidation, bullying, and sacking of Nigerian staff of Seplat; intimidation of senior staff and members of the senior management team; abuse of corporate governance, the relegation of host communities, relocation of Seplat technology office to Aberdeen; bullying of Nigerian staff by foreign nationals, etc. What exactly did the first "Professor of Corporate Governance" do when this British CEO and his expatriate friends and brothers allegedly bullied Nigerian employees of Seplat? Did he bother to cause an investigation into the matter? Does it mean that Mr. Roger Brown is bigger and more important than the multitude of employees suffering in Seplat? Does fair hearing only apply to Mr. Brown? Don't poor Nigerian employees deserve to be heard by their own company?

Also, must it take a court process to guarantee a fair hearing and establish a case of racism as the Professor's apologist surmised? A few days ago, Dominic Raab resigned from office as the Deputy Prime Minister and Justice Secretary of Mr. Brown's country, the UK, after an official inquiry indicted him of the allegations of bullying against him. The other questions Prof. Ajogwu must address are: Does Mr. Brown use foreigners as bodyguards and relegates his black guards? Do these guards stop staff from entering the lift when Roger is on board? Is it true that Brown asked the Technical Director, Mr. Gary Thompson, not to report to the Chief Operating Officer (COO) Mr. Ezeugwuorie, a Nigerian, in clear disregard for the organisation structure approved by the Board? Are there foreigners of almost 70 years in Seplat, even in the Lagos office, still working in the company while Nigerians are made to retire at 60? Was the Subsurface Department of Seplat moved from Nigeria to Aberdeen without a single Nigerian in the office?

Ajogwu

It is noteworthy that the FG clearly stated in its March 3, 2023 letter revoking Mr. Brown's visa, Work Permit, and Resident Permit that he disregarded two written invitations to defend himself. But he snubbed both, claiming to "be unavailable even though we learned he was in Abuja for other purposes at the time". So, what interest drives Ajogwu's defence of a British, who wilfully refused to submit himself to the authorities of the Nigerian government?

ARE FG'S CRIMINAL CHARGES TRULY UNWARRANTED?

It is unkind, even outrageous to describe the criminal charges against Seplat and its Independent Non-Executive Directors (INEDs) as unwarranted when the facts speak for themselves.

FG's letter to Seplat clearly stated: "Investigation and records in the Ministry also revealed that Mr. Roger Brown had CERPAC (Combined Expatriate Residence Permit and Aliens Card) that was not based on validly issued Expatriate Quota approved by the Ministry of Interior resulting to the violation of relevant Immigration Laws and Regulations. As a result of these, the Honourable Minister has determined that Mr. Brown's continued stay in Nigeria is contrary to the national interest.

"Consequently, the Ministry has withdrawn the Work Permit CERPAC, Visa, Residence Permit, and all relevant documents that authorised Mr. Roger Thomson Brown's entry or stay in Nigeria".

So, did Ajogwu and other INEDs make an announcement to the capital market passing a vote of confidence in Mr. Brown, saying he should continue to function as CEO in clear spite of FG's withdrawal of his work permit and visa as well as his declaration as a persona non-grata? Was Mr. Brown giving instructions as Seplat's CEO as recently as 14th April 2023? And as a SAN, is Ajogwu not aware of the provisions of Sections 58, 105, 36, and 71 of the Nigeria Immigration Act 2015, which Mr. Brown, the Chairman, Company Secretary, INEDS including him violated and continued to violate even after the FG wrote them?

They did not stop there. Even their breach of law, Prof. Ajogwu is accused of precipitating Seplat's rather audacious lawsuit (FHC/CS/443/2023) against the Minister of Interior, Nigeria Immigration Service, The Comptroller-General of Immigration Service, The Attorney-General of the Federation, and the Nigeria Police Force, all in a frantic effort to stop their arraignment and prosecution. But Justice A.R Mohammed ruled on 13th April that the criminal charges against them should go on while their lawsuit continues.

Meanwhile, it is Seplat's lawsuit against the FG that was unwarranted because it was instituted without due process of Seplat's litigation policy, which requires a whole/unanimous Board approval before Seplat can initiate a court action against anyone/organisation. It is an open secret at Seplat that under the Omiyi-led Board, of which Ajogwu was a powerbroker, the company has paid unprecedented legal fees, mostly on avoidable lawsuits. For instance, Seplat hired seven SANs and their law firms to defend one case with Immigration in Abuja. They also needlessly sued the co-founder of the company, Dr. ABC Orjiako in court for writing the President on Seplat's letterhead as a Pioneer Chairman over the protracted Mobil deal he was authorised by the Board to help consummate. Ironically, far from disclaiming the letter, they are frantically trying to use it to close the deal. So, what exactly did Omiyi, Brown, Ajogwu, and the INEDs SUE Orjiako for?

THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CONTRADICTIONS

The Fabian Ajogwu's promoter wrote as though Seplat never existed before the hiring of the Professor and as though he left it any better than he met it. For the records, Seplat has been acclaimed as one of the best in Corporate Governance and global best practices, for which the company has received numerous awards and accolades before Ajogwu's entrance in 2021. But experience has again shown the monumental disaster of judging a book by its cover. For instance, Ajogwu was the Chairman of Seplat's NOMCO, which allegedly handpicked a South African White lady without the due process the company is known for. It has also been alleged that the action of Omiyi, Brown, and himself continued to cause extreme division among Board members eroding Board effectiveness.

Furthermore, as a Corporate Governance guru, where was he when Omiyi was carrying on like an executive, carrying out day-to-day activities, usurping management roles, including signing off on corporate announcements? Where was his Corporate Governance attributes when Omiyi compromised his independence by accepting a luxury car from CEO Roger Brown? Where was he when Mr. Brown-led management took over maintenance of Mr. Omiyi's private residence? Where was he when Roger Brown's management approved nearly $350,000 for annual executive luxury car maintenance for Mr. Omiyi? Where was he when over $2 million for annual rent and furnishings was approved for Mr. Brown and Mr. Omiyi's new office house in Abuja against Seplat's board remuneration policy? Where was Ajogwu when $750,000 annual remuneration was approved for Omiyi on the false premise that he is entitled to the same remuneration as the co-founder and Pioneer Chairman? Seplat is listed on London Stock Exchange. Both UKLA and Nigeria's SEC prohibit INEDs from receiving any pay and perks other than their disclosed approved remuneration. But the Corporate Governance guru let it pass.

SEPLAT'S DECLINING SHARE PRICE

The pro-Ajogwu write-up did well by admitting that Seplat's share price is fast declining. But he was not truthful enough to admit that it is the inappropriate actions, lack of effectiveness, poor corporate governance and crisis management of the Seplat Board under Mr. Omiyi's poor leadership that have caused the decline of the share price. Once Mr. Brown, Mr. Omiyi, and the other INEDs resign from the Board and are replaced by a purposeful Board, the share price will rebound itself, given the robust corporate fundamentals put in place by Seplat's visionary founders and for which the company was known before the locusts took over.

DID FG WITHDRAW CRIMINAL CHARGES?

It is not true that the FG withdrew the criminal charges against Ajogwu and others. That IS said to be the real reason Ajogwu resigned in the first place so as not to lose his SAN status or lose his briefs and businesses with multinationals. As a CSO pointed out, if the case was discontinued based on the said Notice of Withdrawal/Discontinuance dated 6th April 2023, how come the Defendants were still served on 11th April? Why did their suit against the FG to stop their trial proceed on 13th April when the Immigration/FG could have simply informed the court that Seplat's lawsuit had been overtaken by event?

Now that he has jumped ship, leaving those he misled on the Board, he should go quietly. Attempts to present himself as a frustrated problem-solver rather than a big part of the problem won't fly.

• Dr. Law Mefor is a Senior Fellow at The Abuja School of Social and Political Thought

MAY & BAKER NIGERIA PLC

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the seventy-second Annual General Meeting of the Company will be held at the Muson Centre, Onikan, Lagos on Thursday, 1st June 2023 at 11.00 a.m. for the following purposes:

ORDINARY BUSINESS

1. To lay before the meeting the financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2022 and the reports of the Directors, Auditors and the Statutory Audit Committee thereon.
2. To disclose the remuneration of Managers.
3. To declare a dividend.
4. To elect and re-elect Directors.
5. To authorise the Directors to fix the remuneration of the External Auditors.
6. To elect members of the Audit Committee.

SPECIAL BUSINESS

1. To consider and if thought fit to pass the following resolution which will be proposed as an ordinary resolution:

   REMUNERATION OF DIRECTORS

   "That the remuneration of the Directors of the Company for the year ended 31st December 2022 for each Non- Executive Director and the Chairman be approved".
2. To consider and if thought fit to pass the following resolution which will be proposed as a special resolution:

   ALTERATION OF ARTICLES

"That following the cancellation of the Company's unissued Share Capital to comply with the requirements of Section 124 of the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020 and Companies Regulation 2021, that the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association be amended by deleting items 6 (a –p) and replacing it with the following: The capital of the Company is N862,617,443 divided into 1,725,234,886 ordinary shares of 50k each".

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD

Adetoun O. Abiru (Mrs.)
FRC/2013/ICSAN/00000003280
for: MARINA NOMINEES LIMITED
SECRETARIES
LAGOS
23rd March, 2023

MAY AND BAKER NIGERIA PLC

CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION AT 31 DECEMBER 2022

	The Group		The Company	
	2022 N'000	2021 N'000	2022 N'000	2021 N'000
Assets				
Non current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	5,011,612	3,860,715	4,969,007	3,833,151
Intangible assets	11,316	21,836	11,110	21,571
Right of use assets	738	3,688	738	3,688
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	3,000	3,000
Investment in Joint Venture	1,141,559	1,167,124	1,326,886	1,326,886
	6,165,225	5,053,363	6,310,741	5,188,296
Current assets				
Inventories	5,342,018	3,588,145	5,228,008	3,351,580
Trade and other receivables	1,016,512	1,165,389	948,166	1,006,063
Other assets	2,474,626	4,933,362	2,451,557	4,909,415
Due from related party	52,432	1,260	82,531	169,330
Cash and cash equivalents	2,906,797	2,880,699	2,864,683	2,679,981
	11,792,385	12,568,855	11,574,945	12,116,369
Total assets	17,957,610	17,622,218	17,885,686	17,304,665
Equity and liabilities:				
Ordinary shares	862,617	862,617	862,617	862,617
Share premium	3,012,065	3,012,065	3,012,065	3,012,065
Retained earnings	3,961,830	2,988,790	3,840,900	2,876,515
Asset revaluation reserve	408,144	408,144	408,144	408,144
	8,244,656	7,271,616	8,123,726	7,159,341
Non-current liabilities				
Loans and borrowings	2,322,768	2,893,510	2,322,768	2,893,510
Post employment benefits	37,409	40,506	37,409	40,506
Deferred tax liabilities	840,320	784,980	833,721	781,300
Deferred fair value gain on loan	414,711	556,771	414,711	556,771
	3,615,208	4,275,767	3,608,609	4,272,087
Current liabilities				
Loans and borrowings	3,235,680	3,643,661	3,235,680	3,644,584
Trade and other payables	2,157,199	1,748,393	2,039,615	1,605,251
Due to related party	10,161	121,957	207,052	121,460
Current tax liabilities	542,991	363,981	519,289	305,100
Deferred fair value gain on loan	151,715	196,842	151,715	196,842
	6,097,746	6,074,834	6,153,351	5,873,237
Total liabilities	9,712,954	10,350,601	9,761,960	10,145,324
Total equity and liabilities	17,957,610	17,622,218	17,885,686	17,304,665

These consolidated financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Board of Directors and were signed on its behalf on 23 March 2023.

Daisy Danjuma
Chairman
FRC/2020/003/00000020890

Patrick Ajah
Managing Director
FRC/2021/003/00000023215

Ayodeji Aboderin
Finance Director/ CFO
FRC/2014/ICAN/00000008270

CONSOLIDATED AND SEPARATE STATEMENTS OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022

	The Group		The Company	
	2022 N'000	2021 N'000	2022 N'000	2021 N'000
Continuing operations				
Revenue	14,328,266	11,901,583	13,582,890	11,038,948
Cost of sales	(10,452,985)	(7,202,971)	(10,099,256)	(6,823,985)
Gross profit	3,875,281	4,698,612	3,483,634	4,214,963
Other operating income	1,673,747	43,017	1,670,494	43,017
Distribution, sales and marketing expenses	(2,149,236)	(1,811,937)	(1,899,866)	(1,669,628)
Administrative expenses	(1,235,417)	(1,228,123)	(1,152,819)	(1,157,195)
Operating profit	2,164,375	1,701,569	2,101,443	1,431,157
Finance income	231,476	59,432	231,411	59,138
Finance costs	(286,034)	(266,828)	(285,532)	(255,845)
Share of loss in joint ventures	(25,565)	(33,798)	-	-
Profit before income tax	2,084,252	1,460,375	2,047,322	1,234,450
Income tax expense	(593,642)	(410,768)	(565,367)	(323,609)
Profit from continuing operations	1,490,610	1,049,607	1,481,955	910,841
Attributable to:				
Equity shareholders	1,490,610	1,049,607	1,481,955	910,841
Other Comprehensive income:				
Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:				
Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss				
Asset revaluation gain net of tax	-	-	-	-
Other comprehensive income	-	-	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	1,490,610	1,049,607	1,481,955	910,841
Attributable to:				
Equity shareholders	1,490,610	1,049,607	1,481,955	910,841
Basic and diluted earnings per share (Kobo) -				
From continuing operations	86	61	86	53
SUMMARY OF CONSOLIDATE AND SEPARATE STATEMENT OF CASHFLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022				
Net cash from/(used in) operating activities	2,061,772	(2,308,975)	2,187,113	(2,346,374)
Net cash used in investing activities	(290,848)	(427,039)	(296,863)	(412,074)
Net cash (used in)/from financing activities	(1,642,053)	1,514,431	(1,642,474)	1,482,085
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents	129,172	(1,221,583)	287,776	(1,276,363)
Cash and cash equivalent at 1 January	2,749,629	3,971,212	2,548,911	3,825,274
Cash and cash equivalent at 31 December	2,878,801	2,749,629	2,836,687	2,548,911
Reconciliation of cash and bank balances to cash and cash equivalents				
Cash and bank balances	2,906,797	2,880,699	2,864,683	2,679,981
Bank overdrafts and commercial papers	(27,996)	(131,070)	(27,996)	(131,070)
	2,878,801	2,749,629	2,836,687	2,548,911

Independent Auditor's Report

PKF

To the Shareholders of May and Baker Nigeria Plc

Opinion

The summarised consolidated financial statements of May and Baker Nigeria Plc, which comprised the consolidated statement of financial position at 31 December 2022 and the consolidated statements of profit or loss and other comprehensive income were derived from the audited consolidated financial statement of May and Baker Nigeria Plc fo r the year ended 31 December 2022.

In our opinion, the accompanying summarised financial statements are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited f inancial statements, in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs) in compliance with Financial Reporting Council of Nigeri Act No 6, 2011 and with the requirements of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020.

Summarised Financial Statements

The summarised financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria Act, 2011 and with the requirements of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020. Reading these summarised financial statements and the auditor's r eport thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial statements and the auditor's report thereon.

The audited Financial Statements and our report thereon

We express an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial statements in our report dated 23 March 2023 which include the communication of key audit matters. Key audit matters are those matters that, in our professional judgement, were of the most significance in our audit of the financial statements of the current period.

Directors' Responsibility for the Summarised Financial Statements

The Directors are responsible for preparing and presenting an appropriate summary of the financial statements, n accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria Act, 2011 and with the requirements of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020.

Independent Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the summarised financial statements are consistent, in all material re spects, with the audited financial statements based on our procedures which were conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISA) 810 (Revised) "Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statem ents.

Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements

In accordance with the requirement of fifth schedule of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, 2020, we confirm that :

i). We have obtained all the information and explanations which to the best of our knowledge and belief were necessary for th e purposes of our audit.

ii). The Company and its subsidiaries have kept proper books of account, so far as appears from our examinatior of those books .

iii). The Group's consolidated statement of financial position and consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehe nsive income are in agreement with the books of account.

Benson O. Adejayan, FCA
FRC/2013/ICAN/00000002226
For: **PKF Professional Services**
Chartered Accountants
Lagos, Nigeria

Dated: 23 March 2023

INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF NIGERIA
ICAN
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NOTES:

ELECTRONIC INFORMATION

Relevant documents in connection with the Meeting are available to all shareholders on the Company's website, www.may-baker.com

PROXY

Every member of the Company entitled to attend and vote at the meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote in their stead. A proxy form is provided with this Annual Reports and Financial Statements (AR & FS). To be valid for the purpose of the Meeting, the form must be completed and deposited at the office of the Registrars, Veritas Registrars Limited, Plot 89 Ajose Adeogun Street, Victoria Island Extension, Lagos not later than 48 hours before the time for holding the meeting. Copies can be downloaded from either www.may-baker.com or www.veritasregistrars.com. Shareholders can also send soft copies of their duly executed proxy form via email to veritasregistrars@veritasregistrar.com. A proxy need not be a member of the Company.

