

CBN Orders Staff to Disclose Relatives in Bank's Payroll, Declare Links with Politically-exposed Persons

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has directed its staffers to declare their relationships with Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) in the country.

In a memo signed by its Deputy

Director of Human Resources Department, Christian Eze, the apex bank, according to Premium Times, also directed its members of staff to declare their 'close relatives' in the employment of the bank.

"Please recall management's restriction on the employment of close relatives of serving staff and board members," the memo reads. "Consequently, all staff are obliged to make declarations of close relatives

in the employment of the bank." The apex bank explained that a close relative is defined as a spouse, biological and adopted children, brother, sister, mother, father and half-siblings.

"Spouse and spousal relationships include cohabitation, live-in partners, couples living together and couples who have children together," it added.

The bank thereafter directed all

members of staff whose close relatives have been in the employment of the bank (serving or retired) to complete a form.

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At Saudi Arabia Investment Roundtable, Tinubu Markets Nigeria to Arab Investors

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

As part of his efforts to attract

investments in Nigeria, President Bola Tinubu has told the government of Saudi Arabia and the country's

investors that Nigeria is now truly open for business. Tinubu added that with the

coming of his administration, every negative perception about what Nigeria had represented in

the past concerning the ease of doing business, monetary policy, and trade cooperation has ceased

to be applicable now and in the

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Violence, Vote Buying, Apathy Mar Governorship Elections in Bayelsa, Imo, Kogi

● APC in early lead in Imo, Kogi, PDP leads in Bayelsa ● INEC adjourns results collation in Bayelsa, suspends polls in nine Kogi wards ● Diri, Sylva trade accusations, Melaye seeks poll cancellation in five LGAs ● Stop off-season elections, Jonathan tells National Assembly ● Clark urges INEC to investigate alleged irregularities ● EFCC arrests suspected vote buyers in Bayelsa, Imo, Kogi See story on page 5



Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodimma, arriving for accreditation during the governorship election in the state...yesterday



Bayelsa State Governor, Senator Douye Diri, casting his vote during the governorship election in the state...yesterday



Kogi State Governor, Mr. Yahaya Bello, casting his vote during the governorship election in the state...yesterday

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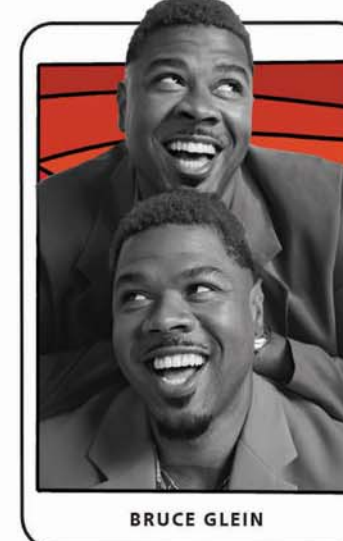
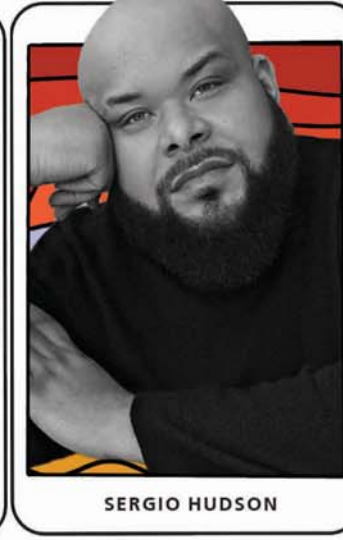
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NEWS

VIOLENCE, VOTE BUYING, APATHY MAR GOVERNORSHIP ELECTIONS IN BAYELSA, IMO, KOGI

Our Correspondents

The governorship elections held in Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi states yesterday were characterised by violence, voter apathy, and buying of votes.

This is coming as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has adjourned the collation of results for the Bayelsa State governorship election.

INEC also suspended elections in nine wards of Ogori/Magongo Local Government Area (LGA) of Kogi State, just as the governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state, Senator Dino Melaye, has called for the cancellation of the polls in five LGAs in the state.

Despite the violence, the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Imo State, Governor Hope Uzodinma and the Bayelsa State Governor and the candidate of the PDP, Senator Duoye Diri were leading, according to the results of the few polling units collated as at last night.

APC's Usman Ododo was also leading from the results collated from few polling units in Kogi State.

In Bayelsa State, Senator Duoye Diri, has accused the candidate of the APC, Mr. Timipre Sylva, of being behind electoral violence recorded in the Nembe-Bassambiri area of the state, the APC candidate accused the PDP and security agents of harassing his supporters.

Elder statesman, Chief Edwin Clark has urged INEC to investigate reported cases of irregularities in the three states.

Former President Goodluck Jonathan, however, asked the National Assembly to work towards stopping off-season elections in the country.

Apart from violence, the governorship polls held across the three states were also characterised by logistics challenges.

Speaking to journalists yesterday in Abuja, the Chairman of the Centre for Democracy and Development Election Analysis Centre (CDD-EAC), Prof. Adele Jinadu, said the CDD deployed over 150 fact-checkers and observers in all three states, as well as a team of data clerks, reviewers, and analysts in its Situation Room in Abuja.

According to him, the observers reported that voting in 65 per cent of polling units observed in Bayelsa State and 80 per cent of polling units observed in Imo State started late, after the 8 am commencement time.

He said in the case of Kogi State, voting in 40 per cent of the polling units commenced late.

In many polling units in Imo State, the few voters, who were present

confirmed that many eligible voters were scared of coming out to vote, due to fear of violence.

Several observers in Bayelsa State also reported the late arrival of INEC staff and security personnel.

In Yenagoa LGA, observers reported that one person was shot in the Fangbe community while voting ended abruptly in PU 24 Ward when thugs destroyed election materials.

The Labour Party (LP) governorship candidate in the state, Mr. Udens Eradiiri, alleged that the election was marred by massive vote-buying.

"The level of vote-buying is overwhelming," Eradiiri said while commenting on the general conduct of the election.

Eradiiri, who spoke at Agudama-Ekpetiama, Yenagoa LGA, said he was particularly disappointed about the open cases of vote-buying because his campaign was partly devoted to educating the people not to sell their votes.

"My greatest disappointment was with a woman from this community whom I offered a scholarship to her son, but today sold her vote for N14,000," he added.

According to him, votes were freely traded for between N12,000 and N40,000 per person.

In Nembe LGA of Bayelsa State, election materials were allegedly secretly hijacked to a different location where agents were reportedly thumb-printing for one of the major political parties.

Before the governorship election, an INEC official was abducted on Friday while waiting to board a boat at the Amassoma Jetty, and later released. A boat also capsized on the eve of the exercise with electoral materials lost, according to INEC.

In Sagbama, Yenagoa, and Southern Ijaw LGAs, there were reports that votes were sold for between N5,000 and N22,000.

Reacting to the poll, Bayelsa State Governor, Senator Diri, accused the candidate of the APC, Sylva of being behind the electoral violence recorded in the Nembe-Bassambiri area of the state.

Diri, who spoke after he cast his vote in the poll, alleged that "Timipre Sylva has been violent in every election".

"We have been raising the issue of the violent character and person of Timipre Sylva. Over the years, in every election he is involved in, you experience violence, you experience lawlessness, and even in Nembe-Bassambiri, the name and the character behind what is happening in Nembe-Bassambiri is Timipre Sylva," Diri said.

Diri, however, commended the INEC for a "seamless" and "very fast" election, saying "This

is an improvement on all the other elections."

The PDP candidate, however, expressed concerns over the situation in Nembe-Bassambiri where he said some of his party members were disenfranchised.

Diri called for "a free, fair process where the BVAS should be used just as I have done here today. Let the accreditation be by the BVAS in Nembe-Bassambiri."

"Special attention has to be taken in Nembe-Bassambiri because everything points to the fact that in Nembe PDP members are chased out of their community."

On his part, Sylva accused the PDP and security agents of harassing his supporters.

Sylva spoke after he cast his vote at Ward 4, Unit 4 in the Brass LGA of the state.

The APC candidate fingered security agents "especially the Army", alleging that they are "playing on the side of the PDP".

He said violence was recorded in Yenagoa, the state capital, alleging that an APC member was shot.

Meanwhile, INEC has adjourned the collation of results for the Bayelsa State governorship election.

The Returning Officer for the election, Mr. Faruk Adamu Kuta, who announced this last night at the INEC Collation Centre in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, said the collation would now take place by 10:00 am today.

Briefing journalists in Abuja, the Convener, Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, Yunusa Ya'u, said reports indicate that the BVAS functioned optimally in Bayelsa and Kogi states, with a low performance in Imo.

"The Bimodal Voters Accreditation System (BVAS) functioned optimally in most polling units across the three states. However, there were reports of malfunctioning of the machines," he said.

Violence, Vote-buying, Apathy Mar Imo Election

Tension was high yesterday in Imo State as violence and vote-buying allegations nearly marred the governorship election in the state with some of the voters selling their votes for as low as N2,000.

Reacting to the election, the

governorship candidate of the Labour Party (LP) in Imo State, Athan Achonu, asked the INEC to cancel the votes in polling units marred by violence.

Achonu made the call after casting his vote in Umunumo hamlet in the Ehime Mbanu Local Government Area of Imo State.

He alleged that some thugs beat up some agents of his party.

Describing the situation as crazy, he said the violence was contrary to democratic norms.

"They beat up so many of our agents. We are sad, we are going to upload some of their pictures. This is crazy, this is what our democracy has come to."

Election observers also reported that INEC officials arrived late at many polling units in the state.

In his reaction, the governorship candidate of the PDP in the state, Senator Samuel Anyanwu, also raised the alarm over electoral malpractices in yesterday's poll.

Speaking on the reports from the party agents in the field, Anyanwu alleged incidents of vote-buying, ballot box snatching, and other irregularities in some polling units.

He spoke in an interview with journalists in his Amaimo residence in Ikeduru LGA.

The PDP candidate accused party agents of the ruling APC of "coercing voters to vote for the party".

He further alleged that some PDP agents were shot by political thugs.

According to him, one of the PDP vehicles was burnt at Inyishi Community in the LGA, while the agents were trying to resist the thugs.

He, therefore, called for the cancellation of the results of the poll in the areas allegedly rocked by thuggery and violence.

He also urged INEC "to beam its searchlight on Ikeduru LGA".

He said: "I have evidence that one of the thugs is a member of the House of Assembly."

"In the process of snatching the ballot boxes, the lawmaker's Identity Card fell off and I have it here with me."

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reported that there were cases of vote buying and coercion of voters in Owerri North LGA.

It was also learnt that some thugs invaded the Umuokoro Village Hall, Iho, also in the LGA, where they

allegedly snatched and destroyed the ballot boxes and ballot papers.

INEC Suspends Election in Nine Kogi Wards as Melaye Seeks Cancellation of Poll in Five LGAs

Meanwhile, the Kogi State PDP governorship candidate, Senator Dino Melaye, yesterday called for the cancellation of the election in five LGAs of the state.

The LGAs, according to Melaye, are Okene, Okehi, Ajaokuta, Adavi, and Ogori/Mangogo.

He alleged that the election in the five LGAs "is a scam coordinated from the highest level of INEC."

Melaye did not show up at his polling unit situated at Iluafon quarters, Aiyetoro 1, Ijumu LGA of the state.

INEC has, however, suspended elections in nine wards of Ogori/Magongo LGA of Kogi State.

The Head of Department, Voter Education and Publicity, INEC, Kogi, Muhammad Kudu Haruna, made this known in a statement.

The statement said the commission had received reports on incidences of electoral malpractices, particularly the incident of result sheets completed before voting.

"Reports indicate that the incidents occurred in Adavi, Ajaokuta, Ogori/Magongo, Okehi, and Okene Local Government Areas. The most serious incidents occurred in Ogori/Magongo, affecting nine of 10 Registration Areas. This is entirely unacceptable. Any result not emanating from the Commission's process in the Polling Units will not be accepted."

"The commission is determined not to reward bad behaviour. Consequently, the election in the nine Wards in Ogori/Magongo LGA (Eni, Okibo, Okesi, Ileteju, Aiyeromi, Ugugu, Obinoyin, Obatgben and Oturu) is at this moment suspended. The incidences in the other local government areas are being thoroughly investigated, and the outcome, including the way forward, will be announced in the next 24 hours," the statement added.

There were reports of vote-buying in the state. Of particular concern were the reports of irregularities in Ogori/Magongo LGA where there were pre-filled election result sheets in areas where voting had not even commenced.

There were also reports of the Igalamela LGA chairman being caught by security personnel with bullets and wads of naira notes.

Electoral violence was reported in Dekini LGA, specifically in Anyigba town, where a thug was reportedly shot and killed by soldiers while fleeing in an attempt to snatch a ballot box. There was a similar attempt in Ajaokuta LGA where an LGA chairman was apprehended by voters.

Clark Urges INEC to Investigate Alleged Irregularities

Following the violence that marred the polls, elder statesman, Chief Clark, has urged INEC to investigate reported cases of irregularities in the Bayelsa, Imo, and Kogi governorship elections.

Clark made the call when a group, South-south Diamond Ladies paid him a courtesy visit in Abuja.

He said the discovery of completed result sheets with names of voters even before the first vote was cast was very unfortunate.

Clark, who is also the Leader of the Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF) said for INEC to redeem its image from the fallout of the 2023 general election, the commission must investigate alleged irregularities reported in the three states.

He said: "This is an election to allow the INEC to redeem itself. Discovering completed result sheets with names of voters and so on is very unfortunate."

"INEC should investigate and make a public statement on this issue otherwise, they will be condemned as we did in the last general election. I still believe the election will be free and fair to a greater extent."

"The elections in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi. I think INEC should redeem its image."

"What happened in the last election was very disappointing because if you say that you are going to use technology, you must use it because you provide it in your guidelines and the electoral law."

"INEC should redeem its image because, without an effective, honest INEC, we are in trouble because democracy will not work in this country."