Each duly completed proxy form shall be counted as one and every member, present in person or by proxy shall have one vote. A proxy remains valid provided that no information in writing of death, insanity, revocation or transfer shall have been received by the Company at the registered office or office of the registrars before the commencement of the meeting or adjourned meeting at which the proxy is used. Any objection to a proxy shall be made in due time and shall be referred to the Chairman of the meeting whose decisions shall be final and conclusive.

The Company has made arrangements at its cost, for the stamping of the duly completed and signed proxy forms.

E-DIVIDEND

All shareholders are encouraged to download the e-dividend mandate form from the Registrars website, execute same with their banks and send to the Registrars to update their records for automatic posting of dividends.

DIVIDEND PAYMENT

If the dividend recommended by the Directors is approved by the members, the dividend will be paid on Friday, 2nd June, 2023, to the shareholders whose names appear in the Register of Members at the close of business on Tuesday 16th May, 2023.

UNCLAIMED DIVIDEND

All shareholders with "Unclaimed Dividends" should address their claims to the Registrars, Veritas Registrars Limited, Plot 89A Ajose Adeogun Street, Victoria Island, Lagos. Due to volume involved, the list of all unclaimed dividends is hosted on our website www.may-baker.com and also on the Registrars website www.veritasregistrars.com for affected shareholders to access. All shareholders are encouraged to download the e-dividend mandate form from the Registrars' website, execute same with their banks and send to the Registrars to update their records for automatic posting of dividends.

CLOSURE OF REGISTER AND TRANSFER BOOKS

The Register of Members and Transfer Books will be closed from Wednesday 17th to Friday 19th May, 2023 both days inclusive for the purpose of dividend.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

In accordance with Section 404(6) of CAMA 2020, any member may nominate a shareholder as a member of the Audit Committee by giving notice in writing to the Company Secretaries at least 21 days before the Annual General Meeting.

Nominees to the Statutory audit Committee must be compliant with the laws, codes, rules and regulations guiding listed companies in Nigeria.

RIGHT TO ASK QUESTIONS

Members have a right to ask questions in writing prior to the meeting on their observations or concerns arising from the Annual Report and Financial Statements 2022 provided that such questions in writing are submitted to the Company on or before Friday, 26th May, 2023. For ease of submission, a dedicated email address: financials@may-baker.com has been created.

DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENT

CAMA has introduced "Disclosure of Remuneration of Managers" to the ordinary business of the Annual General Meeting.

The Corporate Guidelines 2021 (Guidelines) issued by the CAC has defined a Manager in relation to disclosure of remuneration at the Annual General Meeting to include any person by whatever name called occupying a position in senior management and who is vested with significant autonomy, discretion and authority in the administration and management of the affairs of a Company (whether in whole or in part). The remuneration of Managers as defined in the Guidelines is stated on page 93 of the Annual Report.

THE ALTERNATIVE

with Reno Omokri

Who Is The Saviour, Jesus Or Yeshua?

For over a decade, I have been trying my best to lovingly teach fellow believers about the real name of our Lord and Saviour. The most consistent barrier to Christians unlearning the made-up name Jesus has always been their claim that the name of Jesus works wonders for them, and as such, it must be acceptable to God.

When I read or hear people say that, it reminds me of the words of Mark Twain, who said, "The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read."

And sadly, many believers do not read. We rather rely on dogma, and pastors to tell us what we should think. And after a lifetime of religious conditioning, our resistance to the truth is much stronger than our resistance to dogma.

But as the Turkish proverb goes, no matter how far you have gone down the wrong road, turn back.

The name of our Lord and Saviour is not Jesus. And there are vested physical and spiritual forces who do not want you to know His real Name. And they are prepared to go to any lengths, in order to fulfil their mandate of hiding the truth from us.

The mandate after all is to steal, kill, and destroy.

Our Saviour's Name is Yeshua. And He is not the Christ. He is the Messiah, or more accurately, Hamashiach.

And for those saying that they get answers to prayers, and cast out demons, and perform miracles in the name of Jesus, please allow me to quote Yeshua Hamashiach in Matthew 7:21-23.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me."

Many people think Jesus is a translation of Yeshua. No, it is not. Jesus is a transliteration of the Name Yeshua. Which is very different from a translation. A transliteration is not a translation. It is just like when your name is Kayode, and you go abroad, only for a European to tell you, 'I can't pronounce Kayode, so I will call you Kay!'

Almost all the names you see in your King James Version and subsequent versions, are corrupted transliterations.

John is Yohannan
Judas is Yehudah
James is Yaakov

Bartholomew is actually a phrase, Bar Talmai, meaning son (bar) of Talmai. And so on and so forth.

Yeshua means the Name of God saves. Jesus has no corresponding meaning in either Koine Greek or modern-day Greek.

For example, my name in Itsekiri is Bemigho. The Yoruba translation is Bamiwo. But Jesus does not mean Yeshua in Koine Greek. In fact, the word Jesus is the Latin form of the Greek Iesous, which is itself a transliteration. Do you see how far we have drifted? Jesus is the Latin form of a Greek transliteration.

Meanwhile, what is hard in pronouncing Yeshua, the Name that God gave Him through the angel Gabriel? Why must we translate it? Why must we even go beyond translation and transliterate it?

Names have power in the spiritual realm. And instructions passed down directly from God have great power.

Hence, when Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu "offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not" in Leviticus 10:1, they were killed in Leviticus 10:2.

And if Yeshua was hard to pronounce, I could even understand, but still not accept why we had to call our Lord and Saviour Jesus. But what is hard in pronouncing Yeshua?

Imagine the audacity! You, a mere mortal, taking it upon yourself to rename your own Saviour?

We are referring to the most important Name that ever existed for a living human person. We did not translate or transliterate the names of Nelson Mandela, William Shakespeare, George Washington, Vladimir Lenin, Kwame Nkrumah, and other notable historical figures. But it is the Name of our Lord and Saviour we want to translate and transliterate? Meanwhile, all these names have more syllables than Yeshua. But the target for name dilution is aimed only at Yeshua.

Pope Francis

And the first rule of translation is that you don't translate a Name.

To even lovingly show you that Jesus is a made-up name, as at the time of His earthly ministry, the letter J was unknown and the English language had not even been invented or created. English came into existence as a kind of patois, when the Romans took their Germanic Saxon slaves to Britain, and after other Saxons and Germanic peoples migrated as free men to the British isles around 500 years after the death of Yeshua.

And the letter J did not come into existence in ANY language until 1000 years after the invention of English, which coincided with the translation of the King James Version in 1611. Prior to that, Europeans used the names Ιησους (Greek) or Iesvs (Latin). Please note that the V in Iesvs was pronounced as a modern-day U.

If you think praying in the name of Jesus gives you much power, then try praying in His original Father-given name and see if you will not get even greater power made available to you from God. I am not teaching you a new name. No. I am teaching you to call Him by the Name that is above all names, INCLUDING the name Jesus! And that is the name that proceeded from the mouth of angel Gabriel to Yosef in Matthew 1:21.

And it is not just that they changed His Name. These same forces also gave Him a contrived birthday, to hide their pagan agenda.

Christmas is not the birthday of Jesus, for the simple reason that there was never even a historical religious figure named Jesus. Christmas is actually the birthday of Mithras, the sun god. That is why I said it is no better or worse than the Oro festival, or your village's new yam festival.

I actually went to Bethlehem around Christmas time and it is impossible for our Saviour to have been born on December 25, even when you take into effect climate change. This is based on the weather in Bethlehem now, and what it was 2000 years ago, and how the description we are given in Scripture contradicts those weather patterns.

Besides, it was not the practice of our Lord to mark His birthday. Rather, we are to mark His death, which occurred precisely on the 14th day of the Jewish month of Nisan.

Even the Quran is more accurate in describing Him than many of us 'Christians. The al-Quran describes Him as al-Masihu Isa (Yeshua the Messiah) in Quran 3:45.

Sadly, Black Africans and other colonised people have just swallowed hook, line, and sinker, all the dogma and propaganda that Europeans brought to us in the name of Christianity (following Christ), when in reality they are practicing Christendom (the political mixture of Christianity with their pagan beliefs).

And when I teach these things, some people accuse me of teaching Judaism, rather than Christianity. Alas, many of us do not know our faith.

At the risk of repeating myself, let me reiterate that during His Earthly lifetime, Yeshua Hamashiach was a Jewish Rabbi, who lived and died on the Earth as a Jew. He worshipped on the Sabbath. He obeyed the laws of Moses. And He never introduced a new religion. He only introduced new commandments, which is what He said with His own Mouth in John 13:34.

He never introduced the word Christian. That name was more like a nickname given to His followers by the townspeople of Antioch-Acts 11:26.

Both Yeshua and His disciples, including Paul, never disavowed Judaism. They all remained Jews. And you can see this in John 4:22, where Yeshua told the Samaritan woman of Sychar that "salvation is of the Jews."

We also see this in Paul's confession in Acts 21:39, where he said that "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia."

Now, when we Gentiles started believing in Yeshua's teachings, a council was held in Jerusalem, where we were given a special dispensation not to follow the strict rules on Judaism. The dispensation leniently gave us just four rules to abide by, of which you can see those rules in Acts 15:19-21, where James (Yaakov), speaking for the council, said:

"It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For the Law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."

Notice that James called us Gentiles. Only a Jew calls a non-Jew a Gentile.

So, don't get carried away by the nomenclature of the word Christianity. In essence, our faith is an offshoot of Judaism and we are meant to follow Yeshua Hamashiach's example, except that we are not subject to the Laws of Moses, beyond the four rules given to us by the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15:19-21.

Following Yeshua Hamashiach is not hard. Just get Scripture and read it. Then do everything it requires of you. And where what Scripture mandates you to do clashes with what your church prescribes for you to do, then quietly, and without much fuss, obey Scripture.

And why do I say this? Because, as Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

In other words, you are complete with Scripture, and there is no need to go outside Scripture for any doctrine. Even if it is the Pope or the Archbishop of Canterbury that gives you a doctrine outside Scripture, ignore it, as you would do if it came from a nonentity. And the reason for this is in Galatians 1:8, which says:

"But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse."

Reno's Nuggets

Don't make money in order to be rich. Instead, make money in order to have freedom. Freedom to travel. Freedom to move to a new country, or town. Freedom to sit at home, or go to the office. In short, freedom to live life at your own pace, instead of the rat race. And you have to escape the rat race: Go to work. Come home. Watch TV. Sleep. Wake up. Repeat the cycle from Monday to Friday. Then go to church. Then repeat the whole cycle again. That is not life. Do something meaningful with your life. Travel. Write a book. Go sky diving. Do new things. There's more to life than 9 to 5!

#RenosNuggets #FreeLeahSharibu

Eid Greetings

I wish the Muslim Ummah a blessed end to Ramadan 1444/1445 AH. May God bless you all, and may your prayers for peace and prosperity of all people come to a realisation. May the virtues acquired in the last month be lasting, and may the deen flourish. May the Almighty also grant the sarkin Musulumi divine wisdom as he continues to lead the mu'min. Finally, may we all be alive to celebrate the end of Ramadan next year. Eid Mubarak.

PERSPECTIVE

ZIK OF AFRICA –A Review

By Shex Ladipo

I was privileged to be invited as a special guest at the stage play "Zik of Africa" mounted on Easter Monday at the MUSON stage and produced by Joseph Edgar, the indefatigable and indomitable Duke of Shomolu, proprietor of the Duke of Shomolu Foundation, an organization irrevocably committed to entertaining and educating Nigerians through stage drama. I had become a fan of the Duke, though he thinks of me as his egbon, true to Yoruba culture, ever since I saw his "Ogiamen" production on stage. I was very impressed and we became egbon and aburo since that event. Zik of Africa was equally impressive, receiving resounding ovation from a very appreciative audience that included the cream of Lagos and Nigerian society. There were many Special Guests at the Command Performance and His Royal Majesty, Igwe Nnaemeka Achebe, the Obi of Onitsha was the Special Guest of Honor; supported by members of Zik's immediate family. This was my first close encounter with the Obi and I found him to be a very distinguished and personable modern day monarch.

Personally, I relate to Zik. I knew him when I was a toddler because he was my father's friend. Two of Zik's most prominent establishments in Lagos, the West African Pilot newspaper and the Lagos City College, a secondary school, were situated directly opposite my father's Lisabi Mills, Nigeria's pioneer food processing company on Commercial Avenue, Sabo, Yaba on the Lagos Mainland. The Lisabi Mills food processing factory was at the rear of our premises on Commercial Avenue while the residence, administrative office and a retail store were located in the front storey building. So Zik sometimes visited my father when he was in the neighborhood. They would sit and socialize on the balcony of Lisabi House overlooking Commercial Avenue and Zik's establishments across the road. My father, JK Ladipo, apart from being an industrialist, was an avowed nationalist. He was well known for his "British must go" slogan. This translated on the business landscape to "Buy Nigerian Goods", another slogan coined and widely publicized by him. Incidentally another prominent Igbo leader, Sir Odumegwu Ojukwu (the Ikemba's father), also had his business premises on Commercial Avenue. However, like my father, Sir Ojukwu was an industrialist and was never known with partisan politics. The third prominent Igbo man in the area was Mr John Okwesa Snr. who owned a flourishing printing press located in the industrial estate behind Lisabi Mills. By far, Mr Okwesa was my father's closest friend. They were "k'ori, k'osun". Loosely translated, that meant that they never slept without seeing each other, daily. My father Mr JK Ladipo pre-deceased all of these friends in 1961. I was six then. I should mention that Mr John Okwesa continued to visit our family regularly after my father's death. He would often sit on the same patriarchal balcony with my mother, while they talked and had refreshments. It was during one of his visits that an incident occurred which resulted in him giving me the nickname "Rubber Boy". But that is a story for another day.

With such antecedents of my father, I too have always had Igbo friends. I grew up and went to school with many of them. My primary school Ladi Lak Institute, Yaba and my secondary school King's College, Lagos were well known for their integrative ethos in the newly independent Nigeria of the 50s and 60s. So you can well imagine that all this new era ethnic profiling and talk of Igbo domination rub me the wrong way. Any attempt to fester these divisions would certainly rob some of us of a vital heritage of our growing up in Lagos. Who would I be ? For example, prominent Lagos lawyer, Chris Okeke is my egbon ever since I was born. His late mother, a teacher at the Lagos City College was, until her death, one of my mother's closest friends. What about my big egbon, Retired General Ike Nwachukwu ? He and most of his siblings attended Ladi Lak Institute and he also attended Lagos City College. How about John Okwesa Jnr, son of my father's close friend ? Johnny and I were together at Ladi Lak and King's College. Not to mention the highly revered Chief Emeka Anyaoku, my mentor and in-law, married to my cousin Sista Bunmi ? These are some of the Igbos that I know and I can say without any fear of contradiction that they are a proud and industrious people. I have known and related with them all of my life. As well as numerous other close friends of Igbo extraction made from my school days and the Lagos social circuit. Lagos society has always been cosmopolitan and we just never knew or cared who was Igbo.

That this issue has become topical these days is rather troubling for people of my generation. With the high incidence of intermarriages in our society, such ethnic profiling is absurd, unhealthy and unreasonable, to say the least. In fact the Duke of Shomolu reported that some people tried to dissuade him from staging the play Zik at this time because of prevailing sensibilities and controversy. Of course he didn't listen to them. (Does that one listen to anybody ?) Anyway I'm glad he didn't listen, because the play was very educative and, of course, very entertaining. The history of Nigeria's independence struggle, as portrayed by the stage play, based on historical accounts, throws up several posers about the dramatis personae and their true objectives. The play was well researched and ably directed by Dr Erojikwe; himself a Zikist and drama icon in his own right. The story shed light on some germane issues and I feel obliged to share my thoughts.

The late Zik of Africa

Firstly, as an industrialist like my father, I believe in the sanctity of capital and free enterprise. Also, as a Jaycee, I believe that "economic justice can best be won by free men through free enterprise". Igbos, like any other tribe or people, are free to buy land, invest and establish businesses anywhere; so long as the original owners and proprietors sell to them freely and without duress. This appears to have been the case in Nigeria and many other parts of the world where Igbo have successfully exercised their entrepreneurial acumen. In Lagos and Abuja where Igbo hold substantial property investments, such properties were acquired legally from the original owners. The sellers and the buyers were both happy. It is only now, with the benefit of the hindsight of the political mismanagement of the Nigerian union, that these acts of industry and free enterprise are being given a different coloration.

On the political spectrum, it would seem that Zik, unlike the other two members of the national tripod, had a more republican concept of the Nigerian federation. It is easy to deduce this as a consequence of his American education and orientation which differed substantially from Awo's British orientation. Under the American system, States may have distinct jurisdictions, but not so the citizenry. In the United States of America, citizens are relatively free to move across State lines in pursuit of economic and political goals. One could well argue that this system of government is best suited to the type of heterogeneous agglomerations found in the United States and also in Nigeria. To my knowledge, my father certainly had no qualms or reservations about Zik's interests across the road from us. In fact they were friends. With the benefit of history and hindsight, it appears that Zik and Awo, in spite of their mutual interest in Nigeria's national independence, had profoundly different ideological leanings. As an example, it appears that Awo and some other Yoruba leaders had very serious apprehension about Zik becoming leader of government business in the west, a territory they perceived more as Yorubaland. They thought that Zik was overreaching and over ambitious. The records indicate that some other Yoruba leaders were of a different view. This was a contributory factor to the political schism in Yorubaland. In fact Zik and many nationalists, till this day, cite many instances of non indigenes who acquired political popularity and positions in "foreign" jurisdictions. Records show that this phenomena occurred freely in many parts of the Nigerian federation, without any adverse effects on political and economic development. Rather, it seemed to have fostered unity. In an environment of true federalism and honesty of purpose on the part of the political class, Zik's bid to lead Government business in the west should not necessarily have generated such apathy, because it was wholly consistent with his own Republican ideology. In the spirit of true and genuine federalism, Zik often referred to himself as a Suru Lere boy ! Perhaps Zik, the American-styled Federal Republican was largely misunderstood ?

One other remarkable takeaway from the Zik story was his vision for the University that he established in the Eastern Region. While Awo and Yoruba leadership established and named respectively the University of Ibadan and the University of Ife, Zik insisted that his own would be named the University of Nigeria, to emphasize that it was open to all Nigerians. Thus the University of Nigeria, Nsukka survives till this day with that nomenclature. This snippet is a window into the mind of the man Zik. I just hope that one day, some Igbo leaders would not wake up and decide to rename the University after Zik. While such act could be perceived as an honor well deserved, I personally would rather prefer that his underlying dream of Nigeria as one united, indivisible country should be preserved.

The other often cited poser of the Nigerian independence story is Zik's decision to form his Government in partnership with the Northern bloc, rather than the western bloc with the stellar Awo. Based on my earlier postulation, having failed to carry Awo and the western leadership along on his political trajectory, I don't think that Zik had any other choice than to align with the north to form a national government. Obviously things had fallen apart in his political calculus, due to ideological disparities with Awo, and he had to make the best of the situation. It then became fortuitous for him to play his birth place card, having been born in Zungeru in Northern Nigeria. Again, going by American political culture, Zik could well have been considered a Northerner, having been born in the north. Notwithstanding this fractious post-independence scenario, many believed that the Nigerian nation could still be salvaged and nourished under Zik's leadership. Recall that after the inauguration of Zik's government, one of the earliest foreign visits of Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa was to the United States of America where he was received by its government and people with such pomp and pageantry. I would like to believe that US enthusiasm was fueled by the prospects of a Republican style government in Nigeria; one modeled after the United States, notwithstanding its parliamentary variation. The Americans knew Zik and what he stood for. This was all quite plausible as it was during the time of President John F. Kennedy, who had a relatively liberal view of black emancipation than most other world leaders of that time.

One other historical fact often cited in contemporary Nigerian politics is Zik's position on secession. It is on record that he was the leg of the tripod that argued against the inclusion of a clause allowing for secession of the federating units in the Nigerian constitution. It is a no brainer that this position was also wholly consistent with his view of an American-style Republican federation of a united and indivisible Nigerian nation. Today, the obvious contradiction of Zik's position with the Ikemba's Biafra declaration and the more recent IPOB position is the seeming paradox of the Igbo position in contemporary Nigerian politics. From an ideological standpoint, a Biafra could never have been in Zik's purview. We should also note that the proponents of IPOB have never taken their bearing from Zik. Rather their compass is pointedly taken from the Ikemba who led the secession bid. In spite of the often referenced inferences of the 1966 coup as an Igbo endeavor, there is no credible record or evidence anywhere to suggest that Zik had a hand in that coup. He was already President, so what would he stand to gain ? What may be true is that the coupists sought to protect him from any collateral damage. With the benefit of hindsight, it would seem that the coup may have been a misguided adventure. Once again, I would restate my own view that these aberrations were driven more by the divergent and unreconciled ideologies of the founding fathers of Nigeria and the subsequent mismanagement of crisis in the Nigerian project by the political class. However I am hesitant to heap all the blame of the aftermath on the political class because the trust deficit and inherent tensions now created could probably only have been resolved by the tripod. With the untimely subtraction of the Sardauna (and Prime Minister Balewa) from the equation, the schematic was substantially altered; perhaps irretrievably.

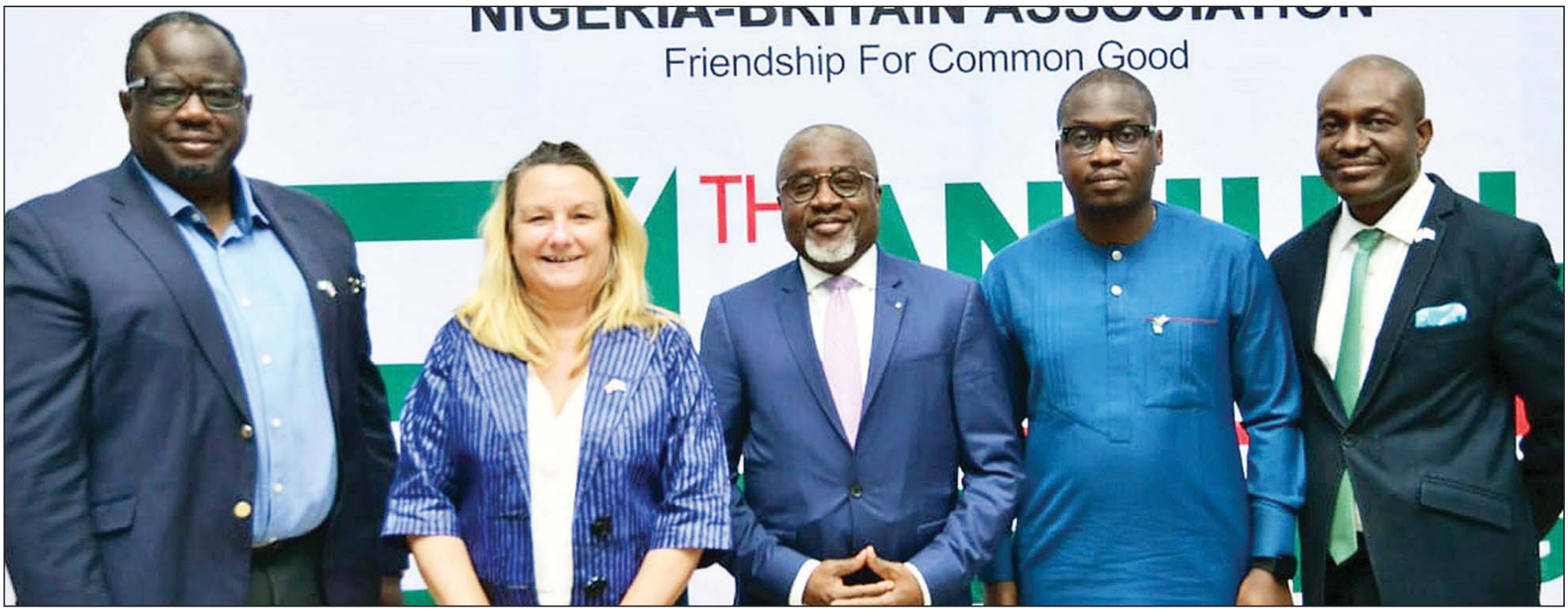
One can only wonder today what Nigeria and Africa could have become if Zik's political trajectory and leadership paradigm had endured and prevailed. One big paradoxical challenge that Zik faced was in Awo. Here was another brilliant leader, but with a different ideological leaning. They should have worked together, but they could not because of their ideological disparities. We know from history that during his sojourn in Ghana (then Gold Coast), Zik interacted very closely with Kwame Nkrumah, another shining star on the African continent who later became President of his country. Both men copiously shared pre-independence notes about development of the African continent. And as expected the Osagyefo would probably have conceded pride of place to Nigerian leadership in the equation. But the envisaged emancipation of the continent that they both dreamed of could only come to fruition if the component parts succeeded in their quest for independence and consolidation. True, both did get independence. But their victories now appear pyrrhic. It would seem that Ghana, like Nigeria, was also derailed somewhere along the line. But Nigeria's derailment is so much more exacerbated along its natural fault lines. I must mention here that not all of the western world harbored goodwill towards the African development project. There is ample evidence of sabotage and dismemberment of the African dream by many western world countries. Had Zik succeeded in leading Nigeria on his preferred political pathway, then most assuredly Ghana would have followed the lead. It is likely that the rest of Africa would have followed suit. Africa would certainly be in a different place today. It was this vision of Africa by Zik that obviously inspired the sobriquet 'Zik of Africa'.

Many of us in the audience at the MUSON that Easter Monday were visibly excited by the alliance of Zik with the legendary Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, mother of the Revolutionaries Olikoye, Dolu, Fela and Beko. Never mind that I mention all of them. They are my family and I knew them all personally. They were all Revolutionaries, like their mother. The exploits of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti in the emancipation of women in those nascent days is the subject of history on its own merit. It is very remarkable however, that Zik tapped into that energy; though hardly surprising because the sentiments of universal suffrage were already consolidating in the United States when Zik was a student there. The alliance with FRK certainly provided Zik with much political leverage in Yorubaland, Nigeria and the globe.

Before closing, let me confess that I love music and dance. Like my father, I played trumpet. I played in the King's College School Band, the Hotspots. In our days, in the 60s, Keem Belo-Osagie did lead vocals, while Yele Aluko played Bass and Ladi Williams (the Pilot) played lead guitar. I was part of a very virile horns section composed of trumpets and trombones. The horns section was trained and led by my seniors Kitoyi Akinsan and Chinyere Ohia. My father JK Ladipo, in his own time as a trumpeter, in the 40s and 50s, led the Mills Orchestra, composed of talented musicians, most of whom worked with him in the food processing factory. They produced yam flour during weekdays and played music on weekends. These are stories for another day. So for me, the music and dance, which have become the forte and a trademark of the Duke of Shomolu Productions, is the most exciting element of their outings. The stage play Zik of Africa served up pulsating traditional rhythms and dance from many parts of Nigeria including Yorubaland, Igboland and Hausaland; all Zik's constituencies. The richness of Nigerian culture was on full display. The excitement that the production delivers, in contemporary music and dance, is unmatched in the history of Nigerian stagecraft. It was simply quintessential; and madd ! to paraphrase the Duke of Shomolu. It is ready for export, if I might add.

Of course the story of the play is equally very compelling; probably more so. Remember that education and entertainment are what is on offer from the Duke of Shomolu Productions. Zik of Africa certainly gave the best of both worlds in about two hours running time. It was a topical and compelling story and many people in the audience came away with a better understanding of our nation's history. Some answers were provided to the oft asked question of "how did we get here ? " It may also have provided a better perception of the path to unity. The Arts must surely be appreciated for its bridge building and unifying role in every society that yearns for development. After the curtain dropped, there was lots of hugs and back patting to go round. Segun Awolowo, the Sage's grandson, who was a Special Guest and the Azikiwe children were in great demand amongst the audience. Zik's surviving widow, Emeritus Prof (Mrs) Uche Azikiwe, drew plenty of tears from the audience. She had featured prominently in the play in some very moving love wan tin tin scenes with Zik. The Obi, in his brief remarks, proved to be a real royal father of the day with his admonition for love and understanding amongst all Nigerians. He also commended the qualitative stage production. I must not forget Olisa Adibua, the anchor and master of ceremony. As usual, Olisa was neat and tidy. Most of us have seen the best of Broadway and I can tell you that the stage craft of Zik of Africa was first class. The actors were very good and the technical support was perfect. The dancers, both male and female, were exceptional. The cultural dance movements were well choreographed, with our trademark Nigerian acrobatic maneuvers executed to precision. First class. It was a great Easter treat. Kudos to the Duke of Shomolu Productions.

Social commentary by Shex Ladipo, former Managing Director of Lisabi Mills Ltd; Consultant-at-Large, shex@tabac.com.ng; Lagos, April 2023



54TH AGM OF THE NIGERIA-BRITAIN ASSOCIATION...

L-R: Honorary Treasurer, Nigeria-Britain Association (N-BA), Mr. Edward Abraham; Vice President, Mrs. Lucy Pearson; newly-elected President, Mr. Sola Oyetayo; Honorary Secretary, Mr. Tobi Asehinde and Assistant Honorary Secretary, Mr. Gboyega Olanbiwoninu during the 54th annual general meeting(AGM) of the Nigeria-Britain Association held at the British Council, Ikoyi, Lagos…recently

Wigwe: We Want 30% Trade in Africa Facilitated by Access Holdings

Dike Onwuamaeze

The Group Managing Director of Access Holdings Plc (Access Corporation), Mr. Herbert Wigwe, yesterday declared that the financial institution is aggressively working to be in a position where it would be able to facilitate a minimum of 30 per cent of the trade that takes place in Africa.

Wigwe said this while reviewing the progress Access Holdings, the parent company of Access Bank has made over the years, during an interview on CNN's 'Market Place Africa.'

He noted that a lot of fundamental changes have taken place in the banking industry in terms of regulatory environment and the demography banks serve presently.

He said: "We want to ensure that 30 per cent of the trade that happens in the continent is facilitated by Access Holdings. In doing this, it means that we need to have network that facilitates African trade from Lagos all the way to Johannesburg. If you have to make payment it will happen instantaneously."

He also said that the holding company was also implementing its current five-year plan and would expand to Europe and the United States of America.

Wigwe said: "I think that we are right on track with the countries that we work in presently and across the continent over the next couple of years. But, I think that beyond that you will see us in Europe and before the end of our five-year strategic plan you will see us definitely in the United States of America."

He, however, acknowledged that African corporates were still faced with perceptional challenges in their bid to spread across the globe even though a good number of Nigerians are doing well globally.

He said: "So, what some of us are determined to do is basically to take our institutions to that global stage. Guess what, we are scrutinised more than any other institution. But for each time we go pass that scrutiny we come out a lot better.

"And also there are several other Nigerian institutions like banks and large corporates that are doing the same thing. The more you find great institutions moving out and actually excelling in those markets then people can start having a different perception of Nigeria."

According to him, there are "Nigerians who are doing great things not just in Nigeria, but in the United Kingdom, USA and others and are excelling. Why do they not talk about those people?

"I think that there are still so much that can happen. There are people doing great things in South Africa, in Kenya more and more will be born. The reason some of us are happy is that people are beginning to see that intellect, talent, technical skills also exists here and are not European or American thing.

"So, you have people who can create great institutions, and who can be extremely innovative in this market. But I think so much more still need to be done, and one of the things we are doing in Access is making sure that we take a lot of more people into African foot print and support them by giving them some capital.

"So there are still so much to be done and I am sure that over the next couple of years you will a lot more than you have seen over the past couple of years."

Wigwe attributed the success recorded by the institution in the past 20 years to God, hard work and leading right people with right sense of value and commitment.

He said: "I will start by saying that we must thank God and put our faith and trust in him. That is the starting point. The second thing is that the harder you work, the luckier you get and then of course you must have the right people because it is all about people that are committed to a particular course. And if you have the right people with the right value and team you will get there."

He also said that the banking has evolved and changed fundamentally in the past 20 years.

"I think it has become a more sophisticated. From the regulatory standpoint, we now have a regulator that is so much more sophisticated than in 2002. It has also changed in terms of demographics. People will take a lot of cash in 2002, but now most of that is done using cards and we have witnessed a progression to a more digital means. So it has been big changes since 2002 to now.

"It has been a big, big change but I think that what it is for Access is that we have been able to predict that change, and create that change."

Access Corporation Plc last week presented its first quarter 2023 earnings on the floor of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX), which reflected positive trajectory.

The first quarter financial performance was released same day as the bank's full year 2022 financial results. The first quarter 2023 results established that the bank got off on the right foot and may end the year 2023 better than its 2022 performance.

Precisely, the first quarter 2023 unaudited results showed that the Holding Company's (Holdco) gross earning maintained its upswing as it increased to N424.917 billion in the review period, higher than the N295.736 billion recorded in the first quarter of March 2022. Its profit after tax which declined marginally at the end of 2022, improved in the first quarter of 2023, to N71.636 billion, compared to N57.825 billion it realised in the first quarter of 2022.

Benin Port Project: 10 Edo Indigenes on Scholarship Scheme to be Engaged as Pioneer Staff

Oil palm, poultry processing, retail, energy most active sectors in Edo in last two years, govt reveals

Adibe Emenyonu in Benin City

The Chairman of the Benin Port Project, Mr. Greg Ogbeifun has assured that the ten Edo indigenes undergoing studies under the Nigerian Seafarers Development programme (NSDP) scholarship scheme would be engaged as pioneer staff of the Benin Port.

In a statement, Ogbeifun, said the ten Edo indigenes are making progress in their studies.

He noted that a major advantage of the port project was the opportunity it presents to build local capacity of Edo youths to participate actively in the maritime sector.

The young Edo indigenes are part of other Nigerian students on fully funded scholarships in Greece and India by Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) studying maritime related courses.

The port project is jointly being executed by the Edo State Government and the federal government through the Nigeria Port Authority (NPA).