CBN ORDERS STAFF TO DISCLOSE RELATIVES IN BANK'S PAYROLL, DECLARE LINKS WITH POLITICALLY-EXPOSED PERSONS

In addition, the bank said staff who joined the services of the Bank from 2014 to date and have relationships with Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) are also required to disclose such by completing the form.

"For clarity, a PEP is an individual who is or has been entrusted with prominent public functions in Nigeria or Foreign countries or by an International Organisation and people/entities associated with them."

PEPs include Heads of State or Government, political appointees to Heads of State or Government, State Governors, Senior Politicians, Legislators (Federal, State and Local Government), Local Government Chairmen, Important political party officials, Family members or close associates of PEPs, Senior Government, Judicial or Military Officials, Members of Royal Families, Senior Executives of State-owned Corporations."

The bank said all submissions should be made on or before 12 noon, Friday, 10 November, 2023.

It warned that non-disclosure or false declaration shall attract sanctions.

The CBN had come under fire during President Muhammadu Buhari's regime for secretly recruiting dozens of family members of top government officials, including children of ministers, serving and former government functionaries and a nephew of Buhari.

The recruitment was done without advertising the vacancies to allow other Nigerians to apply, as required by law. It was also done in flagrant disregard of federal character law.

It was gathered that the disclosures demanded from staff members are part of the ongoing probe of the institution by a special investigator.

"We are told that the investigator demanded to have the social network analysis of the bank's personnel," an official said, asking not to be named because he has no permission to discuss the matter with journalists. "So the bank is collecting the data on his behalf."

President Bola Tinubu had on 28 July appointed a former Chief Executive Officer of the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (FRCN) Jim Obazee, as a Special Investigator to probe the activities of the CBN and other related entities

AT SAUDI ARABIA INVESTMENT ROUNDTABLE, TINUBU MARKETS NIGERIA TO ARAB INVESTORS

future.

Speaking yesterday while deliberating with the Saudi Arabian captains of industry at the Nigeria-Saudi Investment Roundtable in Riyadh, Tinubu said Africa's largest economy is now "open for business."

"I believe in this team that I have brought from Nigeria. When I took office, I declared the immediate commencement of bold and fundamental economic reforms. We have executed them, and we sustain the reform process. Today, I declare that red tape is gone!"

"I believe in the full application of free market economics. Your money will flow easily in and easily out. The arbitrage around our nation's old foreign exchange policy regime and the corruption that was associated with it is also gone!"

"We took on those bold endeavours from day one in preparation for serious investors like you seated here. The greatest opportunity for any entity to prosper lies in its human capital. My team is prepared. We can produce. Our market is full of Nigerian youths who are brilliant, highly educated, industrious, and passionate about innovation and engagement with world-class services."

"The navigation of the ship of this great nation lies in the membership seated here. We are ready to answer all of your questions directly, even into this night if need be. The sky is not just the limit, but it is the destination for our two countries and peoples," the Nigerian President explained.

At the investor roundtable, according to a statement by the presidential spokesman, Mr.

Ajuri Ngelale, dozens of Chief Executive Officers from several Saudi conglomerates specialising in construction, finance, new and traditional energy, healthcare, agriculture, electric power, mining, aviation, telecommunications, creative arts, and hospitality were present and made their exploratory pitches to President Tinubu on areas of tangible collaboration.

Taking notes, the president was said to have listened carefully as they made their contributions concerning new investment opportunities in Africa's largest market.

"I have listened to all of you very intently, and I am not only impressed, but I am determined to be your partner in progress and prosperity. Nigeria will reward your faith. Our people are ready, and we will not disappoint," President Tinubu concluded.

On his part, the Chairman of Dangote Group, Alhaji Aliko Dangote told Saudi investors that Nigeria, under President Tinubu, will be unearthened to the world as a foremost global investment haven.

According to him: "What I always say about Nigeria is that it is the world's best-kept secret in terms of investments and returns. We are also looking to ensure that our investments are a two-way process. Nigerian companies have a lot of value to add to the Saudi economy, and we look forward to working together in expanding our Nigerian operations as well. The soon-coming launch of the Nigeria-Saudi Business Council will be a huge opportunity for both countries to expand on what has been established here."

In his presentation, Saudi

Arabia's Trade and Investment Minister, Khalid El-Falih, noted the passion and candid expression of the Nigerian leader.

He added that after listening to the president speak from his heart without any written remarks about what is possible between the two nations, Nigerians can expect that the Saudi investment community will respond not in words alone, but with substantial new investment across several sectors of the Nigerian economy.

He said: "The Minister of Commerce and I will be visiting Nigeria either before the end of this year or very early next year with a very large delegation of Saudi CEOs from all key sectors. We know you are ready for business, so we do not want to come to Nigeria for any exploratory discussion. We are coming for implementation. It is an action visit."

"Mr. President, you agree with me that good intentions alone will not take us anywhere; so, we will prepare well with your team and our investors will align with your officials, beginning now, to develop a concrete work plan of investments in the key sectors for takeoff when we meet again. When we meet soon in Abuja, it will be to sign and begin delivery on all agreements. We will also use the opportunity to formally inaugurate the Nigeria-Saudi Business Council," the trade minister added.

Also speaking, Saudi Arabia's Commerce Minister, Majid bin Abdullah Al Qasabi, previewed how Saudi Arabia can further contribute to the soft infrastructural reforms needed to unlock the game-changing

quantum of foreign direct investment in Nigeria.

"We have signed an agreement with the World Economic Forum on the reform of the services sector in Africa. In developed economies, the services sector contributes enormously to GDP. But in the developing world, we tend to focus on goods. So, we would like to make Nigeria the pilot country in this agreement with WEF to study Nigeria's service challenges to make it seamless and make the supply chains across sectors streamlined and raised to international standards to enhance Nigeria's economic and investment viability over the long-term," he stated.

The Nigerian government delegation comprised the Governors Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State, Mohammed Umar Bago of Niger State and Dikko Umar Radda of Katsina State; Ministers of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun; Budget & Economic Planning, Senator Abubakar Bagudu; Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. Doris Uzoka-Anite; Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Dr. Bosun Tijani; Agriculture, Senator Abubakar Kyari; Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Dr. Betta Edu; and Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), Senator Heineken Lokpobiri.

The Nigerian business delegation consisted of Alhaji Dangote; Chairman of the Chagoury Group, Ambassador Gilbert Chagoury; President of Flour Mills Nigeria, Mr. John Coumantaros; and CEO of Oando Energy Company, Mr. Wale Tinubu, among others.

NEWS



IN SEARCH OF INVESTMENTS...

L-R: Saudi Arabia's Minister of Commerce, Majid Al Kassabi; Minister of Investment, Khalid Al Falih; President Bola Ahmed Tinubu; Minister of Industry, Trade Investment, Mrs. Doris Uzoka-Anite; and Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun, during Saudi-Nigeria Roundtable Meeting at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia...yesterday

Revealed: Why Wike Halted Impeachment Plot against Fubara

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

Fresh indications have emerged on why the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, may have suspended the impeachment plot against his successor and Governor of Rivers State, Mr. Siminalayi Fubara, investigation has revealed.

THISDAY gathered that Wike's decision to halt the impeachment plot was to avert a possible exposure of the purported dossier of himself and the governor to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Before the electioneering, the EFCC had declared Fubara a wanted person, along with 58 others, over an alleged misuse of N435 billion.

It is believed that Fubara, who was the Director of Finance and Accounts (DFA), Governor's Office, and later Accountant General of the state, could not have mismanaged the said amount without the knowledge or consent of Wike, who was the governor.

Fubara, before his election, was

the governor, was the Accountant General of Rivers State.

He was said to have narrowly escaped EFCC's arrest on many occasions, including in Abuja while submitting his governorship nomination form in the run-up to the general election, and also at the Port Harcourt airport.

Sources privy to the intrigues in the politics of the state revealed that Wike's decision to handpick him was a strategic plan aimed at ensuring that the immunity that would cover him as governor would shield him from arrest and prosecution.

Wike's camp is said to be concerned that once the governor is impeached, and arrested by the EFCC, he would expose all alleged suspicious financial transactions of the state government as the former Accountant General of the state under Wike's administration.

"If the allegation against Fubara is true, there is no way that he could have mismanaged N435 billion without the consent of an active governor like Wike. Close watchers of the politics of the state suspect that a lot of public

funds were channelled into Wike's failed presidential ambition.

"Fubara was taking the bullet for Wike and it was in return that he earned the trust of the governor to make him the sole candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Rivers State. So, the peace accord, to most of us, was to avoid further exposure that could be detrimental to the political career of the former governor, now FCT minister.

"Though Wike is serving in an All Progressives Congress (APC) government, he may still be nursing further political ambition and any fight with Fubara may not be in his best interest," one of the sources explained on condition of anonymity.

Also, it was gathered that the impeachment plan may have also been temporarily halted because of the ethnic colouration it assumed.

The state mainly comprises the upland populated by the Ikwere people and the riverine people made up of the Ijaw people.

The current governor is of the Ijaw stock.

In addition to the ethnic colouration, President Bola Tinubu, and other governors were also said to have intervened.

The source added: "No doubt, the planned impeachment generated tension in the riverine areas where oil exploration is taking place and this would have affected the economy negatively. Most Ijaws believe that this is their time and therefore in one way or the other, they will try to resist the plot if Wike presses further. If the Ijaws feel that their interest is being jeopardised, oil production will suffer and the economy will be adversely affected."

Since the return to civil rule, after the aborted Second Republic, only former governor Ada George, an Ijaw man from the Riverine area, had occupied the Bricks Building, the official seat of power in the state.

The ethnic slant manifested in the way the Ijaw National Congress (INC), the umbrella body of all Ijaw people, and the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) reacted to the impeachment plot. Both groups had slammed

Wike, over his claim that he owns the political structure of Rivers State.

In a statement signed by the INC President, Prof. Benjamin Okaba, the group posited that the political structure in Rivers should not and cannot be anyone's personal property, including Wike.

The INC said Wike inherited the political architecture from past governors of the state and should also pass the structure to his successor, stressing that he cannot lay claim to it anymore.

The group had also stated that the Ijaw people would stand for and by one of their own because no one had identified any wrongdoing or crime the governor had committed against the state.

"The Ijaw will stand for and by one of their own - His Excellency Siminalayi Fubara, particularly

because no one has identified a single wrong or crime he has committed against the state as a citizen and as governor to warrant an impeachment attempt or any form of attack.

"It is important to note that politics is just one of the vital components of a people's culture. Therefore, we have no apologies for being politically conscious of the damning existential threat the case in point portends," he added.

According to the group, Fubara had received accolades from all the tribes and sections of Rivers State and beyond as a technocrat with a robust sense of public service background.

"He is an open and kind-hearted gentleman and a very unassuming, humane, prudent manager of the meagre resources available to him," the group added.

House Deputy Speaker Reiterates Call on South-east to Reject Sit-at-Home Order

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

The Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Benjamin Kalu, has lamented that the "sit-at-home" order being imposed by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) was impeding the growth and development of the South-east region, and urged the people to reject it.

Kalu stated this in Abuja when he received a delegation from Aba Creatives Collective, the organisers of the Aba Fashion Show, who paid him a courtesy visit in his office at the National Assembly Complex.

The event, which is aimed at showcasing the creativity of fashion designers and enthusiasts in Abia State, is held every December.

In a statement signed by his Special Assistant on Press Affairs, Udora Orizu, the deputy speaker commended the delegation on the initiative, saying that it perfectly aligns with the objectives of highlighting the rich cultural heritage and artistic talents of Abia people.

While noting that the event also presents a unique opportunity to harness the potentials of the untapped fashion industry to drive economic growth, Kalu, however, said the issue of insecurity in the

region has been a great challenge.

According to him, the sit-at-home agenda of non-state actors has led to the loss of manpower, increasing unemployment, and exodus of investors from the region.

He, therefore, urged the South-east to reject the sit-at-home agenda, and the fear instilled in the people by "these faceless individuals who don't mean any good for the indigenes".

Kalu said: "I am genuinely excited about Aba Fashion Week, an initiative that promotes our local economy. I know what fashion, fashion designing, tailoring anything that has to do with clothing can do to an economy because we talk about the three basic needs of man, shelter, food, and clothing.

"The economic losses that the region has suffered by the sit-at-home agenda of the non-state actors have integrated impediments to regional growth, regional economic integration, even into our regional leadership integration and into regional development integration. It has affected the fabric of everything that we hold dear. Now fashion designers are feeling the direct impacts because investors are saying the place is not activated for our investment.

Only Governorship Candidates Can Determine Running Mates, Says Supreme Court

Alex Enumah in Abuja

The Supreme Court in Abuja has clarified that it is only a nominated governorship candidate of a political party that has the prerogative to determine who becomes the party's deputy governorship candidate.

The apex court made the pronouncement in a judgment delivered on Friday in an appeal filed by a former deputy governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Abia State, Igwe Phillip Okey.

Okey had, in the appeal marked: SC/CV/919/2023, sought to set aside the August 31 judgment of the Court of Appeal in Abuja, which affirmed the July 3 judgment of the Federal High Court, Abuja dismissing his suit seeking

to compel the PDP to retain him as its deputy governorship candidate for the last election.

In the lead judgment written by Justice Uwani Abba-Aji but read by Justice Emmanuel Agim, the apex court determined the sole question identified for resolution against Okey.

The court held that the justices of the Court of Appeal were right to have held that by the provision of Section 187(1) of the Constitution, it is the constitutional right of the governorship candidate to nominate his/her deputy governorship candidate.

It added that the right to appoint a deputy governorship candidate is personal to the governorship candidate.

The apex court noted that if a governorship candidate dies, the nomination of the deputy governorship candidate dies

with such a dead governorship candidate.

It added: "You cannot impose the deputy governorship candidate chosen by the dead candidate on the new governorship candidate," the apex court said.

It described the case by Okey as a wild goose chase and affirmed the August 31 judgment of the Court of Appeal; dismissing the appeal. It further awarded N200,000 cost against the appellant.

Preparatory to the 2023 governorship election, the PDP conducted its primary on May 25, 2022, from which Prof. Uchenna Ikonne emerged as the party's governorship candidate.