The Minister of Transportation had set up the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Project Delivery Team (PDT) to ensure realisation of the Benin Port Project under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement, as already approved by the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC).

The port is a legacy project of the Governor Godwin Obaseki-led administration, which aims to contribute to the development of both the maritime and agricultural sectors, creating massive employment opportunities.

The project site is located at the confluence of Osse River and Benin River, making it the closest port to the sea after the ports of Lagos, at only 32km from the coastline.

Meanwhile, the Edo State Investment Promotion Office has disclosed that the most active sectors that have attracted local and foreign investments into the state in the last two years were the oil palm, poultry processing and retail sectors.

Managing Director, Edo State Investment Promotion Office (ESIPO)-Ease of Doing Business Secretariat, Mr. Kelvin Uwaibi, disclosed this in a recent chat with journalists, in Benin City

According to him, "Between 2021 and 2022, there are investments in the agriculture, food processing and energy sectors. Some of the companies that have made substantial investments include Persianas Group, which is building the Benin City Mall, on Sapele Road.

"There is also Amo Farm Poultry Processing Plant located at Obayantor, Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State. Fayus Oil Palm Company and Prime Agro Seed and other companies from Asia.

"In the energy space, Ossiomo Power Plant in Ologbo has expanded and then we have two new refineries – one at Ologbo, Ikpoba Okha GRA and the other at Egbokor, in Orhionmwon LGA."

Uwaibi noted that the investments ensured that the state remained a good destination for those looking to expand their businesses in Nigeria, citing the availability of steady power supply from Ossiomo Power as a good incentive.

He added that the Benin Port project, which was coming on stream, was expected to even attract more investment in the agriculture, maritime and ancillary sectors.

Obi: Visiting People for Me Not About Elections

Pledges to support in rebuilding Awka Central Mosque

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

The presidential candidate of Labour Party (LP) in the February 25, 2023 election and former governor of Anambra State, Mr. Peter Obi, yesterday visited members of the Muslim community in Awka, the state capital.

This was just as the Awka Muslim Community explained that their invitation extended to Obi, to their mosque was to fraternise with him as they always did in the past, and to encourage him on his journey to 'New Nigeria,' not minding the falsehoods peddled against him. In addition, they said that they had wanted to visit Obi at his house in Onitsha. However, on receiving their invitation, Obi offered to visit them at the mosque and celebrate Eid el Fitr with them.

Obi stressed that his visit to them had nothing to do with politics, and that visits should not only be because one is seeking political office.

The candidate donated cartons of noodles, bags of rice and soft drinks to the community during the visit, while also promising to help them in the rebuilding of the mosque, which was undergoing facelift.

Obi said: "I Thank you for inviting me to the mosque to celebrate with you. You wanted to come to my house instead, but I said it will be better for me to come and now that I have come, I have also seen that the mosque is undergoing reconstruction.

"I want to pledge here and now that I shall contribute to the work you have at hand, to ensure that you have a befitting place of worship.

"I am a Christian and you are Muslims, but we are all Nigerians, and Nigeria is one. It is only politics that divides us. But let me tell you, I have never seen any road that is built and it is only for Muslims to drive on. "I have also not seen any market where Christians buy bread cheaper than Muslims. If you know such market, please tell me, let me go and buy."

Speaking further, Obi said: "If you go to Dubai, the land on which one of the biggest church is built was donated by the ruler of Dubai. In England too, a mosque was donated by the queen, who is the head of the church of England.

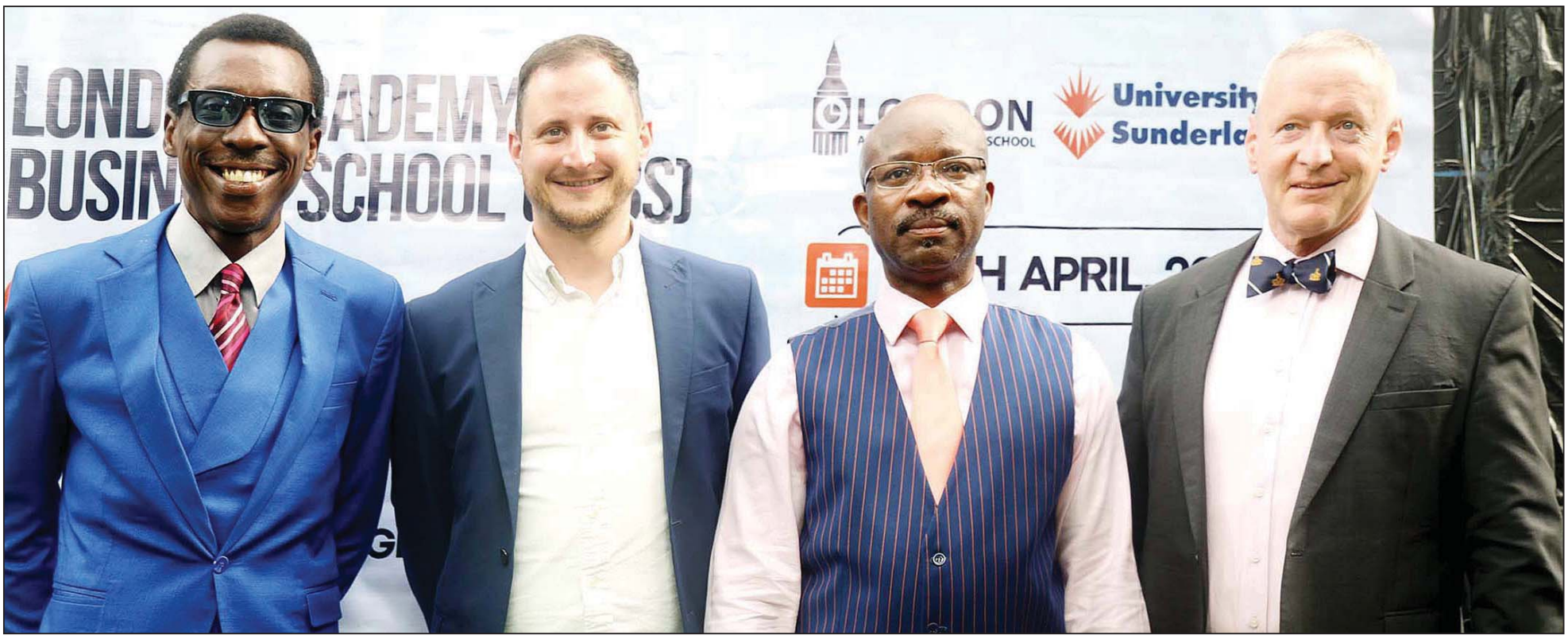
"We are one and we are created by the same God. Only religion is dividing us, but we should not let religion or politics to divide us. Nigeria will continue to be one irrespective of politics.

"I told people I will start fighting poverty from the north and people said north is not poorer than South, and that I'm from south, so I should start here. But the truth is that I know that vast land which we would use to solve the problem of poverty is in the north."

Later, while speaking with journalists, Obi who was asked why he had not taken a rest since after the election said: "People who want to rest can go and rest. For me, I'm not resting. No serious leader will go and rest in Nigeria.

"We will continue to visit as many people as we can, and also support them in the best way we can."

Continues online



QUALITY ASSURANCE ON THEIR MINDS...

L-R: Operations Manager, London Academy Business School (LABS), Mr. Edward Ogbebor; Director of International, University of Sunderland, United Kingdom, Mr. Ian Moody; Director of Studies, LABS, Dr. Larry Jones-Esan; and Associate Professor, Faculty of Businesslaw and Tourism, University of Sunderland, UK, Dr. Derek Watson, during visit by the Quality Assurance team from Sunderland University, UK to London Academy Business Academy in Lagos yesterday PHOTO: ETOP UKUTT

Enugu Governor-Elect, Mbah Names Chioke, Abah, Onyia, Nebo, 60 Others in Transition Committee

Ahead of the May 29, 2023 handover, Enugu State Governor-elect, Dr. Peter Mbah, has named Ike Chioke, Dr. Joe Abah, Prof. Chidi Onyia, Prof Chinedu Nebo and 60 others into his Transition Committee.

The Committee includes internationally-recognised technocrats, good governance, transparency and accountability advocates, financial and management experts, entrepreneurs, as well as tech and innovation specialists.

According to a statement, the governor-elect said the Transition Committee would help articulate and fine-tune the incoming administration's "implementable and impactful development plan," when it assumes office in May.

The Transition Committee members, as contained in the statement issued yesterday, by the head of the Peter Mbah Media Office, Dan Nwomeh, would streamline the State development plan in line with Mbah's "Social Charter" with Ndi Enugu.

"The Charter aims at repositioning the state as one of the top three states in Nigeria in terms of Gross Domestic Product per capita, while addressing poverty, unemployment, and insecurity," it added.

The committee would be chaired by Chioke, an engineer, renowned investment banker, and Group Managing Director of Afrinvest (West Africa) Ltd. He is also the President of the Association of Issuing Houses of Nigeria, Chief Executive Officer of Triple-A Infrastructure Nigeria Ltd, and Chairman of Royal Exchange General Insurance Company.

Chioke has over 30 years of experience in the banking industry, project and structured finance, debt and equity capital markets, media, telecommunications, financial services, and industrial reform.

Other committee members are Abah, Country Director of DAI Nigeria, an international development company and former Director-General of the Bureau of Public Service Reforms in Nigeria; Onyia, the Managing Director of United Kingdom Nigeria Infrastructure Advisory Facility (UK-NIAF); a former Minister of Power, Prof. Chinedu Nebo; a former Chief Executive Officer of Pricewaterhouse Coopers Nigeria and West Africa and current Chairman of Execution Edge, Ken Igbokwe; a former Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Ogbonna Onovo, and a former Executive Director at First Bank and Founder, Krystle Group, Mrs. Christy Okoye.

Also, the Transition Committee members include the Director, Industrial and Trade Development at the African Development Bank (AFDB), Dr. Abdu Mukhtar; the Director, Africa Growth Initiative at the Brookings Institutions, Dr. Aloysius Ardu; a renowned transporter and university proprietor, Chief Dr. Sam Onyishi; President of the Institute of Software Practitioners of Nigeria, Mr. Chinenye Mba-Uzoukwu; a former Commissioner at the Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission and Co-Founder, Excredite, Mr. Eyo Ekpo; former CEO at Neconde Gas, Engr. Frank Edozie; the Group CEO, PanAfrican Capital Holdings Ltd, Chris Oshiafi, and foreign direct investment promoter, Mr. Andrew Thorburn.

Also included are the Vice Chancellor of Godfrey Okoye University, Prof. Christian Anieke; Mrs. Ijeoma Emezie-Ezigbo (KPMG), Kingsley Eze (Tenece), Prof. Obiamaka Egbo (USAID), Chief Chinedu Anih (Coal City University), Mr. Chuka Mordi (Ellah Lakes), Dr. Nnenna Mba-Oduwusi (InSiGHT Health), Dr. Dorothy Jeff-Nnamani (Nova Health), Mrs. Modupe Adefeso-Olateju (The Education Partnership Centre), Mrs. Nneka Okekearu (Pan African University), Mr. Joseph Aneke (Transnetwork), Mr. Tobenna Erojikwe (The Law Crest), and Mr. Obi Ozor (Kobo 360).

Also on the list are Monsignor Prof. Obiora Ike, Prof. Joy Ezeilo, SAN, Prof Chris Ohuruogu, Mr. Ikeazor Akaraiwe, SAN, Lady Ada Chukwudozie, Dr. Simon Gusah, Mr. Aronu Ugochukwu, Mr. Gerald Asogwa, Mr. George Agu, Dr. O. J. Mbonu, Mr. Chinedu Ani, Mr. Chris Roberts Ngwu, Mr. Chinedu Eze, Barr. Osinachi Nnajieze, Dr. Kingsley Udeh, Mr. Dubem Njeze and Engr. Barr. Steve Avah.

The Committee also includes Mr. Obi Asika, Mr. Oliver Nnona, Dr. Andreas Gebauer, Mr. Chibuzo Okafor, Mr. Victor Edeh, Mr. Obinna Ike, Dr. Damian Ozoani, Ms. Vivian Ngozi Ani, Mr. Arinze Chilo-Offiah, Mr. Mike Ogbuekwe, Mr. Osita Onuma, Mr. Emeka Onyebuchi, Mrs. Rita Mbah, Mr. Nkenna Emehelu and Mr. Emeka Ani.

The Director General of the State PDP Campaign Council/ Peter Mbah Campaign Organization, Chief Ikeje Asogwa; Deputy Director General (Enugu North Zone) and former Secretary to the State Government, Dr. Dan Shere; Deputy Director General (Enugu West Zone) and former ranking member of the House of Representatives for Ezeagu/Udi Federal Constituency, Rt. Hon. Chief Ogbuefi Ozomgbachi; and Deputy Director General (Enugu East Zone) and former State Commissioner for Finance, Hon. Deacon Okechukwu Ogbodo are also members of the committee.

Nextier, a multi-competency advisory firm led by Patrick Okigbo III, would provide technical support and policy advisory to the Transition Committee.

The statement stated that the committee would commence work upon inauguration on April 27, 2023, and end on May 29, 2023.

Ahead of Guber Poll, Imo Elders Say No Candidate Has Been Endorsed

Insist the electorate will decide

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

Ahead of the November 11 governorship election in Imo state, the council of elders in the state have denied endorsing any candidate.

The council of concerned elders described such purported endorsement as undemocratic, unconstitutional and does not represent the position of Imo elders for now, with regards to the forthcoming governorship election in the state.

A statement on behalf of the concerned council of elders, that was signed by Chief Nicholas Adiele Oparaku stated: "For clarity, Imo elders have not endorsed any candidate neither have the elders delegated or authorised any person to issue any form of endorsement on any governorship candidate for now.

"To set the record straight, elders in Imo State have been reviewing the state of affairs of Imo State and in line with the fears, anxieties and apprehension of the people of the state with a view to finding ways to salvage the situation and return inclusiveness, peace, harmony and political stability in the state."

It added: "As elders, the focus must be solely on the fortune, interest, wellbeing and rights of the entire people of Imo State, irrespective of political, sectional, religious, clan and partisan affiliations and not on a particular individual or political party.

"The reported endorsement of a particular candidate by certain individuals purporting such to be the resolution of elders of the state is therefore embarrassing as it portrays the elders as being partisan and politically compromised.

"Such endorsement donors must note that the choice of the Governor of Imo state resides with the people in an election. As elders, our duty at this moment is to ensure that the people enjoy the free hand to elect a governor of their choice without any form of coercion," they stated.

The statement noted that it was imperative at the moment that the elders preserve their integrity as the non-partisan conscience of the State in the search for direction at this critical time.

As elders, they said, "we have a duty to preserve the democratic tenets of fairness, unhindered participation, right to aspiration and freedom of the people to choose their leaders without recourse to partisan coercion, blackmail and promotion of the narrow-minded interest of a particular individual.

"What should concern us more is how to join forces with other well-meaning leaders to save our State from the perils of insecurity and hardship instead of engaging in distracting political voyage that is outside of our mandate as elders."

FGC Old Students Association Tackles Kaduna Govt over Alleged Land Encroachment

Oluchi Chibuzor

The Federal Government College (FGC) Kaduna Old Students Association has kicked against the alleged encroachment of the school land by the Kaduna State government, describing the move as a violation of the Federal Land Use Act.

According to the association, Kaduna State government had in a letter dated April 17, 2023, through its Ministry of Urban Planning and Development Agency (KASUPDA), informed the college through the school's principal of its intention to remove vacant land along a section of the River Kaduna, citing "security reasons."

Speaking at the press briefing at the weekend in Lagos, the President, FGC, Kaduna, Old Students Association, Seyi Gambo, said, "We are all alive today to witness the systematic usurpation of the rights of our youths to have a sound education in all ramifications within the context of 'One Nigeria,' without duress and under very conducive atmosphere."

According to him, the old students of the are leaders of thought whose concerns for what was going was grievous.

He noted that the move by the Kaduna State Government has, "angered us and we are going to fight this to the last until all lands belonging to our school are returned. On behalf of the old Students Association of the Federal Government College Kaduna, we say, this will never be allowed to go. Not on our watch."

He noted that, "This is not the first time the state government has tried to carry out the act. In 2015, they attempted to excise 45 metres of land from the south-western end of the fence inwards along the stretch of Umar Mohammed Road to provide plots for immediate development, which they believed have been divided among very top officials in the current Kaduna State government and the governor's friends, but the request was totally rejected by the Minister of Education.

"It was a rude shock to witness on Monday 17th April, 2023 the physical excision and occupation of acres of land by the Kaduna State Government. This is the same land they have been trying to take since 2015.

"The pretense that the land is being excised for security reasons falls short any truth whatsoever because immediately this letter was sent to the school, bulldozers moved to the site, plans to build private homes have begun with drawing of allotted plots, and work is presently going on at that site 24 hours/7 days a week."

Speaking further, he said: "This illegality is not only distasteful and pure wickedness on the part of leaders, but is an agenda to obliterate the memories of the founding fathers of this country and the only institution which is the last bastion of molding Nigerians devoid of the things responsible for our arrested development as a nation. Our leaders and elders should be concerned about strengthening this institution and not destroy the same."

Gambo revealed that the old students have rallied to give back to their alma mater.

According to him, "The Kaduna state government is aware that we have an endowment on infrastructure which runs into billions. We are working on making FGC Kaduna a center of information technology with the hosting of a CISCO training lab with certification for all graduates of the institution, a telecoms repair lab, among other plans to turn our students to global brands.

"As former students of FGC Kaduna in Malali village, we are very concerned at the chicanery going on, emboldening a concern for good education yet behind the scenes, their senile acts leave bile in the mouth."

THE DEFECTORS...

L-R: Minister of State, Education, Goodluck Opiah; Governor Hope Uzodimma of Imo State; House of Representatives member for Aboh Mbaise/ Ngor Okpala Constituency, Bede Eke and House of Representatives member for Mbaitoli/ Ikeduru Constituency, Henry Nwawuba, when the federal lawmakers and other top shots from PDP and other parties defected to the APC at the Ndubuisi Kanu Square, Owerri...yesterday

Northern Groups Differ Over Court Judgment Reinstating Ararume as NNPC Chairman

•*HURIWA: Why Buhari must obey court order*

Alex Enumah in Abuja and **John Shiklam** in Kaduna

The Amalgamated Arewa Youth Group (AAYG) and the Coalition of Arewa Civil Society Groups (CACSG) have disagreed over the reinstatement of Senator Ifeanyi Araraume, as the non-Executive Chairman of Nigeria National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL).

This was just as civil rights advocacy groups made up of 10 credible organisations under the aegis of Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA), yesterday, said President Muhammadu Buhari must comply with the order of court reinstating Araraume.

Ararume was recently reinstated by a federal high court Abuja, after his removal by President Muhammadu Buhari.

The CACSG had while reacting to the judgment reinstating Ararume, expressed its displeasure, saying the pronouncement of the court was a usurpation of the duties of the office of the president and an affront to the powers of Buhari.

However, addressing a press conference yesterday, in Kaduna, Director, Media and Publicity, AAYG, Aminu Abbas, said the judgment of the Abuja Federal High Court, delivered by Justice Inyang Ekwo was based on facts presented and the relevant laws.

He said, the judge held that Araraume's removal by Buhari contravened provisions of the extant laws governing the operations of the NNPC Ltd, including the Petroleum Industry Act 2021 as well as the Company's and Allied Matters Act 2020.

"The judge consequently made an order reinstating Araraume as the Non-Executive Chairman of the NNPC Ltd Board with immediate effect. "The judge also held that the removal of Araraume without a fair hearing by the president was, 'wrong and cannot be tolerated by a court of law'.

The group maintained that "The judge made an unambiguous order nullifying all actions and decisions taken by the NNPCL Board since January 17, 2022, when Araraume was wrongfully removed as non-executive chairman.

"It is important to note that the judiciary is an independent arm of government that operates on the principles of fairness, justice, and the rule of law.

Abbas said, "it is not appropriate for the CACSG or any other group or persons to accuse the court of usurping the duties of the office of the President or to suggest that the judgment was an affront to the powers of President Muhammadu Buhari."

He said the judgment of the court should be respected and seen as a step towards strengthening the rule of law in Nigeria.

Abbas called one stakeholders to abide by the decision of the court and work towards the progress and development of the nation.

According to the group, Araraume has a track record of serving Nigeria without any negative incidents.

"He was elected twice to represent his constituents in the Senate and was appointed by President Buhari to the Board of the Nigerian Communications Commission.

"He underwent security checks by the Department of State Security Service and the Nigerian Police Force, which cleared him for the appointment.

"People who have served our country deserve all the support they need. Our youth should shield themselves from being used as pawns in the power tussle that lacks legitimacy.

"We, therefore, wish to call on President Buhari to clear all hurdles so that Senator Araraume can resume office, and summon board meetings…

The group also called on "those in the NNPCL board sponsoring different groups to discount the orders and judgment of the court, to desist from doing so, "as we won't fold our arms and watch the judiciary being intimidated from doing its work."

The group further called on those who are aggrieved by the ruling of the court to take advantage of the Appeal and Supreme Courts to ventilate their disagreement and stop unnecessary campaign media campaign against the judgment.

HURIWA: Why Buhari Must Obey Court Order on Ararume

Meanwhile, HURIWA, yesterday, said Buhari must comply with the order of court reinstating Senator Araraume. The group spoke at a press briefing in Abuja.

Emmanuel Onwubiko, who spoke on behalf of the group, carpeted the Presidency for saying that the judgment of the court on the reinstatement of Araraume would be challenged by the NNPC after Justice Ekwo held that Buhari acted ultra vires of his powers.

Besides, the group further stated that the sum of N5 billion awarded by the court as damages for Araraume's wrongful removal must be swiftly paid because going by Section 63 (3) of the Petroleum Industry Act 2021 and Section 288 of Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020, the Senator cannot be removed in the manner he was removed by the President on January 17, 2022.

Buhari had in January 2022 dropped Araraume as NNPC Board Chairman, a few months after he announced him as the company's chairman in September 2021. But the President had appointed Senator Margrey Chuba-Okadigbo, wife of the late former President of the Senate, Dr. Chuba Okadigbo, to replace Araraume and to represent the South-East.

However, Araraume approached the court to declare his removal illegal not after the NNPC used his name to register NNPCL as a director and simultaneously as Board Chairman and that such brazen act cannot stand in the face of the law.

The court, last week, ruled in favour of Araraume and reinstated him because Buhari's action was grossly unconstitutional.

Reacting, Onwubiko, who is the National Coordinator of the group in conjunction with the Association of African Writers on Human and Peoples Rights (AFRIWRITE); Initiative for Transparency and Social Rights, Organisations for Promotion of Child Rights; Support Democracy Group; Initiative for Peace and Accountability; Youths Supporting Youth for Rule of Law, hailed the reinstatement of Araraume as NNPC Limited Non-Executive Chairman by the court.

Continues online

10 Members of Same Family Killed in South Africa Mass Shooting

Ten members from the same family, including seven women and three men, were killed by gunmen Friday in the city of Pietermaritzburg, in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province of South Africa, police said Friday.

"According to initial police reports, unknown gunmen stormed a Pietermaritzburg homestead and ambushed the family," the South African Ministry of Police said in a statement Friday.

In an updated statement, the police ministry said a 13-year-old boy was among those killed by the gunmen.

The mayor of the area told local media that they needed to bolster capacity of local police stations.

National police spokesperson Athlenda Mathe told CNN some arrests have been made.

"Two suspects (have been) arrested, one dead, another fled the scene. Police are on a manhunt," she said, adding that three firearms were recovered from the suspects during a shootout.

South African Police Service (SAPS) officers enforce a perimeter around a crime scene as pathalogical investigators inspect the crime scene where 14 people were shot dead in a tavern as a forensic team investigates in Soweto on July 10, 2022.

Fourteen people were killed during a shootout in a bar in Soweto police said on July 10, 2022.

Police lieutenant Elias Mawela, said they were called in the early hours in the morning, around 12:30am after the shooting overnight Saturday and Sunday.

When police arrived at the scene, 12 people were confirmed dead. 11 others were taken to hospital with wounds but two later died, raising the death toll to 14.

South Africa has been rocked by several mass shootings in recent months – some, say police, are related to taxi business violence while others appear to be linked to drug cartels.

There has been no motive yet suggested for Friday's shooting.

South Africa has one of the highest murder rates in the world, according to police statistics. The rates have been increasing sharply after the temporary lull during the most severe period of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns.

At least 15 people died after a shooting at a bar in the township of Soweto last July. Four other people were killed in a separate shooting incident in a bar in Pietermaritzburg on the same evening.

The country's Police Minister, Bheki Cele, is visiting the crime scene of the recent shooting Friday with the top management team of the South African Police Service (SAPS) led by National Commissioner, Fannie Masemola, the statement said.

Dino: My Emergence as Governor Will Strengthen Kogi's Unity

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

Governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for the November 11, 2023 election in Kogi State, Senator Dino Melaye, has told the people of the state that his emergence as governor would enhance development and unite the state.

Melaye, who stated this during a meeting with leaders from Kogi Central, yesterday, said the outcome of the PDP primary election showcased the bond of unity among the people of the state.

In a statement by his media team, Melaye said, "I will not take the massive support of my party and generality of Kogites for granted. This support will propel me to work assiduously for the development and unity of our state."

Earlier, the Leaders of Kogi Central had endorsed Melaye's candidature.

A former deputy governor of the state, Chief Patrick Adaba, who spoke on behalf of the zone in Abuja, said Kogi Central would give Melaye his required winning edge votes.

Adaba noted that Melaye's candidacy would be beneficial to the people irrespective of which part of the state they come from, while urging the people of Kogi West not to miss this "golden opportunity" of producing a governor.

"We enjoin our brothers in Kogi West to seize this moment through Senator Dino Melaye. This is their time and we pray that they don't miss it," he stressed.

Another former deputy governor of the state, Hon. Philip Salawu, said Melaye's victory atthe primary election was the will of God, and therefore charged the PDP governorship candidate to continue with his reconciliatory moves which he said had endeared him to many Nigerians even beyond Kogi State.

PDP chairman in the state, Sam Uhuotu, said the rotation of governorship slot among the three senatorial districts would engender harmony in the state

A former National Publicity Secretary of the party, Kola Ologbondiyan, also said the party's candidate was a household name in the state and needed little or no introduction.

"Every Kogite is aware that Dino has always fought their battles for good governance. When elected into office in November, Senator Dino will bring back the fortunes of the state," Ologbondiyan stated.

LIFETIME OIL & GAS ACHIEVEMENT AWARD...

Group Managing Director, TechnoOil,Mrs. Nkechi Obi, receiving the N.I.E.S 2023 Lifetime Oil and Gas Achievement Award from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum Resources, Ambassador Gabriel Tanimu Aduda at the Nigeria International Energy Summit held in Abuja....recently.

Kidnapped Traditional Chief Dies in Captivity, Co-abductee Freed

Ibrahim Oyewale in Lokoja

A prominent traditional Chief and Cashew farmer of the agrarian community of Aghara in Kabba-Bunu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Chief David Obadofin, who was kidnapped on Easter Sunday, has reportedly died in the kidnappers' den.

Obadofin was said to have passed on last Thursday, 12 days after he was kidnapped, when he could no longer withstand the torture of his captors.

Sources, however, hinted that his co-abductee, Temidayo Elewa, has since been set free.

She was freed at Obajana in Lokoja Local Government Area of the state, from where family members picked her up on Saturday morning, for medical attention.

A source involved in the negotiation told journalists that when the abductors noticed that Pa. Obadofin was becoming too weak, they agreed to collect M2,000,000 for release of the two victims and started mounting pressure for the payment.

Meanwhile, they blind folded Temidayo and separated her to a different location. Unfortunately, the monarch died before ransom could be delivered.

Conscious of the advance of a search group, made up of hunters, vigilantes and some Fulani volunteers, the gunmen set Temidayo free.

She allegedly roamed the jungle alone that Thursday to Friday. After many hours, she met a sawing machine operator, who eventually led her to freedom.

She claimed that the search party nabbed one of the suspects, who has allegedly helped in efforts to recover Pa Obadofin's corpse.

"We have seen the lady and taken her to hospital. We picked her up in a village behind Obajana. As for Baba, we know he is dead but we are still combing the jungle for his remains.

"We will not let go because we are confident that God will guide our efforts to the root of this disaster. We will not let go or give up," an anonymous source involved in the operations said.

Obadofin, a major Cashew farmer and Temidayo were abducted on Easter Monday from his farm residence in Aghara at about 11pm. The gunmen shot madam Toyin Onare, a widow who was in the farm as a labourer.

Toyin was rushed to hospital in Kabba, headquarter of the LGA, about 35 minutes drive away. Unfortunately, she was confirmed dead on arrival.

There were concerns about the monarch's chances of survival as he was said to be on medication for age-related diseases aside the trauma and rough treatment he received from the gunmen.

The gunmen made contact the following day, demanding for N60,000,000 ransom. The late chief allegedly said the gunmen fed them with roasted yam.

The public relations officer of Kogi State police command, SP William Aya, said he was not aware of the death of the farmer but promised to find out and revert.

AFENIFERE: RESURGENCE OF TERRORISM AFTER 2023 POLLS WORRYING

with tax moratorium while serious efforts should be made to bring the four refineries in the country back to production.

It added that efforts should be made to ensure that those in IDP camps were resettled in their ancestral homes with adequate steps taken to ensure that bandits no longer assaulted them.

Afenifere said the stranglehold on the economy, especially through unfriendly fiscal policies, should be relaxed so that economic activities could quickly bounce back. It insisted that these things could be successfully done before May 29, 2023, "If President Buhari and his team really desire to do them."

Buhari to Launch Network Against Crime in Gulf of Guinea

President Muhammadu Buhari is expected to launch "Network on Organized Crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea (NOCINAG)," at a national conference on Friday in Port Harcourt.

The programme initiated by Youths and Environmental Advocacy Centre (YEAC-Nigeria), in partnership with Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, and Resilience Fund, Austria, is targeted at tackling crude oil theft and illegal bunkering, kidnapping, banditry, terrorism racketeering, human trafficking, drugs and arms smuggling, illegal fishing, and sea piracy.

The president will also flag-off the construction of Centre of Excellence and a-100 Bed Specialist Hospital, among other projects of Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) in Ogoniland, on the same date.

According to Executive Director of YEAC-Nigeria, Mr Fyneface Dumnamene Fyneface, NOCINAG will be a regional platform that contributes to the fight against organised crime in the Gulf of Guinea, thus, making Nigeria, Angola, Cameroon, Congo, DR Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe to be more proactive in the fight against transnational crimes.

Fyneface, in a statement, listed organised transnational crimes in the Gulf of Guinea region to include pipeline vandalism, crude oil theft, artisanal refining, illegal bunkering, kidnapping, banditry, terrorism, racketeering, human trafficking, drugs and arms smuggling, illegal fishing, sea piracy, and illegal logging.

He explained that the conference was aimed at facilitating a collaborative local, national and regional solution to the menace of organised crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea.

The statement said, "The conference is imperative to Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea as it brings together critical national and international stakeholders from the security circle, government agencies, oil companies, policymakers, university circles, members of diplomatic community, private sector, the media, civil society organisations, and host communities, among others, to brainstorm on strategic ways of collaborating, supporting and working with governments and security formations in tackling organised crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea for safer societies.

"Apart from President Muhammadu Buhari, some of the critical stakeholders also invited to the conference include Vice President Yemi Osinbajo; Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike; Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Lucky Irabor; Chief of Army Staff, Leut. Gen. Farouk Yahaya; Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Awwal Gambo; Commandant General of NSCDC, Ahmed Audi; Coordinator of Presidential Amnesty Programme, Col. Barry Ndiomu, Rtd.; Inspector General of Police, Usman Baba; and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Geoffrey Onyeama.

"Others include National Security Adviser, HYPREP Project Coordinator, Comptroller General of Customs, Director General of NAPTIP, Managing Directors of indigenous/multinational oil companies (SPDC, NOAC/Eni, Halliburton, NLNG, Total E&E Ltd, etc.), Heads of NOA, NDLEA, NDDC, EFCC, NCDMB, DSS, Nigeria Immigration Service, Nigeria Correctional Service, NNPC Ltd, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Petroleum Resources, ECOWAS, Gulf of Guinea Commission, etc."

it noted that Nigeria was one of the countries in the Gulf of Guinea facing challenges associated with organised domestic and transnational crimes.

Fyneface stated, "These organised crimes manifest in the form of pipeline vandalism, crude oil theft, artisanal refining, illegal bunkering, kidnapping, banditry, insurgency, racketeering, cybercrimes, human trafficking, drugs/arms smuggling; Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in the Gulf of Guinea, sea pirates, other fraudulent activities and environmental crimes including illegal logging."

He added, "The conference is aimed at facilitating a collaborative local, national and regional solution to the problem of organised crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea."

Buhari in Accra Tuesday to Attend Maritime Security Summit

President Muhammadu Buhari would depart Abuja on Tuesday for Accra to attend the Third Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Gulf of Guinea Commission, (GGC) convened by President Nana Akuffo-Ado of Ghana.

The president, according to a statement by his media adviser, Femi Adesina, is billed to participate and deliver remarks at the high-level discussion on strategies for strengthening peace and security in the fight against maritime-related crimes in the region.

As the immediate past Chairman of the Assembly, Buhari had championed collective efforts by Member States of the region, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) and their partners, to address and prevent piracy.

In June, 2019, the National Assembly passed the Suppression of Piracy and Other Maritime Offences Act, 2019, (SPOMO Act), aimed at preventing and suppressing piracy, armed robbery and other unlawful acts within the maritime environment.

The statement said the president would be accompanied by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Geoffrey Onyeama; National Security Adviser (NSA), Major-General Babagana Monguno (Rtd); and Director General, National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Ambassador Ahmed Rufai Abubakar, among other top government officials.

Musa: I'm Still in Race for 10th Senate Presidency

Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

A frontline contender for the 10th Senate Presidency, Senator Sani Musa, has said he had not withdrawn from the race contrary to reports that northern aspirants had stepped down for their southern colleagues.