Ikonne proceeded to nominate Okey as the party's deputy governorship candidate for the election.

But, on January 25, 2023, before the election, Ikonne died,



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**BANKING AT YOUR DOORSTEP...**

L-R: Managing Director/CEO, Providus Bank, Mr. Walter Akpani; Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun; Alake of Egbaland, Oba Adedotun Aremu Gbadebo III; Osile of Oke Ona Egbaland, Oba Adedapo Adewale Tejuoso; and Group Managing Director, Sujimoto Group, Dr. Sijibomi Ogundele, during the opening of Providus Bank, Abeokuta branch, Ogun State...recently

Gas Supply Constraints May Worsen in Nigeria, Europe as NLNG Embarks on Plant Maintenance by February 2024

● Shutdown may impact FG's planned \$7bn dividend securitisation

Peter Uzoho

The Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited (NLNG) is planning a total shutdown of its six-train, 22 million tonnes per annum (MTPA)-capacity plant in Finima, Bonny Island, Rivers State over a proposed maintenance operation scheduled to commence by

February or March 2024, investigation has revealed.

This routine exercise, it was learnt, may worsen the current shortages of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), better known as cooking gas, being suffered by Nigeria, as well the current inadequate supply of LNG to the European markets caused

by the Russia-Ukraine War.

It will also potentially affect the federal government's efforts to boost foreign currency liquidity in the economy and strengthen foreign exchange (FX) through the securitization of about \$7 billion of Nigeria's dividends from the NLNG.

THISDAY gathered from multiple sources that the gas liquefaction company is currently on mini shutdown as the engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) contractor is carrying out mini maintenance on the plant.

The NLNG which is adjudged as the only successful Nigerian company with an element of government ownership, has been facing the challenge of under-capacity production due to feed gas supply shortages resulting from the rampant oil theft and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta.

This has not only impacted its gas delivery to the domestic and international markets but also its revenue generation, as the company had in July last year reported a Year-to-Date \$7

billion loss due to under-capacity production.

In addition, the planned shutdown of operation for the maintenance may further delay the company's plan to begin domestic LNG supply to the Nigerian market with an initial volume of 1.1 million tonnes per annum with effect from July 2022.

NLNG has been operating at roughly 50 per cent capacity for many months running and had lamented that the trend had dampened the hope of gas supply availability for its Train-7 currently under construction, a project that has reached a 52 per cent completion level.

The liquefaction firm had also hinted that the gas supply shortages might hinder its planned expansion to Train-8 and beyond.

According to one of the sources, who spoke to THISDAY on condition of anonymity, NLNG's plant is on "mini-shutdown" to enable us to carry out "Catalyst change-out".

"But it's not a major shutdown, it's a mini shutdown

because the major shutdown will be by either February or March next year. By then, they will stop operation totally until the maintenance is completed," he added.

NLNG is a supplier of LPG to the Nigerian market and has committed 100 per cent of its LPG production, representing 40 per cent of the total cooking gas consumed by Nigerians annually, leaving the larger volume for import by the oil marketing companies.

The company disclosed recently that it had delivered about 380,000 metric tonnes of LPG so far this year, out of the 1.3 million tonnes per annum national consumption figure.

However, marketers, especially LPG plant owners have been complaining of supply deficit for the past several years, resulting in the hike in the retail prices.

Similarly, Nigeria, through the NLNG is one of Europe's top LNG suppliers, and the country, as confirmed by the European Union (EU) exported 9.4 billion cubic meters (bcm)

of LNG to Europe in 2022.

During a recent visit to the NLNG in Bonny, an EU delegation had indicated the imperative reinforcing its diplomatic relationship with its reliable LNG partners like Nigeria in the short term to enable it to bridge the gas supply gap in the continent that resulted from the Russia-Ukraine War.

The EU's Commissioner for Energy in Nigeria, Ms. Kadri Simson, who led the delegation, had revealed that Nigeria exported 9.4bcm of LNG to Europe in 2022.

Simpson, whose delegation took a tour of NLNG's Central Control Room (CCR), the plant complex, and the Train-7 construction site, had also stated that there was potential to improve Nigeria's gas supply to Europe between then and 2027

However, NLNG declined to comment on the said shutdown of operation next year as its Media and Communications department did not respond to phone calls as of the time of filing in this report.

We are Not Selling Assets, Exiting Nigerian Market, Says Novare

Dike Onwuamaeze

For the umpteenth time, the management of Novare Nigeria Limited has re-stated its determination to continue to sustain its businesses and expand its investments in Nigeria.

It stated emphatically that Novare is not selling its assets or exiting the Nigerian market.

Rather, Nigeria is among the countries in Africa that Novare is investing funds it mobilised from South African pension for commercial real estate and mall developments.

Novare's clarification followed recent publications about an ex-parte court order restraining Novare from selling its assets and exiting Nigeria. It clarified that the said ex-parte order was based on factually incorrect representations made by one Grand Towers Realty Limited (Grand Towers) to the court.

It should be recalled that the Grand Towers has sustained legal disputes against Novare that have lasted for more than a decade.

But the management of Novare, in a recent statement, said: "Our attention has been drawn to the newspaper publications of an ex-parte court order restraining Novare from selling its assets and exiting Nigeria.

"The ex-parte Order is premised on factually incorrect representations made by one Grand Towers Realty Limited (Grand Towers) to the court.

"Grand Towers (represented by Nze Chidi Duru) has been in a long-standing dispute in Suit No. FHC/HC/CV/0224/2017 - Grand Towers Realty Limited & 2 Ors v. Novare Investments (Pty) Limited & 4 Ors. filed since 2017 with Novare.

"In the suit, Grand Towers and

Nze Chidi Duru claimed that they ought to be declared our business partners having had early-day introductory discussions with us about the Nigerian market.

"This claim was the subject of an earlier matter filed by Grand Towers and Nze Chidi Duru in 2013, in Suit Number FHC/ABJ/CS/121/2013, where the entitlement claims made by them were settled and a full and final payment of USD \$6,000,000 (Six Million United States Dollars) was made to them as well as the sum of USD \$300,000 (Three Hundred Thousand Dollars) paid towards the legal cost of their Counsel at the time, Dr. Onyechi Ikpeazu (SAN).

"The matter was finally determined by the order and judgment of the Federal High Court per Justice A. R. Mohammed."

The statement, however, said that the "Grand Towers and Nze Chidi Duru resurfaced in 2017 to claim further sums and hence the subsequent Suit No. FHC/HC/CV/0224/2017, which recently went on appeal to the Court of Appeal based on Novare's preliminary objection that the subject matter of the suit cannot be re-litigated having been finally determined by the consent judgment of the Federal High Court in 2013.

"The Court of Appeal in its judgment of January 31, 2023, remitted the case to the High Court for reassignment to another judge for determination of Novare's preliminary objection on its merit, whilst setting aside the ruling of the High Court for not considering the plea of res-judicata raised by Novare in objecting to the jurisdiction of the court to hear Suit No. FHC/HC/CV/0224/2017."

Supreme Court Postpones Sitting for One Week

Alex Enumah in Abuja

The Supreme Court has postponed its sittings scheduled to be held for the whole of this week, from November 13 to 17.

The National Publicity Secretary of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Akorede Lawal, confirmed this in a notification he shared with the association's members via an official e-mail at the weekend.

Lawal, while notifying lawyers about the development, said the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Olukayode Ariwoola, directed the postponement of the sittings to enable the 10 judges of the Supreme Court to attend this year's edition of All Nigeria Judges' Conference.

"Kindly be informed that his lordship, the Honourable, the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Olukayode Ariwoola, has directed the rescheduling of the sitting of the

Supreme Court of Nigeria earlier scheduled to hold between the 13th and 17th November 2023.

"This is to enable honourable Justices of the Supreme Court to attend the All-Nigeria Judges' Conference billed to be held between the 13th and 17th of November 2023.

"The Supreme Court's Registry will, in due time, communicate new dates to affected parties and their counsel," the notification read.

Supreme Court's hearing dates, except when it concerns time-bound election-related cases, are hard to come by for lawyers and litigants. There are instances when cases were adjourned for a full 12-month calendar year.

The court has yet to announce new dates for appeals affected by the latest postponement of scheduled sittings.

The All Nigeria Judges' Conference that disrupted the

schedule of the court is an annual event that brings judges from across the hierarchy of Nigerian courts together to deliberate on important issues concerning the judiciary.

During the event, which is usually attended by political leaders and lawyers, judges can exchange ideas on a broad spectrum of issues among themselves and experts in various fields of law.

Previous editions of the event were attended by either the Nigerian president or the vice president.

The event usually takes place at the National Judicial Institute (NJI) in Abuja.

The NJI, a body whose governing board is chaired by the CJN, is saddled with the task of equipping judges and magistrates with skills and knowledge of new trends in the law and justice administration.

The announcement of the postponement of the sittings of the Supreme Court comes about two weeks after a retiring justice of the court, Justice Dattijo Muhammad, lamented the dwindling number of justices and lopsided composition of the bench of the court.

Currently, the court has 10 justices, the lowest it has ever dropped to, and far from the 21 that the Nigerian constitution provides as the full complement of the court's bench.

The shortage in the number of justices of the court increases the workload for the serving justices and further slows down the pace of the justice delivery process of the court.

On the lopsided composition of the court, the South-east region and the North-central region, which Justice Muhammad hails from, are currently not represented on the Supreme Court bench.

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NEWS

**SOLDIERS' WELFARE ON THEIR MINDS...**

L-R: Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Taoreed Lagbaja; Managing Director/CEO, BUA Africa, Dr. Ubon Udoh; Managing Director/CEO, Futune Contractor Nigeria, Babagana Alkali; and Foreman, BUA, Usman Mohammad; during the ground breaking ceremony of Abdul Samad Rabiu 120 units of corporal and below quarters, at Muhammadu Buhari Cantonment, Giri in Abuja...recently **KINGSLEY ADEBOYE**

ASUU, SSANU, Others Kick against Deduction of 40% of Universities' IGR

● Accuse FG of plot to destroy institutions

Kuni Tyessi in Abuja with agency report

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), among other workers' unions, are up in arms against the federal government over the proposed deduction of 40 per cent of the revenues generated by the tertiary institutions.

A leaked memo addressed to the heads of the universities recently by the federal government, according to Premium Times, noted that with effect from November, 40 per cent of revenues generated internally by the universities will be deposited in their accounts and deducted automatically by the government via the Single Treasury Accounts (TSA).

A copy of the memo addressed to the office of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Abuja by the Revenue and Investment Department of the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation, notified the institution of the automatic deduction of 40 per cent of its IGR by the government.

Dated October 17 with Reference R&I/2045/T/252, and signed by the Director of Revenue and Investment Department, Felix Ogundairo, the letter noted that the

decision which affects all partially funded government agencies and parastatals, including universities, is in line with the provisions of Section 62 of Finance Act 2020.

The memo reads in part: "It is important to emphasise that this policy of 40 per cent auto deduction of gross IGR is in line with the Finance Circular Reference Number FMFBNP/OTHERS/IGR/CRF/12/2021/ dated 20th December 2021, limiting the budgetary agencies or parastatals to not more than 50 per cent of their gross IGR and the remittance of 100 per cent of the remaining 50 per cent to the sub-recurrent account, while all statutory revenue lines like Tender fees, contractors' registration fees, disposal of fixed assets, rent on quarters, etc, shall be remitted 100 per cent to sub-recurrent accounts."

The memo instructed the universities and other affected agencies of the government to align their budgets to the new realities.

Angered by the new development, the National President of ASUU, Professor Emmanuel Osodeke, said his union could not understand what the government meant by IGR in the universities. He said universities globally are not

revenue-generating institutions, adding that they generate only the costs of services rendered and items provided for students.

Osodeke, who described the new policy as the government's attempt to "strangle the poor," said there is no revenue generated by any university.

He said: "What is IGR? As far as I'm concerned, we don't have IGR. So, it's zero. What the students are paying is the cost of items like ID cards, medical health insurance, books, and lab coats, among others. So, there's no IGR in universities. So, it's zero. You see, this is what we have been talking about. Is the university an agency established to generate funds for the government? So, as far as I'm concerned, we will look at it. Let them define what is the idea of IGR. As far as ASUU is concerned, the funds are meant for items and that's why we call them charges."

The union president said the universities have been struggling to provide basic amenities like water, electricity, and necessary infrastructure for teaching and learning.

He said many universities receive less than 120 million annually from the federal government as funding support but that they spend more than

N1 billion annually on electricity.

"If you talk to the management of the University of Ibadan, or OAU, or any other one, they will tell you they only get roughly N15 million a month from the government to run. Will that be able to pay for electricity bills? So, it's so sad what we're hearing today. This is an attack on the university system and I then pray that something will happen and change this narrative. How can you say you're going to collect these charges that the universities collect to take care of their students? Things like this never even happened during the military. If their children are in these public universities, would they ask for such a thing?"

Also speaking on the matter, the National President of SSANU, Mohammed Ibrahim, who said he had spent about 30 years within the university system, said he never knew anything called IGR in the universities.

He said the union will fight it to a standstill, noting that an attack on education from any quarter is an attack on the nation's development.

Ibrahim said his union "opposed such decisions yesterday, still opposing it today and will oppose it tomorrow or any day."

He said: "Education is a social

service for goodness' sake!

Universities are institutions of learning, where teaching, research, and community development activities are carried out. Outside all these, anything a university does is outside its mandate. Therefore, there is nothing called IGR in the university in the first place. So, if the government is saying that universities should remit IGR, then they are now defining something different, something alien, and bringing in something that does not exist in the system. It clearly shows that those people who are making these statements are ignorant of what a university system is how it looks or how it is operated. This is our position"

He said the decision would not only further destabilise the system

but also annihilate the system.

He called on Nigerians to stand against the policy, insisting that the government must be made to know that the people still have some power left in them.

On his part, the National President of the newly registered Congress of Nigerian Universities' Academics (CONUA), Niyi Sunmonu, said the universities already have so much to contend with and suggested that the policy should be rejected.

"Our position is that universities in this country already have a lot to deal with, concerning funding issues. Implementing this policy at this time when the universities are yet to achieve financial stability will cripple them," Sunmonu, a senior lecturer at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, said.

NEITI Seeks EFCC's Support to Enforce Transparency in Extractive Industries

Kingsley Nweze in Abuja

The Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) has called for support from the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in its quest to ensure transparency and accountability in the extractive industries in the country.

EFCC spokesperson, Dele Oyewale, quoted the Executive Secretary of NEITI, Dr. Orji Ogbonaya Orji, as making the call in a statement after he led his team on a courtesy visit to the Chairman of the commission, Mr. Ola Olukoyede in Abuja.

Orji was quoted as saying that the mission of NEITI was to make the extractive industry open and accountable.

He therefore solicited the support of the EFCC to enforce compliance of industries falling short of its standards on disclosure of information and data.

"We need the strong support of the EFCC to enforce compliance with disclosure of information and data by companies," he said.

In a presentation made to the management staff of the Commission, Orji disclosed that 28 out of the 36 states of the federation were sourcing 84 per cent of their revenue from

allocation from the federation accounts.

He explained that "NEITI findings and recommendations are leading reforms in the oil, gas and mining industries" and for the Initiative to deliver more optimal results to the nation, he called for stronger collaboration and synergy with the EFCC.

"Our allies in this industry are few, but with an ally like the EFCC, we feel strong and confident," he said.

He also called for joint training, capacity building and manpower development for staff of the EFCC and NEITI.

In his response, the EFCC's boss noted that every anti-corruption effort should always stand on the pillar of transparency.

He particularly said that lessons learnt as a result of fraud investigation should be a guiding principle for individuals, organisations and nations.

"Corruption investigation is not just for investigation's sake. Lessons learnt should always be applied, he said.

He assured NEITI of enhanced collaboration.

"We will renew our collaboration and mutual support. We will allow NEITI desks in our zonal offices," he said.

Obaseki Remains My Friend in Spite of Our Political Differences, Says Oshiomhole

Adibe Emenyonu in Benin-City

Former Governor of Edo State, Senator Adams Oshiomhole, has said the incumbent governor of the state, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, remains his friend in spite of their political differences.

Oshiomhole, who is currently the senator representing Edo North Senatorial District, spoke while giving his goodwill message at the ongoing 2023 Alaghadaro Summit in Benin City.

The summit has as its theme, "The Edo Story: Creating Shared Opportunities into the Future."

The Alaghadaro summit is held yearly by the Edo State Government, in partnership with the private sector, to mark the anniversary of Obaseki in office.

The state government usually avails itself of the opportunity to showcase the progress being recorded in transforming the state into an investment haven.

Oshiomhole, who thanked Obaseki for hosting the Alaghadaro summit and inviting him, noted that the world should know that he and Obaseki were friends and not enemies.

According to him, "being friends doesn't mean we can't disagree or have different opinions; but we must treat ourselves with love and care."

"Regardless of what people say, we should not give the impression that different options translate to war."

"People don't need the tears of leaders joining them to lament but taking bold steps to solve the problem facing the people."

"Having the privilege as a governor, I have high regard for the Office of the Governor and for the governor himself."

"To have all the civilian governors elected in the state present here today speaks volumes."

"We definitely belong to different political parties but the sum total of those parties is not equal to Edo State."

"What this means to me is that we can politic differently but never have doubt about the shared commitment to the citizens of the state that should be the greatest in Nigeria."

"The language of leaders matters to followers. What defines democracy is that of ideology, even if we share the same destination but the route to get there may differ, it should not be a matter of war."

"I thought the world should

know that Godwin is my friend. It doesn't matter; being friends does not mean we cannot debate or disagree but being friends means we treat ourselves with love and care and bring our followers together."

"I am happy that with all the challenges in Nigeria, Nigeria is greater than the challenges," he said.

Earlier, Obaseki said his government had, in the past seven years, reengineered Edo for growth and development, and consciously laid a solid foundation for the state's future.

The governor noted that the government focused on six thematic pillars, including institutional reforms, economic revolution, social welfare, infrastructure development, environmental sustainability and arts and culture.



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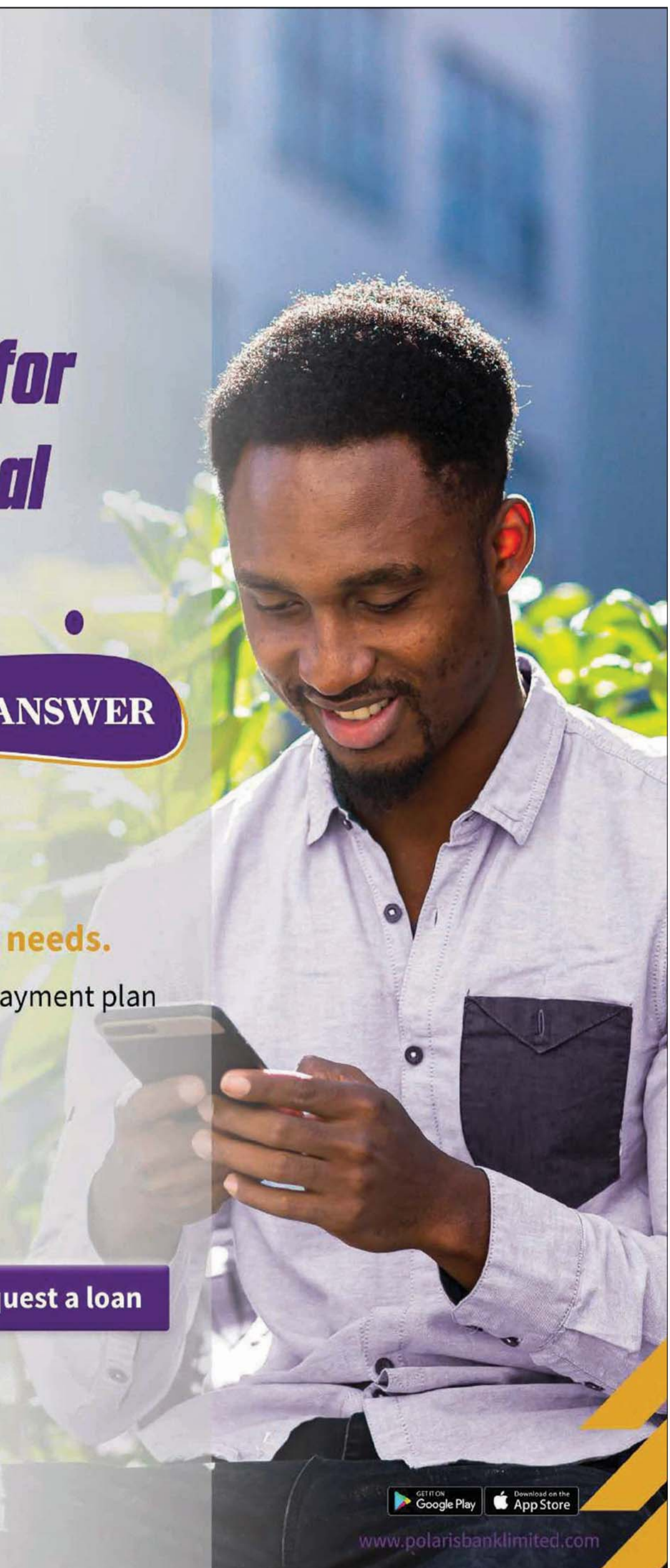
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Dangote Refinery Secures Permit to Process over 300,000 Bpd of Crude

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The President of Dangote Group,

Aliko Dangote, yesterday said the Dangote Refinery has secured a licence to refine more than 300,000

barrels of Nigerian crude per day and will begin to process petrol soon.

Dangote said this in an interview in Riyadh on the sidelines of the Saudi-Nigeria business roundtable.

"We don't want to start our refinery with foreign goods, we want to start with the Nigerian crude," the billionaire told Bloomberg.

"We're more than ready and you will see our gasoline products

soon."

The 650,000 barrel-a-day refinery was supposed to start production by the end of July but missed that target.

Speaking on the commencement of operations of the refinery, Dangote said the refiner would start producing "very very soon".

He said the refinery's first priority is to supply petrol to Nigeria before exporting to elsewhere, including the West

African region.

Dangote said the 650,000 barrel-a-day facility, which is expected to produce 27 million litres of diesel, 11 million litres of kerosene and nine million litres of jet fuel, will receive crude from other producers in Nigeria, as well as the country's state oil company, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited.

The NNPC is expected to allocate six million barrels of

crude oil to Dangote Refinery in December 2023.

Meanwhile, during the week, the national oil company had announced the introduction of the Nembe crude oil grade to the market.

The Nembe crude stream is expected to be managed and marketed by a joint venture between NNPC and Aiteo Eastern Exploration and Production Company.

MTN Blames Debt Cancellation on System Glitch

Emma Okonji

MTN Nigeria yesterday blamed the cancellation of the debt of subscribers on its network on a system glitch and stated that the glitch had been resolved and the network normalised.

A glitch in the telecommunication company's system yesterday caused the disappearance of debt on the accounts of subscribers who borrowed airtime from the company's platforms.

Many of the customers affected took to X (Twitter) to thank MTN for the development. The subscribers who believed the telecoms operator deliberately cancelled their debts, had jubilated and thanked the company.

But the company has, however, debunked such claims.

According to a statement released by MTN Nigeria and signed by its Senior Manager, External Relations, Mr. Funso Aino, "MTN Nigeria Communications Plc can confirm a system glitch

impacting balance inquiries. As a result, some customers may receive error messages showing that their balances have been cleared. This is not the case and all balances will reflect accurate figures once the problem is resolved. Our engineers are currently working to ensure this. Please accept our apologies. We regret the inconvenience."

Responding to the claims, MTN added, "Yello, we are aware that some of our customer's Xtratime debt was cleared, it was a system glitch, and the airtime was not cleared. The issue is receiving attention from our support team and feedback will be shared once received."

Aina however said the glitch on the network has been restored, adding that affected subscribers will still have to pay the supposed cleared debts.

He advised MTN customers not to jubilate that their outstanding debts have been cleared because all affected customers will still pay their outstanding debts since the faulty system has been resolved.

Host Communities Threaten to Shut down Production over 3% Fund

Sylvester Idowu in Warri

Groups that identified themselves as crude oil host communities have vowed to stop production if the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) fails to desist from actions that could affect the three per cent Host Community fund.

The 2021 Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) stipulates that the host communities be allocated three per cent of operation cost by the oil companies in their areas.

The communities warned the commission to desist from

activities that take a toll on the fund such as expenditure on the HostComply portal.

Their position was contained in the statement jointly issued by a foremost Youth Leader, Mr. Christopher Tuduo; His Royal Highness, Theophilus Moses; Chairman, Dodo River Rural Development Authority, Francis Amamogiran; Hon. Target Segibo of Oporoma Rural Development Authority and former Chairman of Koluama Clan Oil and Gas Committee, Mr. Ebimielayefa Dick-Ogbeyan.

According to the statement,

NUPRC must reverse any action and regulations adversely affecting the host communities to avoid a severe backlash.

The host communities, said the leaders in the statement, are often excluded from the decision-making process, which results in the use of public resources.

The communities declared their readiness to take decisive action and escalate their efforts to address the concerns of the oil and gas communities if the NUPRC fails to treat the matter as an emergency.

Emphasising their proactive engagement to pacify the

youths across various communities since the signing of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), they underscored that the stability of oil operations could be compromised if NUPRC allows the situation to deteriorate further.

The communities asked NUPRC to recognise the urgency of the matter and take immediate, substantive steps to resolve the concerns at hand.

They warned that improper handling of host community issues could have negative repercussions on Nigeria's oil production and economy.

Angola Pledges to Improve Trade with Nigeria

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

Angola has expressed interest in improving trade with Nigeria, pledging that it would continue to push for improvement of bilateral relations.

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Angola to Nigeria, Benin, and Niger, Ambassador José Bamóquina Zau, said this at the 48th Independence anniversary ceremony of the country at the weekend in Abuja.

He said the 48 years of independence of Angola represented the sacrifices made by the Angolan people and the government's determination to implement the main objective of the country.

Zau added that Angola and Nigeria are brother countries and giant crude oil producers in Africa and have been in a

relationship that started since Angola's liberation struggle began until its independence.

He said: "Angola and Nigeria faced challenges and their respective leaders remain committed to resolving most essential problems and strengthening bilateral cooperation are core plans of Presidents Joao Lourenco and Bola Tinubu.

"Since 2008, the Angola-Nigeria Bilateral Joint Commission has awaited a roundtable with the officials of the two countries to work on socioeconomic, political, defense, and internal security issues.

"The commission also awaits to consolidate the bilateral legal instruments needed, given the dynamic that is to be created between the two brotherly countries.

"The Angola-Nigeria economic balance still does not reflect the strategic dimension of the two giants.

"The African Free Trade Zone is coming, so it is in everyone's interest to prioritise trade cooperation and reverse the current situation in the short and medium term."

The envoy while acknowledging the partnership between Angola and Nigeria within the framework of Technical and Methodological Coordination of the African Petroleum Organisation (APPO), which extended to the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), noted that the Gulf of Guinea Commission as one of the outcomes of the sub-regional organisation's coordinated actions aimed at gaining momentum, amidst the

current challenges in the area.

He said: "In this regard, the leaderships of the two countries have always taken the lead in fulfilling principles defended by the founding fathers of the OAU.

"It is where we highlight the intangibility of the borders of our colonial heritage, freedom for oppressed people, and freedom of religion, and above all raising the great challenge of lifting millions of Africans out of poverty.

"The UN organisation is another forum where leaders of the two countries expressed desire for an increasingly fair world with re-founding of multilateral institutions on a global scale.

The ambassador said that the Angola/Nigeria Chamber of Commerce and Industry was established in Luanda to ensure the needs of the business community in both countries

are properly understood and supported.

The envoy stated that the embassy on Oct. 19 hosted its maiden Diplomatic Business Forum that brought together political and business stalwarts from Angola and Nigeria.