Musa, who is representing Niger East Senatorial District in the 9th National Assembly, made the clarification in a statement he personally signed on Monday.

He said the report about the withdrawal of all aspirants from the North, as published in a newspaper (not THISDAY), was not the true position of the situation on ground.

Musa said the only condition that could make him to withdraw from the race was if the leadership of the All Progressives Congress decided to zone the presiding officers' positions to other zones apart from the North Central.

"My attention has been drawn to the story that I have shelved my aspiration to be elected as a Presiding Officer in the 10th National Assembly. I guessed it is the imagination of the writer of that newspaper's story.

"I am still in the race and will only decide otherwise if the zoning arrangement of our great party, the APC, did not favour my zone for the office of the President of the Senate or the Deputy.

"I appeal to my distinguished senators-elect, my constituents and the general public to remain steadfast and be hopeful for a united and robust 10th National Assembly that will be independent and committed partner to our incoming administration," he added.

The senator, who once said he would gladly step down if the leadership of the APC did not zone the position to the North Central, had vowed not to allow his political ambition to becloud his sense of patriotism.

"I have chosen to respect the religious and tribal diversity of Nigeria. I will abide by the position of our great party, because of my loyalty and all of us will work as a team to achieve national unity and cohesion," Musa had said

Kwara High Court Judge, Justice Oyinloye, Dies

Hammed Shittu in Ilorin

A High Court Judge in the Kwara State Judiciary, Justice Sikiru Oyinloye, has reportedly died after a brief illness.

Oyinloye died on Sunday, five months after his second-in-command in the state's judiciary, Justice Titilayo Daibu, also died due to a brief illness.

Meanwhile, Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, has described as painful and a great loss, the death of Oyinloye. He described him as an upright jurist in the state judiciary.

In a condolence message signed by his Chief Press Secretary, Rafiu Ajakaye, AbdulRazaqsaid, "We join the Kwara State Judiciary and the Nigerian bar to mourn the unfortunate death of Hon. Justice Oyinloye, a very upright and brilliant judge.

"We are consoled by the fact that he left a legacy of uprightness, hard work, and brilliance for which he was known within and outside of the court system.

"Our heartfelt condolences go to his family, the Kwara State judiciary, the good people of Isin Local Government, and everyone, who mourns the late judge. We pray Allah to grant him Al-jannah Firdaus and comfort the family that survived him."

NEWS

BIDDING LATE PATRICIA KEHINDE AKPATA FAREWELL…

L-R: Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Benin Branch Chairman, Nosa Edo-Osagie; former Edo State Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Prof Yinka Omorogbe, SAN, and immediate past President of the NBA, Olumide Akpata, at the funeral obsequies of late Patricia Kehinde Akpata in Benin City…recently

Four Killed in Ondo, Federal Capital Territory Crises

Olawale Ajimotokan in Abuja and **Fidelis David** in Akure

Two persons were on Sunday shot dead with houses burnt as fresh crisis erupted between two warring parts of Ikare-Akoko, headquarters of Akoko North-east Local Government Area of Ondo State.

Similarly, an inter-ethnic clashes at Gwarimpa Estate, Federal Capital Territory (FCT) yesterday left at least two people dead and several persons injured.

THISDAY gathered that gunshots were fired sporadically into the air I Ikare-Akoko, which forced many shop owners and market women to hurriedly close their shops while commercial activities were grounded.

Some residents who spoke under the condition of anonymity lamented that security agents were not enough to douse the tension, advising the state government to immediately declare a curfew in the town and find a lasting solution to incessant and senseless conflict in the town.

The cause of the crisis was unknown as at the time of filing this report.

The state government had recently set up a panel to look into communal and religious issues causing unrest in the town but the committee is yet to submit its report.

In the same vein, a 50-year-old farmer, Mr Olaoluwa Olorunfemi has been killed at Ifeloduro camp forest reserve in Ala area of Akure by unknown killers.

It was learnt that Olorunfemi was macheted to death by his killers numbering about four and bolted with his phone and that of others met in the farm.

Spokesperson of the Ondo State Police Command, Funmilayo Odunlami Omisanya, who confirmed the killing via a press statement, said the police and family members of the deceased have visited the scene of the incident.

According to her, "the deceased's corpse has been evacuated from the scene. The command has launched an investigation into the matter".

PDP Big Guns Defect to APC in Imo

Some top guns in the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and other political parties in Imo State, yesterday, defected en masse with their supporters to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

Top on the list of the defectors were Hon Bede Eke (Aboh Mbaise/Ngor Okpala Federal Constituency), Rt. Hon Henry Nwawuba (Mbaitoli/ Ikeduru Federal Constituency) and Rt. Hon Ikenna Elezianya (Owerri Federal Constituency), all PDP chieftains and federal lawmakers from the Owerri zone.

The others included: Hon. Bruno Ukoha from Ezinihitte/ Ahiazu Federal Constituency, PDP Apex Leader in Ngor Okpala, Hon. Emma Nwogu and Pastor Frank Onwumere from Okigwe.

The defectors, in unison, however, endorsed the second term bid of Governor Hope Uzodimma and pledged to work for his reelection come November 11, 2023.

Uzodimma, his deputy, Prof Placid Njoku, Dr. MacDonald Ebere, Imo State APC Chairman, Dr. Ijeomah Arodiogbu, APC National Vice Chairman, South East, among other key party members were on ground to welcome the new entrants into the APC fold.

Speaking, Uzodimma said: "My heart is full of joy. First, I will start by giving God glory. He set aside today for a reunion of men of good conscience from Imo State, those who understand the need for a united Imo State and a new Imo State. A state where everybody must be his brother's keeper, a state where people must support a winning team to continue to play the match. I want to thank the Almighty God for that.

Tetra Pak Harps on Product Packaging with Cartons

Yetunde Bello

The Tetra Pak has continued its global commitment to ensuring improved food packaging by providing consumers with the highest quality packages.

Speaking at a media roundtable in Lagos, the Managing Director, Tetra Pak West Africa, Mr. Oshiokamele Aruna, said that the roundtable was to create awareness among stakeholders about the worrisome environmental effects of other packaging materials and the need to switch to cartons for food safety and consumers' health.

Aruna said that the company was set to embark on a sustainability drive, tagged: 'Better with Carton.'

He also noted that the company had been championing the continuous need for safe food packaging for many years and has made safety and health some of its guiding principles.

He further explained that using some the latest technologies to push modern limits of packaging, processing, and service solutions, the company has expanded access to safe food in the entire food and beverage industry to deliver safe, standard and high-quality food packages.

"Tetra Pak packages are environmentally sound because they are made from renewable materials, recycled with the aim of helping prevent food waste. Tetra Pak has committed to reach net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in its global operations by 2030. On an average about 70 per cent of our carton by weight is paperboard,renewable, plant-based material and made from FSC®-certified forests and other controlled sources. Renewable plant-based materials are better for the environment because they can be replenished over time and enable a move away from fossil fuel-based materials.

Edo Lawyer Advises Mayaki to Get a Decent Paying Job

An Edo State-based legal practitioner, Greg Ewah Esq, has charged a former aide to Governor of Edo State, Mr. John Mayaki, to quit the diabolic and unwarranted obsession with Governor Godwin Obaseki, and focus on building a decent career.

Ewah, who decried the recent jibes at the governor by Mayaki over the recent recognition by the World Bank, said the ex-aide was pained because he was sacked over his incompetence over seven years ago and hasn't gotten over the unfortunate incident.

He said: "It is quite curious that Mr. John Mayaki has made attacking the governor his day job. He was sacked as Interim Chief Press Secretary (CPS) and has never gotten a decent job ever since. After hobnobbing with the opposition for crumbs and staging laughable public relations (PR) stunts for his immediate family members, he will always make a roundabout turn to obsess with the governor and issue watery stations. He would then proceed to make demands that are way above his station.

"In the eyes of the right-thinking members of the public, his actions would appear petty and infantile, but it is disturbing that Mayaki doesn't see it as such. He thinks he is on top of the world.

"While many in the state were overjoyed over the invitation extended to Governor Obaseki to present the successes of the education reforms in the State at the Spring Meetings in Washington DC, USA, Mayaki was busy manufacturing lies and making shameful demands from the World Bank."

APGA Leadership Tussle: Edozie Njoku Petitions IG

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

Leader of a splinter group seeking to take over the leadership of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) Chief Edozie Njoku, has written to the Inspector General(IG) of Police, Usman Alkali Baba, urging him to help his group take possession of the national Secretariat of the party in Abuja.

The petition to the IG came just as the national executive of APGA led by Chief Victor Oye, has debunked the claim by Njoku as dubious, insisting that Supreme Court did not rule in Njoku's favour.

In a letter signed by Edozie Njoku, dated April 19, 2023 and addressed to the IG he claimed that the Supreme Court had on March 24, 2023 reaffirmed and reinstated him as the national chairman of APGA.

Njoku's letter read: " I write to bring to your notice, the judgement of the Supreme Court which reaffirmed and reinstated me as the national chairman of APGA that emerged from the Owerri convention of May 31, 2019".

He claimed that the Supreme Court had in the judgement ruled that the party officials elected at the Owerri convention has nothing to do with Chief Victor Oye as national chairman of APGA .

Buhari Commiserates with Journalist, Yusuf Alli, on Mum's Demise

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Muhammadu Buhari has mourned Hajiya Hawau Odee, the mother of Alhaji Yusuf Alli, Managing Editor of The Nation, saying that her philanthropic efforts would continue to mark her legacy through generations going forward.

In a message to the leader of the journalism community in Abuja, President Buhari, in release issued yesterday by presidential spokesperson, Mallam Shehu Garba, prayed for the repose of the soul of the deceased and urged the family members to take solace in the good record left behind by their mother.

According to the President, "the deceased will be remembered for filling people's lives with happiness and joy. Condolences to Yusuf Alli and the rest of the family and her admirers. May her soul rest in peace."

Excitement as Kaduna Teachers Operate Computer for the First Time

Excitement was visibly written on the faces of some primary school teachers in Kaduna State yesterday as they touched and operated the computer for the first time ever.

The 25 teachers had undergone a five-day digital literacy training programme organised for primary school teachers in Chikun Local Government Area of the state.

The training was organised by Emerald-Isle Foundation (EIF) under its "Train-the-Tutor" project, designed to improve the capacity of teachers.

It was organised in partnership with the Kaduna Basic Education Accountability Mechanism, IHIFIX Foundation, Queen Amina College, and Leadership, Effectiveness, Accountability and Professionalism (LEAP) Africa, a youth-focused leadership development non-profit organisation.

The Coalition of Associations for Leadership, Peace, Empowerment and Development is another partner in the training programme

One of the teachers, Ms Kasham Tanko, who teaches a Primary Four class at Local Government Education Authority Primary School, Sabon Tasha, said the training was a game changer for her.

Group Supports Gagdi for Speaker of House of Representatives

A political support group, South Eastern Democratic Union, has declared that it is supporting the member representing Pankshin/ Kanke/ Federal Constituency of Plateau State, Hon. Yusuf Gagdi, to emerge as the Speaker of the 10th Assembly of the House of Representatives because he has the capacity and competence needed to hold the office.

The group, in a statement signed by its Secretary General, Dr. Emma Onwuatuegwu, said though all candidates in the speakership race were eminently qualified, Gagdi had distinguished himself by his track record of performance in core legislative functions and constituency projects in the last four years of his stay at the House of Representatives.

It, therefore, appealed to all stakeholders to support him to become the next speaker of the House of Representatives in order to deliver good governance and development to Nigerians.

The group said: "Gagdi is the youngest candidate in this contest so far. He is in his 40s but understands the Legislature. In his first and only term in the House of Representatives, six bills that he sponsored or co-sponsored became law, signed by the President."

TRAINING ON EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICE…
L-R: Ingenium Customer Service Foundation Course Alumni, Ayeni Oluwadunsin; Nwanneka Adebayo; Chief Executive Officer, Ingenium Concepts Limited, Jennifer Orode, and Queen Onyeukwu, at the opening of a training session on skills of excellent customer service in Lagos…recently

Nigeria Governors' Forum Holds Valedictory Session for Outgoing 17 Govs

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

The Nigeria's Governors Forum (NGF), the umbrella body of all elected governors, will tomorrow (Wednesday) hold a valedictory session for all outgoing governors, while officially ending the tenure of Governor Waziri Tambuwal as the chairman of the forum.

A statement by Director, Media and Public Affairs, Abdulrazaque Barkindo, said that the forum would be holding its 2023 valedictory meeting tomorrow 26th April 2023.

It therefore said that all the 36 governors are invited to the session in line with 'invitation by the Director-General of the NGF Mr. Asishana Okauru.

It further stated that after the chairman's brief and few parting remarks, the floor would be open for valedictories from members. Seventeen 17 governors are leaving the forum, having completed their terms of office, while plans have reached an advanced stage for the on-boarding of the new governors at the upcoming NGF induction for new and returning Governors, which comes up between 14th and 17 May 2023.

The meeting will also effectively end the Governors' Fayemi/Tambuwal leadership of the Forum.

The statement added that another chairman will, in due course, emerge from among governors of the majority party, stating first termers are ineligible to vie for the Chairmanship of the Forum.

Police Confirm Killing of One in Rivers Cult Clash

Blessing Ibunge in Port Harcourt

Rivers State Police Command yesterday confirmed the killing of one person in a renewed cult clash in Diobu, Port Harcourt City Local Government Area of the state.

THISDAY gathered that yet to be identified man was shot dead Sunday night, by suspected cult gangs along Awkuzu/Lumbumber Street, Mile 1 Diobu, Port Harcourt.

This incident happened about 24 hours after a similar clash claimed the life of a yet-to-identified man along Illoabuchi axis of Mile 1 Diobu in Port Harcourt.

Residents of the area disclosed that the killing occurred during a battle for supremacy and territorial control by suspected factions of the D12 and BS of Deygbam cult groups.

An eyewitness revealed that the victim, a native of Akwa/Ibom state and resident of Awkuzu street was ambushed by over 10 men and shot him severally.

It was learned that the relatives of the man shot dead was at the Divisional Police headquarters Mile 1 for official complaint on the crime.

As at the time of this report, there was tight security presence within the area of incident.

Confirming the crime, the spokesperson of the state police command, SP Grace Iringe-Koko said the killings was cult-related.

She said: "The Command is aware. I think it is still related to battle of supremacy by these cult groups.

Igbo Think-tank to Promote Unity, Peace in Enugu

Sunday Okobi

In its efforts to build national cohesion, peace, justice as well as douse ethnic tension in Nigeria, the distinguished international Igbo think-tank and professionals' group, Nzuko Umunna, has announced April 28, 2023, to organise and celebrate their second edition of 'Handshake Across Nigeria' in Enugu, Enugu State.

In a statement signed and made available to THISDAY yesterday by the Head of Media Committee of the group, Collins Steve Ugwu, the Executive Secretary of the think-tank group, Mr. Ngozi Odumuko, said: "Coming at a time like this, the 'Handshake Across Nigeria' project is dedicated to expanding friendships and cementing bonds between Ndigbo and other nationalities of Nigeria, and this will again raise the decibel of our strength in diversities, as our great heritage for our desired unity and development."

He stressed that: "As a non-partisan body of committed optimists, experiences of history and facts of our co-existence have compelled the awareness that Ndigbo are deep friends of our brother nationalities, and believe in one accord, that there is no love lost that cannot be renewed, refreshed, and even transferred generationally.

"Nzuko Umunna is proud by this inspiration and remains humbled by stakeholders' endorsements across board, as we look forward to another big day, with South-east state governments as great host."

The statement also quoted the President of the group, Prof Chika Moore, as saying that understanding the core of inclusion, justice and fairness expressed in a worthy handshake activates respect that love is above hate when friendship is grown intentionally.

According to him, "The pillars of trust must replace the columns of suspicions, so that national cohesion will stand rooted in our hearts of liberty, freedom and security."

Population Commission Assures Nigerians of Server, Data Safety

The National Population Commission (NPC) has reassured the public of the safety of its server and data as they prepare for the 2023 Population and Housing Census.

Director, Public Affairs Department (PAD), NPC, Dr Isiaka Yahaya, said this in a statement issued in Abuja yesterday.

News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reported that a staff of the Commission and Comptroller of Chanchaga LGA, Niger State, Mr Sanusi Maigida had earlier claimed that the NPC server was hacked.

Maigida had cited this development as the reason for the postponement of the LGA-level training of the Supervisors and Enumerators for the 2023 Population and Housing Census.

Yahaya, who reaffirmed the commitment of the commission to a credible and acceptable census, said that its server was not hacked.

The PAD boss described as false and misleading, the information on hacking of the commission's server.

"We wish to assure the public that the security of the data for the 2023 Population and Housing Census is absolutely guaranteed.

"The commission is committed to upholding the highest standards of data protection and maintaining the trust placed in us by the Nigerian population," he said.

Yahaya explained that the Commission's Chairman, Alhaji Nasir Kwarra's visit to the United Nations was to attend the 56th Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development was to the benefit of the country.