He noted that at the forum, were captains of industries such as the oil and gas sector, banking, agribusiness, aeronautics, and mining, among other areas of interest to both countries.

He revealed that it was the mutually coordinated actions of both countries that resulted in the establishment of the Angola-Nigeria Business Council (ANBC).

He described the event as a preparation for the proposed "Road Show Angola," an exhibition fair designed to boost business opportunities in Angola. He revealed that: "As part

of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, structural reforms have been made in various sectors: Legislative, migration, banking and agriculture.

"We can highlight here the ease of the mobility of Nigerian business people and not only to Angola with the granting of entry visas at a very short time, contrary to the previous period.

"This is always in the context of human mobility on a global scale, a total of 98 countries in the world were exempted from entry visas to Angola with immediate effect."

He, however, observed that: "This process of removing some barriers to the movement of people is carried out gradually with the inclusion of more countries whenever technical and material conditions are created for such purpose."

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 ABUJA: 71 Usuma Street, Opp. Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Maitama, Abuja.
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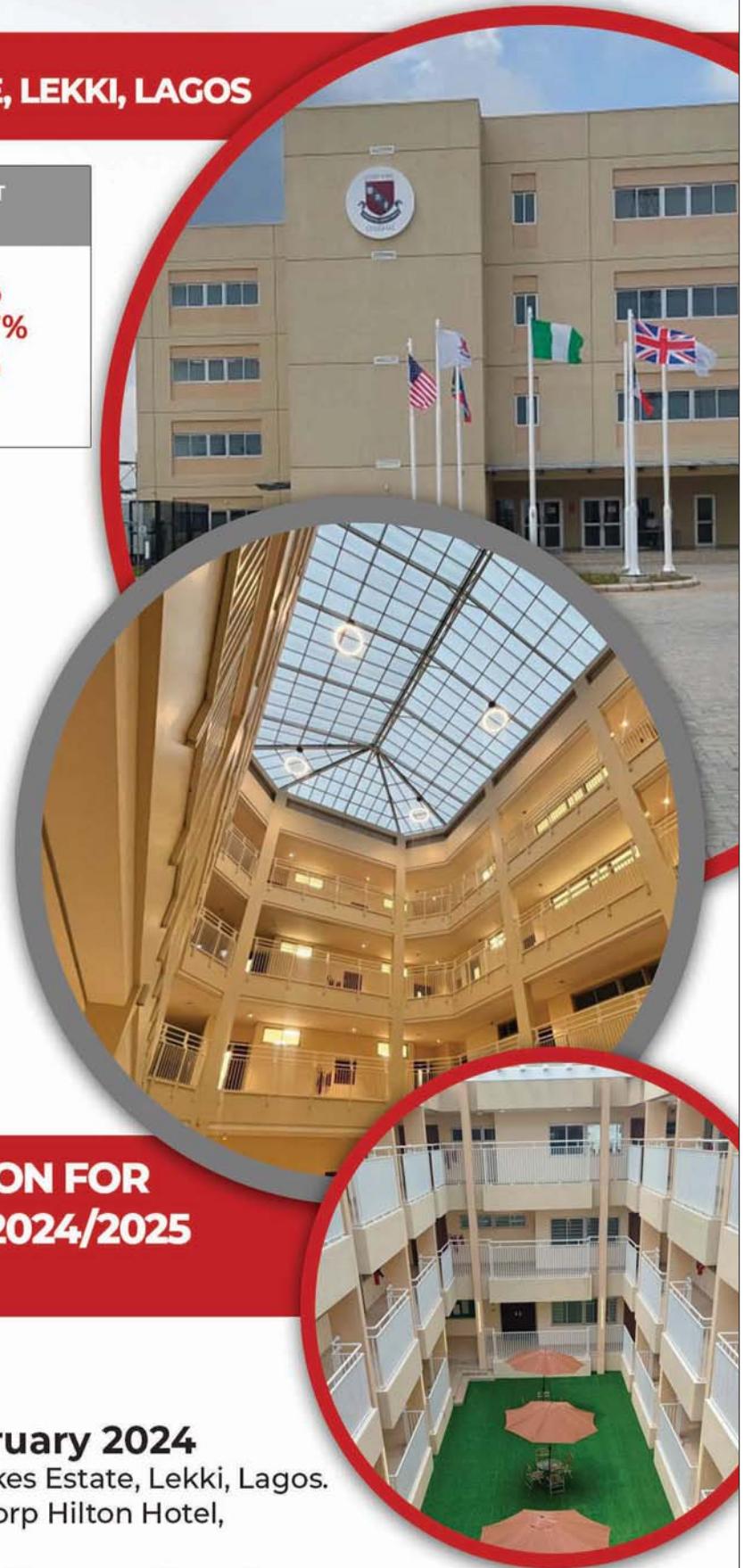
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Important: Please note that submission of applications with all required documents will close on Wednesday, 17th January, 2024.



NEWS



IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU...

L-R: Managing Director, Banner Energy, Mr. Nuhu Yakubu; President, Nigeria Liquefied Petroleum Gas Association (NLPGA), Mr. Felix Ekundayo; and Managing Director, NIPCO Plc, Mr. Suresh Kumar, during the association's 13th conference in Abuja...recently

Nigeria Faces Alarming 4% Annual Forest Loss

Environmentalists have revealed a pressing concern at COP28, pointing to Nigeria's staggering four per cent annual forest loss, the highest on a global scale.

In a seminar organised by Development Agenda Magazine

and EMCAN in Abuja, the experts emphasised the dire consequences of illegal tree logging in states like Cross Rivers, Ondo, Ogun, and North-central region of the country.

The seminar was themed,

'Climate Change and COP28: The Way Forward For Nigeria.'

The seminar underscored the urgency to address the estimated daily felling of 1.5 million trees, contributing to a 3.5% deforestation rate annually.

In a welcome address at the seminar, the Publisher and Editor-in-chief of Development

Agenda Magazine,

Paddy Ezeala, lamented the reckless destruction in various states and highlighted the exacerbating impact of a foreign-owned charcoal factory in Nsukka, Enugu state.

Ezeala underscored the absence of a valuation system

for forest resources, calling for adequate compensation for negligent destruction.

According to him, between 1981 and 2000, Nigeria lost 3.7 million hectares of forests, resulting in a colossal loss of biodiversity.

Ezeala urged a shift towards environmentally

and socially equitable forest management approaches, emphasising the need to curb the wanton destruction of forests nationwide.

He advocated harnessing forest potential for eco-tourism and scientific research instead of illegal logging and wildlife trafficking.

Your Operations Causing Insecurity, Kwara Govt Tells Scavengers

The Kwara State Government has said the operations of scavengers in the state pose insecurity and will be regulated henceforth.

The government said the move would ensure the security of lives and property and increase revenue drive of the state.

The state Commissioner for Environment, Mallam Shehu Ndanusa Usman, disclosed this during a meeting with the Association of Scavengers in Ilorin.

"The present administration is not comfortable with their operations in the state as it is

causing insecurity.

"Therefore, we deem it fit to regulate your activities, through an official registration, for efficient operation across the state," the commissioner said according to a statement by the Press Secretary, Yakub Kamaldeen Aliagan, yesterday.

The commissioner explained that the ministry would commence registration of the industry for proper recognition, each bearing an identity code and uniforms for identification.

Police Rescue 14 Kidnapped Victims, Arrest Four in Niger

Laleye Dipo in Minna

In different operations carried out in bandits-prone Munya Local Government Area of Niger State, the police yesterday said it rescued 14 kidnapped victims and arrested four suspected kidnappers.

The suspects were said to have been apprehended as they led their victims into the forest around Mangoro village of Munya Local Government

Area of the state.

According to a statement made available to newsmen in Minna at the weekend, the state police command Public Relations Officer, DSP Wasiu Abiodun, said: "The joint security team intercepted the hoodlums, engaged them in a gun battle," leading to the rescue of eight of the victims.

Abiodun said in another operation, the police tactical team attached to Zingau Division and vigilantes

met and hunted out of the bandits "engaged the hoodlums in a gun duel" saying three victims, two males and one female were rescued unhurt.

He added that the suspected kidnappers were believed to be behind the murder of one Nuhu Yakubu of Maikunkele town near Minna after the deceased was kidnapped.

The police spokesman said the deceased was declared missing for three days be-

fore the police discovered his decomposing body in a bush around Gusasse

He said after painstaking investigation by the police crack team, the four suspects - Aminu Dada, Umar Sule, Mamman Abubakar, and Shehu Abubakar, were arrested in connection with the crime.

He said 81 cows and 42 sheep were recovered from the suspects who confessed to committing the crime

Appeal Court Fixes Hearing of Gov Sule's Suit Nov 15

Igbawase Ukumba in Lafia

The Court of Appeal has fixed Wednesday, November 15 for the hearing in the appeal instituted by Governor Abdullahi Sule of Nasarawa State.

Governor Sule is seeking to overturn the split decision of the Governorship Election Petition Tribunal in favour

of the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), David Ombagadu.

This was contained in the notice of hearing issued to the parties in the case by Nasiru Alhassan, Electronic Desk Officer of the court on Saturday.

According to the notice, hearing in the case will commence by 9 am at the Court of Appeal, Abuja Division.

FMDQ Key Partner in Economic Devt of Lagos, Says Sanwo-Olu

Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has described FMDQ Group Plc as a key partner in the economic development of the state and Nigeria as a whole.

Sanwo-Olu said this at the 10th anniversary of FMDQ Group at the weekend in Lagos, with the theme: "Celebrating a Decade of Innovation in the Nigerian Financial Market." He said that FMDQ Group had played a pivotal role in the developmental projects achieved in the state.

The governor also acknowl-

edged the sustained collaboration between FMDQ and the Lagos State Government in sustainable finance.

"FMDQ commitment to sustainable finance aligns seamlessly with the state's shared vision of a more sustainable and environmentally friendly climate," he said.

Sanwo-Olu said that the Lagos State Government would continue to collaborate with the company for enhanced growth and development.

He expressed optimism that the partnership would continue to yield

a remarkable result.

The governor described the 10th anniversary as an occasion that signified a decade of innovation, transformation and willing dedication to the advancement of the financial market.

He noted that the journey of FMDQ Group in the last 10 years had been characterised by pursuit of excellence, innovation and great achievement. According to him, the company's distinguished colour symbolises success, excellence, prosperity and resilience.

"FMDQ indeed has every reason to celebrate because it has been a shining light of our financial market and shaping the path of the nation's financial market," Sanwo-Olu said.

He commended the group for playing a pivotal role in the growth and development of the nation's economy.

"The future is bright, together we will continue to build a vibrant and competitive global capital market that will benefit all stakeholders," the governor said.

Havilah Takes Digitisation to Abuja Investment Summit

Havilah Group, Nigeria's foremost records management and archiving Solution Company, has announced plans to formally unveil its partnership with ELO Digital Office, the rights owners of ELO ECM SUITE, the leading global software for enterprise content management (ECM), at the upcoming Abuja Investment Summit and Expo.

Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Akogun Lanre Adesuyi, said: "Havilah Group's partnership with ELO Digital Office will deepen the adoption of ELO-enterprise to promote digital records management in Nigeria, particularly in the public sector where organisations still grapple with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic."

Police Kill Suspected Gunrunner, Recover 185 Live Ammunition in Katsina

Francis Sardauna in Katsina

Operatives of the Katsina State Police Command have killed a 22-year-old suspected gunrunner and kidnapper, Nazifi Ibrahim, in Yankara village of Faskari Local Government Area of the state.

The suspect, according to a statement issued to journalists yesterday by the command's Public Relations Officer, ASP Abubakar Sadiq Aliyu, was neutralised after a raid on his

enclave in a farm in Yankara village.

He said the operatives recovered 185 live rounds of 7.62mm ammunition, 90 live rounds of 5.56mm, M193 type 06 ammunition and 13 Ak-47 magazines "neatly concealed" in a bag after a fierce gun battle with the criminals.

He explained that many of the criminals escaped the hitherto battle ground with varying degrees of gunshots

injuries, calling on residents of the state to report to the nearest police station any person seen with suspicious injuries.

The statement read in parts: "On November 11th, 2023, at about 0330hrs, based on a tip-off on the activities of some suspected kidnappers wielding dangerous weapons such as AK 47 rifles, in a farm situated at the outskirts of Yankara village, Faskari LGA, Katsina State,

"Upon receipt of the report, the

DPO Faskari promptly mobilised a joint team of police operatives, members of the vigilante, and officers of the Katsina Community Security Watch Corps and responded to the scene.

"Upon noticing the presence of the operatives, the suspected kidnappers opened fire on the operatives, to which the officers valiantly returned fire, forcing the terrorists to abandon their evil plan and flee into the nearby bush."

BUSINESS

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CBN Calming FX Market with Multi-pronged Approach

With the modest appreciation of the naira at the official and parallel markets last week, the consensus is that President Bola Tinubu and his economic team will not only need to sustain the current tempo of reform in the economy but also need to lead by example in a way to send the right signals to currency speculators and other economic saboteurs that the current positive threshold has come to stay, writes Festus Akanbi

After weeks of anxiety, frustrations, and losses at the official and parallel markets of foreign exchange, Nigerians began to heave a sigh of relief last week as rates in both markets began to tumble in response to a cocktail of efforts put in place by the Nigerian authority in the past few weeks.

From Monday last week, it was a roller-coaster at both the Nigerian Autonomous Foreign Exchange Market (NAFEM) and the unofficial market.

For instance, the exchange rate between the naira and the dollar fell to N869.91/\$1 on Tuesday at the official market. This represents an N60.89 loss or a 6.99% decline in the local currency compared to the N809.02 it closed the week on Monday.

Still on Monday, at the Bureau de Change level, people purchased one US dollar for N1180 and sold it for N1170, while on Tuesday, the rate was between N990 and N1005.

On Wednesday, November 8, a dollar was exchanged for N874.71 while forex traders reportedly bought the US dollar for N1,097 at bureaux de change (BDC), representing a wide spread of N352.50/\$1.

On Saturday, a dollar was traded at N1,140 at unofficial market.

Payment of Matured Forwards to Creditors Financial industry watchers said the relief in the FX market was coming against the backdrop of the recent commencement of the payment of outstanding matured FX forwards owed to various creditors by the CBN.

The banks are Citi Bank, Stanbic IBTC, and Standard Chartered Bank. The amount of overdue forward payments is estimated at \$6.7 billion, according to the Minister of Finance, Wale Edun.

The settlement of matured foreign exchange forwards, according to the Association of Corporate Treasurers of Nigeria, is a significant step in promoting stability and confidence in Nigeria's foreign exchange market.

A statement signed by the association president, Adeyinka Ogundimu, reads, "We, at ACTN, believe that the timely settlement of matured FX forwards is crucial for our members and the broader business community. It allows our corporate treasurers to efficiently manage their foreign exchange risks and plan for their financial obligations."

Presidency: Shocks Await Currency Speculators

In its reaction to the marginal increase in the value of the Naira, the presidency has assured that the policies being worked on by the President Bola Tinubu administration will further strengthen the Naira that it will soon exchange for N500 to one United States Dollar.

Special Adviser to the President on Economic Matters, Dr Tope Fasua, who disclosed this at the "Cowries to Cash" lecture and lunch in Abuja last week, noted that the fall in the value of the currency of any country was a sign of conquest.

He warned Nigerians hoarding foreign currencies with the hope that the local currency will continue to fall to be prepared for the shock of their lives going by the current policies of the federal government.



Central Bank of Nigeria's Headquarters, Abuja.

Fasua, who represented Vice President Kashim Shettima at the event said: "For those who are speculating and praying and wishing that the currency would become nonsense, I believe that policies being rolled out by the Central Bank and the government that I serve, led by the President, will shock some of them."

"Some people thought the naira would continue to lose value. Of course, we can already see what's going on, and who knows, maybe the naira will strengthen even further to maybe something 500 or 600. I'm beginning to see some of those," he asserted.

The currency hit a record low of N1,300 per dollar on the black market, a month after it crossed the N1,000 mark, amid thin trading volumes on the parallel market and dollar shortages on the official market.

However, responding to the claim that the Federal Government is putting in place measures to achieve the exchange rate target of N500-N600/\$1 while reorganising the banking sector, various private sector institutions and financial experts have expressed divergent views over the feasibility and the benefits of the goals.

The Nigeria Employers Consultative Association, NECA, and economy experts commended the idea but urged the working policy plans should be disclosed and made clear.

They added that the government should focus on local production, address the nation's propensity to import, and make the fiscal and monetary policy authorities work in sync among other things, before dreaming of a lower exchange rate.

NECA's Director-General, Mr Adewale-Smatt Oyerinde, urged the government to deepen engagement with organised businesses with the view of building greater consensus and support for the ongoing reforms.

Oyerinde stated: "We note the plan by the Government to shore up the value of the Naira to between N500 and N600 to a Dollar in 2024. This plan is quite commendable and ambitious. "While we commend the plan, it is instructive

to note that this will require a deliberate and focused plan of action to address the shortfall in Dollar supply".

A Doubled-pronged Approach

Perhaps, a more practical reason for the current appreciation of the Naira was the one provided by the ABCON, which described the double-edged sword of dollar liquidity injection and the mopping up of the naira through interest rate hikes as the major reason for the improvement in the value of the local currency.

According to a statement by the association's president, Aminu Gwadabe, "The development stems from the 'double-edged sword dollar liquidity injection and the mopping up of the naira through interest rate hikes."

"What is happening in the market and the continued naira rebounds is the manifestation of the Central Bank of Nigeria's double-edged sword measures of dollar liquidity injection and naira mopping through the instrumentality of interest rate hikes. It is a good development as it is a greater risk to speculate, hoard, and substitute naira for other currencies."

Meanwhile, ABCON in its solidarity with the CBN's efforts said BDC operators are ready to rally around the CBN to sustain the recent gains of the country's currency.

The association president in a separate statement last week said, "It is a good development as it is (now) a great risk to speculate, hoard, and substitute naira for other currencies."

"As we continue to observe developments, there is the need for caution in attacking the naira, as it all appears that the CBN has got the arsenal and the logic to continue to enshrine the success recorded."

Long-term Strategy

However, analysts believe the current threshold in the FX market can only be sustained with a long-term strategy that includes the immediate de-dollarisation of the economy, the extinguishing of mature foreign obligations, and the urgent need for the CBN to deal transparently with participating banks at the I&E Window (now NAFEM).

The Founder and Chief Consultant of B. Adedipe Associates Limited (BAA Consult), Dr. Biodun Adedipe insisted that there is no shortcut to Naira exchange rate stability, saying there is a need to rely on a focused combination of fiscal, monetary, and trade policies.

According to him, "CBN should deal transparently with participating banks at the I&E Window. De-dollarise the economy by declaring as illegal any local transactions in US dollars (sale of assets, rent/leases, and other services, including school fees and medical bills) and ensure that government agencies stop charging local operators and entities in US dollars (quite common in the maritime sector)."

On his part, Chief Executive Officer, Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE), Dr Muda Yusuf said there is no silver bullet in the treatment of the current fate of the naira. He explained that fundamentals are weak because the government can't make FX available.

Yusuf said the CBN, which is the only supplier of fx for now is weak, saying the situation will remain the same until others can bring additional inflow. "These can be fresh flow from oil sales or IMF support which is also a possibility because other measures had been exhausted by the immediate management of the apex bank."

As Nigerians await the crystallisation of the various policies aimed at calming the foreign exchange market and improving the chances of Nigeria in international trade, analysts said the government will need to lead by example in all its dealings.

CAPITAL MARKET

Implications, Prospects of Stock Market at 70,000bps Historical Record

As the All Share Index of the Nigerian Exchange crossed the 70,000 basis points recently, which was an all-time high index in the market, **Kayode Tokede** writes on its implications and prospects for investors and the Nigerian economy at large

It is no longer news that the stock market of the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) recently crossed 70,000 basis points, marking an all-time high. The significant growth sent excitement across the financial sector home and abroad.

Also, the market capitalisation stood at N38.778 trillion as of October 31, 2023, another milestone record, driven by investors' renewed interest in some fundamental stocks, quoted on the Exchange.

Closing November 1, 2023, at 70,581.76 basis points means the stock market has gained 37.7 per cent Year-to-Date (YtD) from 51,251.06 basis points it opened for trading this year and it comes on the backdrop of new listings, investors taking a position in cheaper medium-large capitalised stocks, amongst which are; Airtel Africa Plc, MTN Nigeria Communication Plc, Geregu Power Plc, Zenith Bank Plc, Guaranty Trust Holding Company Plc, Nestle Nigeria Plc, among others.

Also, impressive third quarter (Q3) corporate earnings, most especially the Oil & gas, Banking, and Cement producing companies helped to boost the market indices growth.

What is Driving the Stock Market Growth?

Since resuming office on May 29, President Bola Tinubu's government announced foreign exchange liberalisation, and subsidy removal, two major components welcomed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), among other international agencies.

The stock market has been on an upward trajectory since the entry of the new administration but it comes with a heavy price as the Naira at the Investors & Exporters Foreign Exchange (I & E FX), and parallel market rates have depreciated significantly, while prices of goods and services have also doubled.

Take for instance, Naira at the I & E FX window closed on October 31, 2023, at N824.99/\$ from N461.42 /\$ as of June 1, 2023, the following day the government announced the liberalization. The inflation rate reached 26.72 per cent as of September 2023 from 22.41 per cent in May 2023, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

Amid foreign exchange policies, foreign investors and high network investors have positioned in large capitalised stocks and invested in key listed companies in the Oil & Gas, Banking, Industrial, Fast Moving Consumer Goods, and Telecommunication sectors.

Stock Market Key Drivers

As of November 1, 2023, the stock price of Dangote Cement has gained 26 per cent YtD to N328 per share, while Airtel Africa rose by nearly four per cent YtD to N1,694.10 per share.

The stock price of MTN Nigeria Communication increased by 14.4 per cent YtD to N246 per share, as the stock price of BUA Cement closed November 1, 2023, at N107 per share, an increase of 9.5 per cent YtD from N97.75 per share.

In the banking sector, the stock price of Zenith Bank rose by 43.3 per cent YtD

Stock Price (N)













	November 1, 2023	December 30, 2022
 MTN	246	215
 BUA	107	98
 DANGOTE CEMENT	328	261
 ZENITH BANK	34	24
 UBA	21	8
 GTCCO	35	23
 GEREGU POWER PLC	396	149
 seplat energy	1,905	1,100
 BUA	203	65
 NESBE	1,050	1,100
 ZENITH BANK	75	33
 airtel	1,694	1,635

Table: NGX

to N34.4 per share as United Bank for Africa closed November 1, 2023, at N21 per share, representing an increase of 176 per cent YtD from N7.6 per share stock opened for trading this year.

Also, GTCO's stock price hit N35.4 per share as of November 1, 2023, from N23 per share (54 per cent increase) as Stanbic IBTC reported IBTC's stock price rose by 124 per cent to N75 per share, representing an increase of 124.22 per cent YtD from N33.45 per share it opened for trading in 2022.

These companies have maintained stronger corporate earnings and interim dividends to shareholders. Although the growth of these companies does not guarantee prosperity for investors, it does signify global recognition of Nigeria's vast potential.

The hope is that this extraordinary accomplishment will lead to improved living standards for Nigerians and bolster economic stability for the nation and domestic investors at large.

Operators Positioned on Stock Market Performance

The stock market has outperformed foreign analysts' downgrade over foreign exchange challenges which is a new source of negative sentiment that is capable of triggering stock sell-off at the Exchange.

FTSE Russell and MSCI Nigeria Indexes lately have warned foreign investors against Nigeria's stock market.

FTSE Russell in September 2023 downgraded the Nigerian market on the backdrop of Nigeria's foreign exchange crisis, while MSCI Nigeria Indexes has announced plans to reclassify the Nigerian

market from frontier markets to standalone markets status in one step coinciding with the February 2024 index review.

According to the American finance company, "Since March 2020, liquidity challenges in the Nigerian foreign exchange (FX) market have consistently affected the accessibility of its equity market, leading to ongoing capital repatriation concerns and a significant gap between the official and parallel exchange rates for the Nigerian Naira. This has caused international institutional investors to face recurring challenges with index replicability and instability of the MSCI Nigeria Indexes and other indexes they are part of."

"On June 22, 2023, MSCI announced that feedback from market participants obtained as part of the initial consultation conducted from June 2022 to June 2023 suggested that the limited accessibility of the Nigerian equity market would warrant the removal of the MSCI Nigeria Indexes from the MSCI Frontier Markets Indexes. However, MSCI extended the consultation period to September 29, 2023, to allow more time for the liquidity situation in the Nigerian FX market to stabilize following measures announced by the Central Bank of Nigeria on June 14, 2023.

"No significant improvements in FX liquidity were observed by market participants during the extended consultation period,

confirming that the ease of capital inflows and outflows in the MSCI Nigeria Indexes is not to the standards expected from Frontier Markets. This has led to MSCI's decision to reclassify the MSCI Nigeria Indexes.

"To facilitate index replicability at the time of the reclassification, MSCI will delete each Nigerian security from the MSCI Frontier Markets Indexes at a price that is effectively zero as of the close of February 29, 2024. More information on this and other details related to the implementation of the reclassification will be shared at a date closer to the reclassification," the report by MSCI Nigeria Indexes added.

While investor sentiment suggests that the Nigerian stock market's recent peak is not a mere flash in the pan, experts stress the importance of ongoing stability, security, and continued economic reforms. The historic high of the Nigerian stock market has created ripples in the global financial arena, with investors keenly observing the nation's economic trajectory.

The CEO of Wyoming Capital and Partners, Mr. Tajudeen Olayinka said the stock market growth is a sign of renewed confidence in the ongoing effort of President Bola Tinubu's led government to restore equilibrium to the economy.

On the implications, Olayinka highlighted that more investors, local and foreign, will begin to do a review of the market to streamline their participation interests. He noted that the growth is expected to bring back confidence in the economy.

"It will help public companies to be able to raise money at a lower cost of capital; It will improve wealth and purchasing power of investors and help improve liquidity in the market," implications Olayinka highlighted.

The Managing Director, of Morgan Capital Securities Limited, Mr. Rotimi Olubi, said the remarkable gains recorded in the stock market can also be attributed to the release of impressive third quarter (Q3) 2023 earnings results by various companies, fueling positive investor sentiment.

"Additionally, the implementation of policies aimed at stabilizing the foreign exchange market has garnered favorable reactions from investors.

"This upsurge is expected to bolster investor confidence in the Nigerian equities market, further increasing the already substantial domestic investor participation rate, which stood at 90.49 per cent YtD as of September 2023, compared to 83.70 per cent YtD in 2022FY. Furthermore, this market performance is likely to result in greater wealth accumulation for investors who have positioned themselves in high dividend-yielding stocks.

"The resilience of the Nigerian equities market in the face of significant economic challenges is a testament to the forward-looking and optimistic nature of investors. Looking ahead, we anticipate the market to continue on this positive trajectory, driven by ongoing positive earnings releases.

"However, rising yields in the fixed income space could pose a risk to this outlook. Hence, we recommend that investors focus on fundamentally sound stocks in sectors such as banking, oil and gas, and industrial goods."

SOFT FINANCE

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Abdullah Bukar: The Nigeria's Steel Industry Dream Can Become A Reality

Quietly since 2017, the People Expertise and Excellence Foundation (PEEF), a platform accommodating professionals, local and international, from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds, have assiduously been playing an advocacy role, generating quality implementable ideas which it has continued to pass on to the relevant government quarters. Its strong belief is that when the right policies and delivery systems are in place, this would create the environment for proper utilisation of available human, cultural and natural resources, which would ultimately propel the country and Africa towards achieving the best quality of life for the citizens.