NGO Expresses Commitment to Curbing Crime, Environmental Crises in Nigeria

A non-governmental organisation (NGO), Youths and Environmental Advocacy Centre (YEAC-Nigeria) has expressed commitment to ensuring that crime and other environmental crises are curbed in Nigeria.

Executive Director of the NGO, Mr. Fyneface Dumnamene, said this in an interview with the *News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)* in Abuja.

Dumnamene said that part of the efforts by the group to address the menace was through inauguration of Network on Organised Crime in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea (NOCINAG).

He said that the organisation had made several moves to curb crime and environmental crises through effective collaboration with other stakeholders across the country.

Dumnamene, who said that the partnership was not only in Nigeria, added that the organisation had also involved other international bodies in addressing the challenges.

According to him, the NGO has organised various workshops and seminars with relevant stakeholders, both nationally and internationally.

"We are organising more conferences and workshops and we are talking with the government and other stakeholders for necessary collaboration to address organised crimes in the Niger Delta (Nigeria) and the Gulf of Guinea.

KWASU Lecturer Dies in His Sleep in Ilorin

Hammed Shittu in Ilorin

A lecturer of the Kwara State University (KWASU), Malete, Dr. Ajeigbe Issa, yesterday died in his sleep at his home in Ilorin, the state capital.

Ajeigbe was until his death yesterday the Head of Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education as well as the acting director of Sports at the institution.

Confirming the lecturer's burial in a circular yesterday, the Registrar of KWASU, Dr. Kikelomo Sallee, said Ajeigbe died in his sleep at his home in Ilorin.

It was gathered that the Islamic funeral prayer (Salatul Janazah) for the deceased lecturer was underway in Budo-Egba, Asa LGA of the state.

Sallee said: "With heavy heart, we announce the death of the Head of Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education and acting Director of Sports of the Kwara State University, Dr. Ajeigbe Issa Yaqub, who died in his sleep.

"Janaza is at 10 a.m. on April 24 in Budo-Egba, Asa LGA of Kwara State.

"As the university mourns this loss of a committed member of staff, we pray Allah forgives all his shortcomings and admits him into jannatul firdaus.

"May Allah also console his family, friends and the university community."

Ex-AGF, Bayo Ojo, Bags International Law Achievement Award

Wale Igbintade

Former Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Chief Adebayo Ojo (SAN), has been conferred with the Inaugural International Law Achievement Award by the International Law Association, Nigerian chapter.

The award was presented at the President's Dinner and Award Night organised as part of the sixth Annual Law Conference of the association held in Lagos.

The event had in attendance more than 100 participants both in person and online.

Several dignitaries and leading international law experts attended the dinner ceremony, including the President of the association, Professor Damilola Olawuyi (SAN); Dr. Edward Kwakwa, assistant director-general of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), Geneva, Switzerland; members of the judiciary, including the wife of the honoree, Justice Folashade Ojo of the Court of Appeal.

Other dignitaries are Justice Adedotun Ademola Onibokun of the Osun State High Court; Director of the Nigeria Country Office of WIPO, Dr. Oluwatobiloba Moody, and the Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Professor Mohammed Tawfiq Ladan.

Bauchi Presents Official Cars to Local Govt Chairmen

Segun Awofadeji in Bauchi

Bauchi State Governor, Senator Bala Abdulkadir Mohammed has presented brand new official vehicles to the 20 Local Government caretaker Committee Chairmen of the state.

The official vehicles, according to the governor, is to make their work easier in reaching out to communities in their local government areas.

Presenting the vehicles yesterday Governor Mohammed stated that his administration always recognised the hard work of local government chairmen in the state hence the need to help them discharge their responsibilities.

Represented by the Secretary to the state government(SSG), Barrister Ibrahim Kashim, the governor urged them to serve their people by bringing development and Identifying with them at all times.

Speaking earlier, the state Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Hon Abdulrazak Nuhu Zaki, said the vehicles were procured to help their LG chairmen effectively discharge their duties.

In a vote of thanks, the Chairman, Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), Bauchi State chapter, Umar Hassan appreciated the gesture and promised to consolidate and complement the governor's giant strides.

FOREIGN DESK

COMPILED BY BAYO AKINLOYE

More Bodies Recovered in Kenya Church; Red Cross Says 178 Missing

Kenyan authorities have recovered at least 50 bodies of Good News International Church members believed to have starved themselves to death. The death toll is expected to rise as the Kenya Red Cross said 178 members of the church were reported missing.

Hassan Musa, the Kenya Red Cross regional manager for the Coast region, said there were still 178 people missing and the organisation is working closely with the government and other stakeholders to see if they can identify the missing while also dealing with the number of bodies.

Kenyan security forces and residents of the coastal town of Malindi continue to recover the bodies of people who were following the teachings of Good News International Church pastor Paul Makenzi.

Kenya's inspector general of police, Japhet Koome, said an additional 11 bodies were exhumed from Makenzi's land in Shakahola forest on Monday. He said 29 people were rescued.

Authorities have recovered 50 bodies from the Shakahola forest since then.

According to reports, Makenzi was arrested more than a week ago after four of his followers died of starvation, thinking it was a way to meet Jesus.

Countries Evacuate Diplomats, Citizens Out of Sudan

Countries are rushing to evacuate their diplomats and citizens from Khartoum, Sudan's capital, as fighting between the two rival factions in the Northeastern African country continues.

Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the United States are among the nations using aircraft and convoys to bring foreign nationals out of Sudan.

More than 420 people have been killed so far, and thousands have been injured.

More than 420 people have been killed so far, and thousands have been injured.

Sudanese nationals are fending for themselves amid power blackouts and loss of internet service.

Some Sudanese have made the decision to escape in cars and buses on dangerous roads.

Samantha Power, the administrator of the US Agency for International Development, announced Sunday the organisation had deployed a team of disaster response experts to Sudan. She said the team would initially operate out of Kenya.

"The United States is mobilizing to ramp up assistance to the people of Sudan ensnared between the warring factions," Power said.

World Military Spending Up to All-time High: SIPRI

Global military spending grew for the eighth consecutive year in 2022 to an all-time high of $2.24 trillion, with a sharp rise in Europe, chiefly due to Russian and Ukrainian expenditure, a Swedish think tank said Monday.

Spending globally increased by 3.7% in real terms, but military expenditure in Europe was up 13% — its steepest year-on-year increase in at least 30 years, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, or SIPRI, said in a report. Military aid to Ukraine and concerns about a heightened threat from Russia "strongly influenced many other states' spending decisions."

The independent Swedish watchdog said that last year, the three largest arms spenders were the United States, China and Russia, who between them accounted for 56% of global expenditure.

'The rise "is a sign that we are living in an increasingly insecure world," said Nan Tian, a researcher with SIPRI's Military Expenditure and Arms Production Program.

Several states significantly increased their military spending following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while others announced plans to raise spending levels over periods of up to a decade. Some of the sharpest increases were seen in countries near Russia: Finland (36 %), Lithuania (27%), Sweden (12%) and Poland (11%).

Both Sweden and Finland jointly applied for NATO membership in May 2022, abandoning decades of nonalignment in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While Finland has been admitted, Sweden's bid to join NATO remains stalled by opposition from Turkey and Hungary.

Air Pollution Kills 1,200 Children Yearly, Says EU Agency

Air pollution still causes more than 1,200 premature deaths a year in under 18's across Europe and increases the risk of chronic disease later in life, the EU environmental agency said Monday.

Despite recent improvements, "the level of key air pollutants in many European countries remain stubbornly above World Health Organization" (WHO) guidelines, particularly in central-eastern Europe and Italy, said the EEA after a study in over 30 countries, including the 27 members of the European Union.

The report did not cover the major industrial nations of Russia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom, suggesting the overall death tolls for the continent could be higher.

The EEA announced last November that 238,000 people died prematurely because of air pollution in 2020 in the EU, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

"Air pollution causes over 1,200 premature deaths per year in people under the age of 18 in Europe and significantly increases the risk of disease later in life," the agency said.

The study was the agency's first to focus specifically on children.

UN Chief Lambasts Russia on War Against Its Neighbour

UN secretary general Antonio Guterres told a Security Council meeting Monday that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is "causing massive suffering and devastation to Ukraine and its people" and contributing to "global economic dislocation triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic."

"Tensions between major powers are at a historic high. So are the risks of conflict, through misadventure or miscalculation," Guterres said.

Sitting next to the UN chief, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned the council that the world is now in a more dangerous situation than even during the Cold War.

"As during the Cold War, we have reached the dangerous, possibly even more dangerous, threshold," Lavrov said during the session on "Maintenance of International Peace and Security" that he was chairing. Russia holds the monthly rotating presidency of the 15-member body for April.

Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto said at a European Union meeting in Luxemburg Monday that the EU must accelerate its acquisition of ammunition for Ukraine.

During the meeting, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell expressed confidence member states will finalise the remaining details. He said despite some disagreements among the members, he was sure that "everybody will understand we are in a situation of extreme urgency."

Australia to Order Military Build-up in Response to China's Aggression

The Australian military will be rapidly transformed to prepare for a possible conflict between China and the United States.

An unclassified version of a major defence review published Monday recommends that Australia buy longer-range missiles to counter China's growing threat to "the global rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific."

The report outlines the biggest shake-up to Australia's military in decades.

The defence review doesn't identify China as a direct threat to Australia. But it does warn that Beijing's rapid military build-up and its territorial ambitions in the South China Sea threaten Australia's security.

The report states that "the prospect of major conflict in the region… directly threatens our national interest."

The review also details concerns that the Australian Defense Force is not equipped for modern warfare's "missile age" and that Australia is no longer protected by its geographic isolation.

Ex-UN Secretary General Ban Makes Surprise Visit to Myanmar

Former UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon has made a surprise visit to military-run Myanmar on behalf of a group of elder statesmen that engages in peace-making and human rights initiatives around the world, local media and a South Korean diplomat said Monday.

State television MRTV reported Monday night that Ban, deputy chair of The Elders, met in the capital, Naypyitaw, with top leader Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing. It said they exchanged views on the situation in Myanmar in a friendly, positive and open discussion. It did not report details of the meeting, which it said was also attended by the ministers of defence and foreign affairs.

It said Ban arrived with a small delegation on Sunday and was greeted by the deputy ministers of defence and foreign affairs. It said Ban's party departed Monday after the meetings.

The visit by Ban, a former South Korean foreign minister, appeared certain to have focused on Myanmar's ongoing political crisis.

"This visit by Mr Ban Ki-moon was totally scheduled by The Elders. We are not engaged in this process," said a South Korean Embassy official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorised to speak to the media. "This is not the official visit."

The Elders was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007 and comprises mostly retired world leaders. The group did not immediately release any details about Ban's visit.

60 Killed in Attack in Burkina Faso

Men wearing Burkinabe military uniforms killed approximately 60 people last week in a village in northern Burkina Faso, a local prosecutor said Sunday, citing a police report.

Lamine Kabor said authorities had launched an investigation into the attack in the village of Karma in Yatenga province, near Mali.

The region has experienced an uptick in similar attacks by suspected jihadists.

Climate Activists Glue Themselves to Roads, Stop Berlin Traffic

Environmental activists glued themselves to the asphalt in dozens of street blockades across Berlin on Monday to demand the government do more to tackle climate change, an action condemned by Germany's finance minister as "physical violence."

"We no longer accept that the government has no plan to stop the destruction of the basis of our existence," Carla Rochel, a spokeswoman for Last Generation, the group behind the protests, said in a statement.

The action was swiftly rejected by Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government, with spokesman Steffen Hebestreit saying: "We do not support such forms of protest."

Around 200 arrests were made over the protests, Berlin's regional interior minister Iris Spranger said on Twitter.

Campaigners launched their protests at the start of morning rush hour traffic.

They glued themselves to the street surface, halting traffic across Berlin, including on the city's busy A100 motorway.

Police used a drill to dislodge an activist glued firmly to the ground, an AFP journalist saw, leaving the protester with a slab of asphalt stuck to his hand.

Around 500 officers were deployed to secure the streets and clear demonstrators from over 30 protest sites, a spokeswoman for the Berlin police told AFP.

Oil Workers Strike Spreads Across Iran

A strike involving workers in Iran's oil industry over inadequate wage growth is spreading rapidly across the country.

This is according to reports and videos sent to VOA.

Following the increase in the inflation rate in Iran and the large gap between household income and expenses, various unions and groups, including workers, teachers, and retirees, have started mass protests and strikes in recent weeks.

The striking workers in the oil industry have recently called for a 79% increase in the wages of contract workers in industrial and non-industrial factories.

The government of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has offered a 27% increase and pledged to curb inflation in 2023.

The striking workers have rejected this.

Meanwhile, the Iranian Labour News Agency, ILNA, announced a 40% increase in the prices of goods and services in the first month of this year.

US Officials Urge Iran to Release Detainees

On the 5th anniversary of the imprisonment of Iranian American citizen Emad Shargi in Evin Prison, the US special envoy for Iran called Sunday for his immediate release.

Robert Malley said Iranian authorities arrested Shargi "on spurious charges" and that Shargi has been "wrongfully detained in Iran's Evin prison."

In his tweet, Sunday, Malley also called for Iran to release two other imprisoned Americans.

Shargi is an Iranian American businessman and investor arrested in 2017 for what Iran alleged was espionage and disrupting national security. He was acquitted of all charges and released after eight months, but authorities arrested him again, and he was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

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Iheanacho, Ndidi in Survival Battle with Leicester at Leeds Tonight

Kelechi Iheanacho (left) and Wilfred Ndidi will be hoping for a repeat of their victory at Wolves tonight at Elland Road when they take on Leeds United a relegation dog fight

RELEGATION STAR WAR

Femi Solaja

Super Eagles duo of Kelechi Iheanacho and Wilfred Ndidi are in for a tough duel tonight when former champions, Leicester City, visit Elland Road home ground of fellow relegation threatened side, Leeds United.

Iheanacho last weekend helped his side to come from behind to beat Wolverhampton Wanderers 2-1 to snap a 10-match run without a victory in all competitions and keep alive their Premier League survival bid.

Leicester had claimed one point from their previous nine league games and the long-awaited victory at Wolves moved Dean Smith's side out of the drop zone and up to 17th on 28 points — above Everton on goal difference.

Hosts Leeds are just one spot above Leicester at 16th place on 29 points from same numbers of matches. Technically, Leeds are also swimming in the dangerous relegation water. As they go Head-to Head this evening in a winner takes-it-all encounter, anything can happen!

The situation for both clubs is perilous and neither dare drop the match. A draw is also a temporary relief that may turn out bad news should both Everton and Nottingham Forest win their respective match-day 33 games.

According to Television Pundit, Danyal Khan, it is difficult pinpointing why Leicester City are in this hot water of the English topflight this season.

"It's hard to pinpoint one reason why Leicester have had a difficult season. When you rewind to the start, they had to sell another one of their best players in Wesley Fofana. Although they brought in Wout Faes as a replacement, it did not feel like that was enough to reinforce a squad that had been together for a while under Brendan Rodgers without any real key additions.

"They did look to address this in January with Harry Souttar, Tete and Victor Kristiansen but they all joined a squad that was already low on confidence and struggling to get a string of results together. This has led to the team making a flurry of individual mistakes in the last few months which has piled on the poor results - that's why when Dean Smith came in, one of the first aspects he looked at was raising morale and bringing positivity back into these players."

Should Leicester, a former champion fail to weather the storm to survive the drop, it surely will be bad news for Super Eagles Portuguese gaffer, Jose Peseiro. After tonight's game at Elland Road, only five more matches will determine the fate of Iheanacho and Ndidi.

Tottenham Sack Stellini after Newcastle 6-1 Thumping

●*Chelsea hold talks with Pochettino, want him to succeed Lampard*

Interim manager Cristian Stellini has been sacked by Tottenham Hotspur after four matches in charge.

The decision comes a day after Spurs were thrashed 6-1 at Newcastle- a performance chairman Daniel Levy has described as "wholly unacceptable".

Stellini, 48, was appointed on 26 March after Antonio Conte's 16-month spell as Spurs boss came to an end.

Ryan Mason, who worked under Stellini and took charge when Jose Mourinho was sacked in 2021, succeeds him.

Sunday's defeat at Newcastle, where they trailed 5-0 after 21 minutes, was a significant blow to Spurs' hopes of securing Champions League qualification.

"It was devastating to see," added Levy.

"We can look at many reasons why it happened and while myself, the board, the coaches and players must all take collective responsibility, ultimately the responsibility is mine."

Tottenham are fifth in the Premier League table, six points behind both Newcastle in third and Manchester United in fourth.

Both teams have played fewer games than Spurs, who host Erik ten Hag's side on Thursday.

Spurs won one, drew one and lost two games after appointing Stellini, who acted as Conte's assistant during his time as manager.

Stellini also led the side when Conte was missing from the touchline after a gall bladder operation in February, with Spurs winning three of their four Premier League games in Conte's absence, but also losing to Championship side Sheffield United in the FA Cup.

Meanwhile, Chelsea are in advanced talks to make former Tottenham boss Mauricio Pochettino their new manager.

The Argentine, whose most recent job was at Paris St-Germain, is keen on the role but more negotiations will take place before any deal is finalised.

Chelsea want a quick resolution and believe they are at the end of the process as they search for a permanent replacement for Graham Potter. Pochettino, 51, would take over from interim manager Frank Lampard.

The former England midfielder took charge of the Blues after they sacked Potter at the start of April, but has lost all four of his games in charge.

Osimhen's Napoli Four Points Away from First Scudetto in 33 Years

SERIE A

Nigeria international, Victor Osimhen, and his Serie A club, Napoli, are now just four points away from being crowned champions of Italy for the third time after a famous 1-0 win at Juventus on Sunday night.

Napoli could even bag the Scudetto as early as next weekend should they beat Salernitana at home and closest challengers Lazio lose at Inter Milan the following day.

Napoli are 17 points clear at the top of the standings on 78 points with just seven round of matches left to end of the Serie A season in Italy.

The Naples team have previously scooped the Scudetto in the 1986/1987 and 1989/1990 seasons.

Osimhen is the leading scorer in Serie A this season with 21 goals and he will also make history as the first African to be crowned Goal King of Italy should he hold out till the end of the campaign.

It will also be his first major trophy since he moved to Europe in 2016 after winning the FIFA Under-17 World Cup title with the Golden Eaglets in Chile.

Aruna, Assar to Renew Rivalry in Nairobi

Nigeria's Quadri Aruna and Omar Assar of Egypt will again take their rivalry to Nairobi, Kenya when the 2023 Africa Cup kicks off on May 4. The competition will run until May 6 at Moi International Sports Centre in Kasarani, Kenya.

Aruna who missed out from the title in 2022 after suffering a thigh injury in the final to concede the crown to Assar at 4-3.

He will be hoping to reclaim the title following his recent devastating form in international tournaments across the globe.

Aruna, presently ranked 12th in the world, is the highest ranked African in the world while Assar is 33rd and the second best rated In the continent.

Current African best ranked female player, Dina Meshref, is at present in fine form following her display at the just concluded WTT Champions in China will be up against compatriot and defending champion Hana Goda who claimed her first continental title in Lagos last year.

Each participating country is expected to present two players in the men and women events while Egypt as the defending champions in men and women will nominate two players alongside the two champions.

Kenya as host will present four players each in men and women events while Brian Mutua will lead the East African team against the visitors.

Already, the organisers of the tournament, Kenya Table Tennis Association (KTTA) has assured stakeholders of a top-class event having staged the same event in 2018.

The Africa Club Championships will precede the Africa Cup and both tournaments would serve as dress rehearsals for the first World Championships to be staged in Africa in 84 years, which is due to take place in Durban, South Africa from May 20 to 28.

Quadri Aruna...set to renew rivalry with Egypt 's Omar Assar at the 2023 Africa Cup in Nairobi

I'm Storming Lagos for Victory, Boasts Apata Roro

GOtv BOXING NIGHT 28

Ibadan-based lightweight boxer, Samuel "Apata Roro" Moses, has declared that he is storming Lagos to defeat his opponent, Michael Adesodun at GOtv Boxing Night 28.

The boxer made the declaration in a telephone interview from his training base in Ibadan on Monday. The eight-round national super featherweight challenge is one of the seven bouts lined up for the boxing event, to be held at the Molade Okoya-Thomas Indoor Sports Hall of Teslim Balogun Stadium, Lagos, on 1 May.

Speaking on his preparation for the bout, Apata Roro said he is in top shape for the challenge. "I am coming to Lagos to win. They said Lagos boxers fight better in front of their fans, right? No problem. I am fully ready for Michael and will defeat him right in front of his fans in Lagos," he said.

Apata Roro had an impressive outing at GOtv Boxing 25 held in Ibadan, where he defeated Lagos – based boxer, Wale Anifowose.

The biggest bout of the night will see London-based World Boxing Federation (WBF) Intercontinental featherweight champion, Taiwo "Esepor" Agbaje, trade punches with Twalib Tuwa of Tanzania.

In the other bouts of the night, cruiserweight boxers, Demiji Salami, and Samuel Elegbede will slug it out in a six-round national super middleweight challenge bout; lightweight boxers, Emmanuel Abimbola and Prince Lion Nwoye will face each other; Dolapo Omole will battle Gbolahan Mojeed in an eight-round featherweight bout; Steven "Freeman" Kadima will face Godwin Ambrose in a national challenge duel, while Azeez Ayobami 'Latest' will engage Tosin Osaigbovo, in an eight-round national lightweight challenge bout.

GOtv Boxing Night 28 is sponsored by GOtv and will be broadcast live on DStv channel 209 and GOtv Channel 64.

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MISSILE

Shaibu to Festus Keyamo

"In any case, Keyamo's time as Minister of State for Labour and Employment witnessed the highest level of unemployment, which KPMG says is about to hit 40 percent. Under Keyamo, universities also witnessed prolonged strikes, as ASUU proceeded on 10 months strike in 2020 and eight months industrial action in 2021. Keyamo clearly failed as a Minister but grew wealthier in the process through his so-called real estate business. He thus needs to be investigated with immediate effect"–*Atiku's Aide, Phrank Shaibu, urging the Senate to publish the report on N52billion Special Works implemented by the Minister, Keyamo.*

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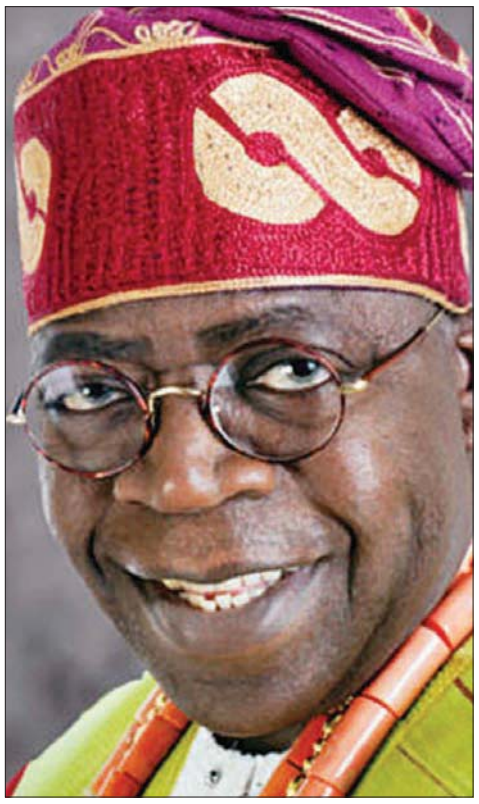
The Return Of Bola Tinubu, President-Elect

Nigeria's President-elect Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) is back in the country. He was declared winner of the February 25 Presidential election with 8, 794, 726 of the total votes cast with over 25% in 30 states, more than the 24 states required by the Constitution. He reportedly returned to the country at 4.30 pm yesterday through the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja after a four-week vacation in Europe and Saudi Arabia. He left the country on March 21, and according to his handlers, the President-elect needed time to rest, relax, re-tune, rejuvenate and prepare for the inauguration of a new government on May 29. We were told he would be in France, the UK and Saudi Arabia where he was expected to observe the lesser hajj, that is Umrah. The trip fueled speculations about the state of his health, with many Nigerians arguing that his trip abroad was a cover up for undisclosed medical treatment. There were even videos of his sightings in Guinea, and speculations about his citizenship. For record purposes, I had argued on another platform, The Morning Show of AriseNews, the television wing of this newspaper where, as lead anchor I ruminate on sundry issues every morning - that Asiwaju Tinubu has the right to the freedom of movement and that I did not see anything wrong if he wanted to take time off to rest after what we would all readily agree was a hectic, hypertensive, campaign season.

Nigerians were however inconsolable. They wanted the President-elect on the ground. They said they were not comfortable with the idea of a President-elect who would be missing in action or become the equivalent of an unidentifiable, untraceable flying object going from France to the UK to Saudi Arabia and wherever. Where is he?, they asked. And that included even persons that did not vote for him. To be fair, I could understand the concerns of those who raised these questions. When a man is proclaimed President-elect, he becomes automatically, a property of the state. He becomes a person and subject of state interest. He is effectively no longer an ordinary person. He is asked to move into secure state accommodation, in this case, the Aguda House in Abuja. He is given a full complement of state security. He receives daily briefings from all the security agencies. He acts in other words, as if he were already President. The only difference is that he cannot yet exercise executive powers until he is duly sworn in and he takes the oath of office. The underlying logic in this regard is that there cannot be two Presidents at a time. So, in effect, Tinubu is a President-in-waiting, and Nigerians who are concerned about his movement, health and safety have every reason to raise questions. There are also national security implications. The British, Chinese and the Americans would not allow their President-elect yo-yoing across the world weeks before inauguration. In traditional communities, such persons, waiting to ascend the throne, are kept in seclusion, to be prepared for the enormous assignment ahead and their transition from one plane of existence to the other.

However, Bola Tinubu is back. What a big relief! His return, yesterday, it can be said, has settled the questions about his condition and health. Those who have raised questions about his health and circumstances can now see him. It bears stating that no one would expect any further overseas travel by the President-elect before his inauguration, 35 days from now. The timing of his return is also auspicious. The Ramadan season is over, and whoever uses religion as the excuse for being abroad, is of course expected to return. While he was away, the supplementary elections in 24 states of the Federation took place on April 15. The President-elect issued a statement commending the process and asking all



Tinubu

elected persons to work with him. While he was away also, there were controversies about his citizenship and whether or not he committed perjury in filling the Form EC9 that he submitted to INEC. Quite a number of persons insist that the President-elect must address these two issues.

I have argued and I stand to be corrected that the controversy about his Guinean connection and/or dual citizenship is of no moment. No right-thinking, reasonable person would imagine that Tinubu is not a Nigerian. He is in fact more Nigerian than most of us. That is why he is President today and you and I are busy still pursuing the dream. The laws of our land recognize dual citizenship, and in law that matter was settled in the Bukola Saraki case. The conditions for citizenship are properly spelled out in Sections 25 – 28 of the 1999 Constitution, and there is no point quibbling over Tinubu's qualifications in that regard. The other issue that has been raised has to do with perjury. But that can only be proven and confirmed by a court of law. Section 117 of the Criminal Code frowns upon giving false evidence or testimony, either orally or in writing, and Section 118 further prescribes punishment accordingly. But perjury has to be proven. It should be recalled that last year, some lawyers went to the Federal High Court accusing Tinubu of perjury. It was an ex parte motion seeking an order of judicial review with regard to Tinubu's educational qualification. What is the status of that case?

We have been through this route before, by the way. As Governor of Lagos State, Tinubu was similarly accused of perjury. The lawyer involved in that case was a jurist of timbre and calibre: the inimitable Gani Fawehimi. "Gani The Law" was a formidable officer in the temple of justice. But nothing came out of that case. The matter was dismissed. The order of mandamus sought by Gani Fawehinmi was ruled out of time. Tinubu was already Governor. The court held that the was covered by immunity under Section 308 of the 1999 Constitution. I imagine that similarly, history would repeat itself on this matter, in the same manner in which it is certain that the inauguration of Asiwaju Tinubu as President of Nigeria would take place on May 29, 2023. It is true that there are petitions at the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal, but anybody who knows Nigeria fairly well can confidently wager a bet that their Lordships will not give a decision to upturn the social and political order. Tinubu has already set up an inauguration committee, a 13-man committee. His associates have been sighted attending the Spring meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions in Washington DC, United States. He has been busy playing Rose Garden politics. Meanwhile, nothing has been heard from the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal. Petitions and cross petitions have been filed. Hundreds of lawyers have been lined up. We would probably be here in 50 days from now, with inauguration done attended by traditional rulers competing for attention, the international community in attendance too, a Federal cabinet in place, the woman in charge of catering for the Presidential inauguration Ball having been paid for her pepper soup, small chops, and jollof rice, and the aso ebi, skyscraper Yoruba headgear crowd compensated, a new National Assembly inaugurated, and then the election petition tribunals would suddenly start sitting… The same tribunals would be paid and offered logistics by the new government. Indeed, the Nigerian system is one of the most comedic in the world. Never mind. The lawyers will collect their pay, there will be one or two dramas in the courts, the judges will be happy to have made some fine points of law, and we will all move on.

Moving on, however, it is important, now that the President-elect is back in town that we remind him of the urgent tasks ahead: the big load on his shoulders, the thing around his neck: how to lead Nigeria out of the woods. Nigerians can expect that it would not take Tinubu a long time to set up a Cabinet. In 2015, it took President Buhari quite a while to identify Ministers. He was not alone. One state Governor ran a one-man show in his state for a whole year! He had stayed too long in Lagos before going back home to be Governor. He had difficulties identifying his own people. Tinubu would naturally put a team together without any stress. He has the necessary experience. He has done this and that before as Governor of Lagos State and as an active Godfather in Nigerian politics. Nonetheless, he has more than enough persons in his face who since the elections have been posturing as potential Ministers and advisers, re-enacting their own "Emilokan" – "it is my turn" posturing. The sense of entitlement in the Tinubu camp is so much, so loudly paraded, I would not be surprised if one or two persons in that camp end up in the hospital if they do not get what they think they deserve. But should that bother us? Nigerians are not looking for a team, post-May 29, of entitled persons, boys and girls who are in government to collect IOUs, "emilokan adventurists" in the corridors of Aso Villa.

Nigerians want a team that can work and move Nigeria forward. In eight years, this country has taken one step forward, two steps backwards. We don't need to argue over that. Check your pocket. Listen to the loud, tsunami-like rumblings of your stomach. Consider the rate at which burial spaces are disappearing at the cemeteries because of increased harvest of corpses. Imagine how laughter has died in the people's throats and the pronounced jeremiad in Southern Kaduna, Benue and Plateau. Headline inflation is now over 22%. Food inflation is much higher. The country is in heavy debt. Only the other day, the World Bank told us that Nigeria's debt service to revenue ratio is 96%. President Buhari says he is looking forward to May 29, and that he can't wait to return to his home town of Daura. He wants Nigeria to forgive him in case he has not met our expectations. Err, he needs not worry. Nigerians are too distracted, too confused, they don't know what is good for them. The President can be sure that he has already been forgiven except anybody wants to start another round of religious and ethnic controversy. Charly Boy says the apology is not accepted. Charly Boy, Charly Daddy, is on his own. What Nigeria needs right now is a magician. And the question is: how versed is Tinubu in the magical arts of leadership and societal transformation? He says "emilokan": now soon, that would be fulfilled in a historical manner, the only other Yoruba man in contemporary times to be President of Nigeria. Very soon, Abuja will be overtaken by the Yoruba cap, the language spoken in the big halls of Abuja hotels would be distinctively Yoruba, "emilokan" will become "awalokan" with Tinubu's children, in-laws and associates treading the surface of mother earth like new conquerors, backed by power aphrodisiac and possibly, Artificial Intelligence! What Nigeria needs is a President who knows what to do!

"Whatever they like, they (can) speculate, I am healthy and strong and I am okay. May 29 is not a calendar…The challenge ahead is beyond that., it is for all of us together. And we must stay focused. That is very important. Don't isolate one date. One date on the calendar does not mean anything. It is just an event.", Tinubu said on his arrival yesterday. Good. We have heard. But the President-elect must be further reminded that he made many promises to Nigerians, including those who voted for him and those who did not, about his mission to restore hope. Nigerians are looking forward to the delivery of those promises. They need the renewed hope that he promised! Once upon a time in this country, and many would remember, a President told us that he was not aware of the promises in his own election manifesto. He changed the script the moment he got into power and blamed the past administration for everything that did not work. Tinubu cannot play that game. He is an APC man succeeding an APC administration. He would not have a predecessor to blame! Scratch that out of the strategy list. He cannot unleash the security agencies either after the departing administration. If anything, he would in fact be expected to give the incumbent President and other influential persons slots in his own government.

We, the people of Nigeria, cannot control that. But we expect hope, and that the promises made will be delivered. The President-elect promised Nigerian students that he will pay them loans. Those students at home and abroad are waiting. Where will the money come from? He told us he will increase oil production to 4 million barrels per day. Nigeria has never done more than 2.2 million barrels per day. We can't even meet our OPEC-assigned quota. Nigeria's refineries are down, there is a big crisis in the oil and gas sector, upstream, midstream and downstream. Will Tinubu remove fuel subsidy, immediately he assumes office, on May 29, or would he postpone the evil day complaining about consequences or some "bla bla, blu blu" excuses?. He says he will address the challenge of insecurity in the country. How? And how soon? We would all love to see a civilian leader succeed where a President with an acclaimed strong security background failed. The days ahead are challenging indeed, not a season for proverbs and Babelic language but action, leadership and results.

As it is, Tinubu will be President. The courts can have their say, but the power brokers will have their way. I sympathize with the people who continue to insist that something else will happen before May 29, based on the predictions of. prophets and pastors. I am unavailable for that kind of talk, to borrow a phrase that has been made popular in Nigeria by Davido, the musician. In Nigeria, you can hire a Pastor to see what you want to see, and use his social media pages (These Pastors are all over social media now) to say what you want to say. Even persons who are not pastors see visions in Nigeria. So, deal with it, what is ahead in Nigeria would prove to be very interesting. The countdown has begun.

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