PEEF has organised six brainstorming sessions thus far with themes that address different strategic needs of the country. This year, its conference will focus on the development of the steel industry in Nigeria and how to make that dream come alive.

In the notes below, Engineer ABDULLAH BUKAR, chairman of the Board of Trustees of PEEF, throws more light on the activities of the foundation and the reasons for its focus on the still sector in its upcoming conference.

WHY THE FOCUS ON THE STILL INDUSTRY?

The steel industry is a strategic sector for technological and economic development in Nigeria. The industry is vital for developing linkages with all other sectors of the economy and serves as the backbone of industrialisation in Nigeria. The conference theme aims at facilitating the achievement of the following specific objectives in the industry:

1. Job creation: The steel industry has the potential to create a significant number of jobs in Nigeria. The industry requires a large workforce, from the mining of raw materials to the production of finished steel products. It also serves as a catalyst for many other productive enterprises for direct goods production for local consumption and export as well as import substitution. This is one of the reasons the then regional and federal governments understood the need to produce steel early in the first five years of the life of independent Nigeria. It is an absolute must if we are to become a self-sufficient nation.

2. Reduction in capital flight: Nigeria is blessed with major raw materials needed for the production of iron and steel, including iron ore, coal, limestone, and natural gas. However, the country still spends billions of naira annually on the importation of steel products. The development of a functional steel industry in Nigeria will reduce the country's dependence on imported steel products and save foreign exchange.

3. Industrialisation: The steel industry is a key driver of industrialisation in Nigeria. The industry provides the base for Nigeria's industrial take-off and will sustain spare parts and components of the industries that produce steel-based goods.

4. National pride: The development of a viable domestic steel industry is a matter of national pride and a reflection of industrial progress for Nigeria.

5. Contribution to GDP: According to Dr Fayemi's Road Map for Development, the Ministry of Mines and Steel Development is capable of contributing \$27 billion to the country's GDP.

6. In summary, the Nigerian steel industry has the potential to create jobs, reduce capital flight, drive industrialisation, contribute to GDP, and is a matter of national pride.

VIEWS ON THE CURRENT CHALLENGES BEDEVILING THE DEVELOPMENT OF STEEL SECTOR IN NIGERIA?

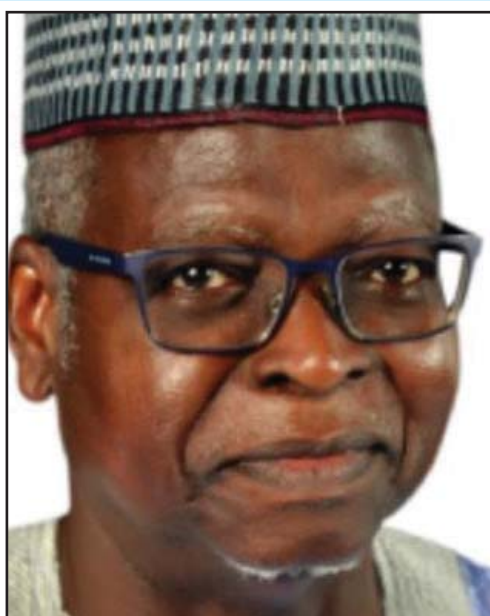
The Nigerian steel industry faces several challenges that have hindered its growth and development. Some of the current challenges are:

1. Inadequate infrastructure: The steel industry requires a lot of infrastructure, including power, transportation, water supply and up and downstream partners to ensure rapid growth.

2. Dependence on imports: Nigeria spends about \$3.3 billion importing steel every year. The country has 30 steel manufacturers, but they can only produce 2.2 million tons a year with scraps and billets imported mainly from China. This dependence on imports has made it difficult for the industry to grow and develop. Here, you can see directly where the local steel industry can help reduce imports of goods and services we can produce locally, increasing the local content of the GDP while minimising imports.

3. Inadequate funding: The Nigerian steel sector has faced a lot of operational challenges primarily due to poor planning, contracting strategy, design, funding, and political instability.

The lack of proper integration with the rest



Bukar

of industrial development's role in the evolution of the Nigerian economy towards regional dominance and international presence led to moribund industries, which are all in silos and unable to consolidate and support each other.

4. Poor management: Corruption, poor management, sponsored sabotage, and fake news have been barriers to Nigeria's industrial initiatives, including the steel industry. The privatisation that was carried out in 2004-2005 did not revive the sector but transformed the companies into worse conditions. Moreover, nobody told the buyers what is expected of them from the national development level to ensure the roles are effectively discharged.

5. Technological challenges: Despite the abundance of iron ore in Nigeria, there are some technological challenges in using them for steel making. The country needs to invest in research and development to overcome these challenges. How can we improve the quality of the inputs to the steel-making process and avoid importing? Alternatively, can we develop a new steel-making process that fits the types of ore we have?

6. Policy and legal framework: The Nigerian steel sector has faced challenges due to poor planning, contracting strategy, design, funding, and political instability. The government needs to provide a favourable policy and legal framework to support the growth and development of the industry.

The policymakers should listen to advice and engage to make a better development basis for reviving this

The steel industry is a strategic sector for technological and economic development in Nigeria. The industry is vital for developing linkages with all other sectors of the economy and serves as the backbone of industrialisation in Nigeria

crucial part of our national growth plan.

THE WAY FORWARD IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE STEEL INDUSTRY.

Achieving an effective, efficient, viable, and sustainable steel industry in Nigeria requires a multi-faceted approach. The subject matter experts at this year's conference will speak more specifically about the thematic areas. The following are points to note:

1. Government support: The government needs to provide a favourable policy and legal framework to support the growth and development of industry. The government should also provide adequate funding for the industry, including alternative sources through industry-based partnerships.

2. Investment in infrastructure: The steel industry requires a lot of infrastructure, including power, transportation, and water supply. The government needs to invest in infrastructure to support the growth and development of the industry.

3. Reduction in dependence on imports: Nigeria needs to reduce its dependence on imported steel products. The country has 30 steel manufacturers, but they can only produce 2.2 million tons a year with scraps and billets imported mainly from China. The development of a functional Ajaokuta steel company, as the flagship of the Steel Making Industry, will reduce the country's dependence on imported steel products and save foreign exchange. Once mature, this should be followed by a revival of the Delta Steel Complex at Aladja, the moribund steel rolling mills and future plants that will add to meeting national and regional demand.

4. Investment in research and development: Nigeria needs to invest in research and development to overcome the technological challenges associated with using iron ore for steel making. The government should also encourage collaboration between the steel industry and research institutions.

5. Effective management: The steel industry needs effective management to thrive. Corruption, poor management, sponsored sabotage, and fake news have been barriers to Nigeria's industrial initiatives, including the steel industry. The government needs to ensure that the industry is well-managed by seasoned professionals and the same level of competence is upheld despite changes in ruling structure and affiliations.

6. Promotion of local content: The government should promote local content in the steel industry. As much as possible, all inputs should be locally-sourced at competitive prices. Similarly, steel, as input to other industries, should be managed to give a competitive edge to products from Nigeria to enable them to flourish on their merit. This will create jobs and reduce capital flight. The government should also give preference to domestic steel firms in infrastructure contract awards.

The national plan should recognise the need to ensure proper integration of our industries covering steel and steel products, the oil and gas industry, aluminum production from ALSCON and the minerals production plans currently under initiation in the Federal Ministry of Solid Minerals.

THE PLACE OF THE STEEL SECTOR IN THE "RENEWED HOPE AGENDA" THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT

The steel sector can positively support the "Renewed Hope Agenda" of the current federal administration for sustainable growth and development of Nigeria by creating jobs through youth empowerment, reducing insecurity, contributing to GDP, reducing capital flight,

promoting industrialisation, and promoting local content. However, the government must provide adequate support and responsive management of all issues for the industry to achieve the desired goals.

Steel production should catalyse growth in many industries, prove import substitution and create new exports from Nigeria to neighbouring countries.

WHAT OF THE ISSUE PROCUREMENT FRAUD AND CORRUPTION ASSOCIATED WITH THE STEEL SECTOR SUPPLY CHAIN?

Yes, one of the topics at the conference is addressing that subject matter and how procurement fraud can be generally dealt with across the different sectors of government. Here are three examples to note which the subject matter experts would explain at the conference.

1. Appointment of a preferred single source contractor on preferential terms. No competition.

2. Selective Tendering. Politicians submit a list of contractors to be invited to bid on a project and collusion sets in. After the evaluation of bids, the final selection is still influenced by political forces.

3. Evaluation criteria intentionally designed and tailored to favour a preferred contractor and disqualify other bidders.

4. Lack of comparative analysis to see how others, locally or internationally, have addressed the same issue.

OTHER ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES

The industry's dependence on imports and lack of adequate funding could affect its financial stability. Additionally, the steel industry requires a lot of infrastructure, including power, transportation, and water supply, which could be affected by climate change. The steel industry could also face financial risks if it fails to reduce emissions at the rate required to keep global warming below 2°C, as this could lead to carbon pricing and affect the industry's profitability.

WHAT OF THE AJAOKUTA STEEL MILL?

I will address this in three tranches:

1. At the personal level. As a mechanical engineering undergraduate at Swansea University in the UK, in 1969, among other fellow students, I met four others who were sent to the University to learn steelmaking and Metallurgy. Segun Oguniola was a postgraduate student sent by the Ministry of Mines and Power to study as he has been posted to Ajaokuta Steel. Justin Adigwe, Rahael Upaa and Abiodun Abe were sent there to study Metallurgy by Makeri Smelting Company, based in Jos. It shows the importance of hard Minerals to Nigeria and the efforts that were made to develop needed manpower. In those days Nigeria made more money from these hard minerals than oil and gas. We must revive this industry.

2. Again, as a facilities engineer at Shell, I worked at the Oben Gas Plant from 1979 to 1982 to deliver gas to Ajaokuta. NNPC built the gas pipeline in 1978, and it was fed with gas from associated gas facilities from Oben Field in Edo State. I also worked on the gas supply for the Aladja Steel Plant in Delta State and increased power generation to serve it from NEPA's Delta IV Generating Plant. So, it showed we had good plants, which have been neglected and we must revive them to meet the needs of our dear nation and improve the quality of life of the citizens by productive enterprise.

NOTE: Read the full Interview in the online edition on www.thisdaylive.com

The Yeye Oloriwe of Oro Kingdom in Kwara State, **Hajia Basirat Motunrayo Adedoyin**, who turned 60 years last week marked the milestone with a dinner organised by her children at the upscale restaurant, Ember, in Victoria Island, Lagos. Hajia Basirat is the wife of celebrated journalist and Oloriwe of Oro Kingdom, Alhaji Raheem Adedoyin whose colleagues and associates also honoured the dinner invitation. Here are some of the dignitaries who graced the event



The celebrant with her husband, children and grand children



Prince Ayorinde Adedoyin and Oloriwe Raheem Adedoyin in a conversation at the dinner



Media guru, Sir Folu Olamiti , delivering a Goodwill message at the dinner



Prince Bode Odetundun, Business Head, Real Estate Advisory, Investment One Financial Services Group and other guests at the dinner



Celebrant's Sister-in-Law, Alhaja Afusata Adebayo and her friend with the celebrant (middle)



An officer of the University of Lagos, Mass Communication Alumni Association (UMCAA), Mrs. Mopelola Alli and her husband, Engr. Oluwole Alli at the dinner



Chief Fattah Amolegbe (representative of the Deputy Governor of Kwara State, Mr. Kayode Alabi) and wife, Chief Mrs. Grace Amolegbe at the dinner

OPINION

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THE NORTH AND THE 'JAPA' PHENOMENON

Migration decisions among northerners are shaped by interplay of economic, cultural, social, and security factors, argues **ROY CHIKWEM**



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THE CLIMATE QUESTION: THE WAY FORWARD

PADDY EZEALA argues urgent need to do more to save the Nigerian environment



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EDITORIAL PRESIDENCY AND THE SINGLE-TERM PROPOSAL



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INTERROGATING THE SINGLE-TERM PRESIDENT GAMBIT

A first-term president who performs in office should be entitled to a second term, contends **CHEKWUBE NZOMIWU**

I took with a pinch of salt the calls made by the two major runners-up in the 2023 Nigerian presidential election, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Peter Obi of Labour Party (LP) for the country to adopt a single term presidency. While Alhaji Abubakar, the Waziri Adamawa, canvassed for a constitutional amendment to provide for six-year single term for the president, to end the desperation to win at all costs, Obi differed a little, advocating a single term of five years for each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, with a 30-year rotation plan.

The two political heavyweights made their opinion known at different media parleys in Abuja while reacting to the judgment of the Supreme Court, which upheld the return of Bola Ahmed Tinubu of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) by the Independent National Electoral Commission as the winner of the 2023 presidential election.

Before stating my opinion on this matter, let me make it clear that I was not surprised by the latest crusade by Atiku and Obi. In any case, it is in the character of an average Nigerian politician to gain political advantage with everything, including a misfortune.

More so, Nigerian politicians believe that their countrymen forget things quickly and hence, whatever they said or did yesterday, does not matter today. If not, why would Alhaji Abubakar and Peter Obi who enjoyed two terms as Vice President and Governor of Anambra State, respectively, parade themselves today as promoters of a single term?

Assuming the last presidential election and the plethora of litigations that emanated from it favoured any of them, would the person be canvassing for a single term today? I leave the question for my readers to answer.

The Nigerian politician assumes that everything they tell us, we will swallow it hook, line, and sinker, without asking questions. As of the time of writing this piece, I still could not understand how single term for president will reduce the desperation to win at all costs. Will the reduction of the term limit change instantly the "do-or-die" attitude of Nigerian politicians? We have seen instances where people were killed in ordinary council elections to elect chairmen and councilors who will serve only two years. Even if the tenure of the president is one month, Nigerian politicians will try to win at all costs. This will continue to happen until we change our political culture.

In my opinion, the demand by Atiku and Obi for a single term (whether five or six years) must have been driven by hypocrisy or at best, self-interest. Unfortunately, it has exposed their ignorance of the origin of the two-term limit for the president in Nigeria. Taking a trip down memory lane, the 1963 Republican Constitution of independent Nigeria established the federal parliamentary system of government, with the president as ceremonial Head of State and the Prime Minister as the Head of Government. The events that trailed the military coup of January 15, 1966, caused the collapse of the First Republic.

After nearly a decade and half of military rule, the 1979 Constitution shifted Nigeria to a



presidential system of government, borrowing from the model of the United States of America. Hence the presidency, which was ceremonial in the First Republic, became an executive post in the Second Republic. Personally, I am one of those who think that it was a "big mistake" for us to abandon the parliamentary system for the presidential system. However, I reserve that discussion for another day.

The American model, which Nigeria adopted in the Second Republic, limited the tenure of the President to two terms of four years each. The Second Republic later collapsed and was trailed by long years of military rule, in the course of which a few attempts to return to democratic rule were aborted.

The military administration of Gen. Abdulasami Abubakar eventually midwived the 1999 Constitution, which ushered in the current Fourth Republic, borrowing again from the American model. Although the 1999 Constitution has undergone amendments, it still limits the tenure of the President and State Governors to two terms of four years each.

I have gone this whole hog to let the advocates of single term president to know that the current two terms limit in Nigeria did not fall from the moon. If it worked in US, a multiracial country, it cannot be "the trouble with Nigeria," a country populated by only black people.

In case Atiku and Obi do not know, the two-term limit was a product of the Twenty-second Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, approved by the Congress in 1947. Before the amendment, presidents enjoyed unlimited terms. It is on record that war time president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), served a third and fourth term. He was the only President that achieved that feat in the history of US. Before him, successful presidents like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson voluntarily decided not to seek third term.

Back home in Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo almost changed the Constitution to give himself a third term in office but for the doggedness of his vice, Atiku Abubakar and others. So, the trouble with Nigeria is the politicians themselves and not the term limit for the president. In my candid opinion, precluding a sitting first term president from seeking re-election contradicts democracy in the real sense of it. One of the most popular definitions of democracy is "Government of the people by

the people and for the people." If an incumbent is doing well, the people should not be denied the right to ask him to continue.

The United States where we copied our constitution has a history of incumbent presidents who lost re-election bid, including John Quincy Adams (1825-1829), Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), George Bush Sr. (1989-1993) and the controversial Donald Trump (2017-2021). It is on record that Trump was the eleventh incumbent American President to lose re-election bid. Today, he is gearing up to run again. That is if he escapes conviction from the series of criminal charges slammed against him in different American courts. In Nigeria, an incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan of PDP was defeated in 2015 by a coalition of forces of Atiku and five PDP governors, Tinubu's Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and Muhammadu Buhari's Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), who merged to form the APC. The rest is history. So, what's the fuss about single term?

Two-term limit is not peculiar to America and Nigeria. In the current French Fifth Republic, the President of France did not have term limit until the amendment of the Constitution of France in 2008, limiting French presidency to two-terms

A single tenure will disincentivise performance. A sitting first term president who knows that he has nothing to lose or gain by performing in office, will not be eager to deliver. The person will just stay in Aso Rock and while away five or six years, playing Chess, Ludo or Draft, at the detriment of Nigerians who have been pummeled by insecurity and economic hardship caused by rotational (tum by tum) presidency.

I think that time has come for Nigeria to consider meritocracy, irrespective of where one comes from in choosing who leads the country. On this ground, I vehemently disagree with Obi's single term of five years for each of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, with a 30-year rotation. We cannot continue to do things the same way and expect a different result. It is not possible. Finally, my rejection of single term does not mean that I am one of those people who believe that four years is not enough for a president to perform. I recall that sometime in 2019, former President Goodluck Jonathan described four years as quite a short period for somebody intending to change the country to do much. I don't agree. Performance is not a product of longer stay in office. Anybody who wants to do something can do so even in one year. How long did it take Jonathan's former principal, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua to stop the militancy in the Niger Delta using the now corrupted Amnesty Programme?

In fact, very recent experience in Nigeria has shown how things could degenerate with longer stay in office. It will benefit the country more when longer stay in office is based on performance. Thus, a first term president who performs in office should be entitled to a second term. That is the spirit of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), which we copied from the United States.

Nzomiwu, a development communicator and political scientist, writes from Awka, Anambra State

THE NORTH AND THE 'JAPA' PHENOMENON

Migration decisions among northerners are shaped by interplay of economic, cultural, social, and security factors, argues ROY CHIKWEM

For decades, Nigeria has grappled with substantial emigration, primarily driven by high youth unemployment and underemployment. The attraction of better job prospects, higher incomes, and improved living conditions overseas acts as a powerful motivator for migration. This has prompted some young Nigerians to seek security and stability elsewhere. The term "Japa" syndrome characterizes a phenomenon in Nigeria where individuals, particularly young Nigerians, choose to migrate abroad in search of better opportunities, often with no intention of returning to their homeland. The term "Japa" is Nigerian slang derived from a Yoruba word meaning "to escape" or "to run away" and is commonly used to describe leaving Nigeria for other countries in pursuit of a better life, education, or employment opportunities. Migration patterns vary significantly among different regions and cultures within Nigeria. It is observed that Nigerian Northerners tend to have a lower inclination to migrate abroad compared to other regions. This inclination can be attributed to various factors.

Economic factors play a significant role in the decision-making process of Nigerian Northerners. The northern region boasts a robust agricultural sector and abundant natural resources, including solid minerals. Opportunities in farming, mining, and trading contribute to local economic stability and growth. The cost of living is exceedingly low, there are lots of scholarship and job opportunities in the North and then the spirit of solidarity is very high. Dr. Ishola, a university lecturer from Kwara said, "The availability of Agricultural lands has remained an important factor reducing the interest of northern youth from traveling abroad". Zhokwo, a Certified Accountant from Nasarawa, said, "Many northerners prefer to study abroad and come back to Nigeria to continue their progression in their chosen field. There are a lot of economic opportunities in the north for the educated especially those who study abroad." On the contrary, Dr. Sani Ibrahim from Kano said, "In practical terms, there are no employment opportunities that may prevent Northerners from going abroad; I rather see ignorance and lack of information and awareness as reason young people in the North find it difficult to travel abroad." An anonymous interviewee from Kogi said "The north is a fertile virgin land; whatever you grow there, will thrive as far as it is not forbidden or what we call "Haram". Aderoju, a Development Practitioner from Osun, suggests, "Nigerians should not relocate abroad; instead, they should stay and use their expertise to develop the country for a better future."

Religious and cultural factors are paramount to Nigerian Northerners, with a large Muslim population that takes pride in religious customs and traditions. Aderoju, said "Nigerian Northerners prioritize their cultural norms and values when making decisions, including migration. They are known for their strong adherence to their traditions and way of life." These cultural ties make it difficult for individuals to consider leaving their homeland. Dr. Ishola further stated, "Northerners are polygamous in nature, and they support large family members. Hardly will any Western country issue a visa to a man with up to four wives and about 20 children." He further said "Northerners are usually unwilling to make changes or adapt to foreign culture and religion. Given these factors, they prefer to dwell among fellow conservatives in Niger Republic, Cameroon, and neighbouring nomadic countries instead of venturing abroad." The northern region's cultural



diversity, with various ethnic groups and languages, fosters strong attachments to cultural heritage and traditions, motivating individuals to stay locally and preserve their cultural identity. Dr. Peter Ajanson, a Medical Doctor from Bauchi, said, "The religious view that God determines everyone's destiny plays a huge role that influences the decision of Nigerian Northerners regarding migration. In addition, Amidu, a Pharmacist from Kogi, said, "Family ties play an important role in preventing Nigerian Northerners from migrating abroad because of the polygamous nature of most Northern families and the Islamic educational institutions keep Nigerian Northerners rooted to their homeland".

Social factors, including family and community ties, have a profound impact on the decision to stay rooted locally. Northern Nigerian culture places a high value on family bonds, with extensive family networks. Staying local allows them to maintain these relationships and participate in community activities. Zhokwo said, "The northerners detest the western culture and some of the Muslims would fear that if their children who study abroad stay over – there is a tendency that the western culture will influence them in marriage, and by implication may make them change their religion." Zhokwo further said, "I am an example of this. I did my master's degree at the University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom, but because of my family, I never thought of staying behind in the UK". Northern Nigeria has grappled with the presence of several terrorist groups over the years, posing significant security challenges in the region. For many Nigerian Northerners, there exists a genuine fear of being collectively stigmatized as potential terrorists by the international community. Dr. Sani Saidu Ibrahim from Kano, said, "Indeed, the security situation in Northern Nigeria is always affecting the decisions of the young people to travel abroad. This means that people are being tagged the so-called "Jihadists" or sometimes some young Muslims in the region are denied visas."

The migration decisions among northerners are multifaceted, shaped by an intricate interplay of economic, cultural, social, and security factors. Understanding these factors provides valuable insights into the diverse migration patterns within Nigeria's northern region. As we navigate the intricate tapestry of migration in Nigeria, it is crucial to recognize and celebrate the diverse paths individuals choose on their journey toward a better future, whether that journey takes them to distant shores or allows them to flourish in the warmth of their homeland. Ultimately, the "Japa" syndrome serves as a testament to the complexity and diversity of human aspirations in the face of global opportunities. ■

Dr. Chikwem is an international education and migration expert based in Sydney, Australia

PADDY EZEALA argues urgent need to do more to save the Nigerian environment



THE CLIMATE QUESTION: THE WAY FORWARD

Climate variability or what is generally known as climate change has been prominent in global discourse in recent times. The upcoming 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) provides us an opportunity for introspection with regard to our response to this issue of climate change. The conference with the theme, Food Systems Resilience is taking place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) later this month. By extension, it is also an opportunity for us to take stock of the state of our environment and evaluate our responses to the various challenges confronting us.

The consequences of climate change are manifesting starkly in Nigeria and in fact across West Africa and, the world. We can no longer pretend that nothing is happening. We are all affected.

The Sahel region of northern Nigeria, especially the areas bordered by Niger and Chad, is under the severe menace of desertification. Fertile land areas from which the people derived sustenance through farming and other economic activities are speedily witnessing increasing loss of vegetation. They evoke the image of aridity, which is an apt metaphor for a state of wholesale degradation begging for remedial action. The situation of Lake Chad is emblematic of the extent of damage being wrought by climate change in Nigeria. The Sahel is listed as a region of high vulnerability to climate-driven hazards and increasing health threats to climate interactions in the "10 New Insights in Climate Science" report developed by Future Earth, the Earth League and the World Climate Research Programme. The truth is that if we want wetlands to remain wet, and green lands to remain green, then we must not desert dry lands. Climate change adversely affects the health of entire ecosystems. Several environmental extremities are linked to climate change. The frequency and intensity of these extreme weather events associated with climate change have sometimes led to humanitarian challenges.

Northern Nigeria remains the food basket of the country. Any attempt not to address the environmental issues with the seriousness it deserves would spell disaster for the entire country. We are elated, however, by the Great Green Wall initiative aimed at wedging the incursion of the Sahara Desert into the country. Environmental degradation worsens the living condition of a people and in some cases occasions migration which in turn has its own other environmental and sociopolitical consequences.

In southern Nigeria, it is as if war has been declared on the natural environment. Not even protected areas are spared. Massive and uncontrolled logging has been taking place in many states in Nigeria as if we are in a lawless situation. The level of illegal logging in Cross River, Edo, Ogun and even in some North Central States is disturbing. The citing of a foreign privately-owned charcoal producing factory in Nsukka in Enugu State has not helped matters. Even the adjoining states have been affected by the massive logging instigated by this destructive Foreign Direct Investment.

Between 1981 and the year 2000 Nigeria lost 3.7 million hectares of forests. At present, less than 4 per cent of Nigeria's untouched rainforest cover is left. More frightening is the fact that the loss is still continuing at the rate of more than 3.5 per cent annually. This implies a colossal loss of bio-diversity. For instance, 484 plant species are threatened with extinction in Nigeria. Out of the 7.5 million hectares of forests lost globally on annual basis according to Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Nigeria accounts for the loss of 350,000 hectares; with 1.5 million trees felled daily due to illegal logging. If not for the existence of protected areas, especially,



the National Parks, these figures would have more than doubled. This situation is made hopeless by the almost total absence of measures aimed at encouraging forest regeneration. Related to this is the absence of a valuation system to place a value on forest resources so that when forests are destroyed through individual or corporate negligence, adequate compensation would be paid.

The point should be made that there is need to develop more environmentally and socially equitable approaches to forest management in Nigeria. The wanton destruction of forests across the country must be checked.

Forests perform a broad range of critical environmental and climatic functions, including the maintenance of constant supply of water. Forests harbour species and at the same time have very deep economic, aesthetic, industrial and religious significance for humans. However, economic development pressures often lead to the conversion of forest ecosystems without consideration for both the long-term economic costs and the implications of the immediate loss of bio-diversity, ecosystem structure and function.

We should be able to harness the potential of the forests in the development of ecotourism and scientific research rather than continue with illegal logging and wildlife trafficking. Nigeria's remaining rainforests harbour about 4000 different species of plants, including those that have been found to be effective in the development of alternative medicine. There are also animals, including birds that can be found only in Nigeria. These include the Ibadan malimbe, the Anambra waxbill, the Jos indigo bird, the white-throated monkey (*Cercopithecus erythrogaster pococki*), the Niger Delta pigmy hippo and the Niger Delta red colobus monkey. The question remains: What has been done to protect, harness and develop these natural endowments? In other words, we should be able to fashion a sustainable development strategy that ensures the prosperity of humans while living in a way that synchronizes with the natural environment.

Back to the main issue; climate action plans known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) is in response to the Paris Agreement. The Federal Government of Nigeria submitted an NDC in 2015 which was updated in 2021. The country promised to contribute 20% below business-as-usual carbon emission levels by 2030 and even 47% with international support. It is anticipated that by 2050 Nigeria will be a country of low carbon, climate-resilient and high-growth circular economy with an emission reduction of 50% compared to current levels; on the way towards achieving Net zero emission. ■

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EDITORIAL

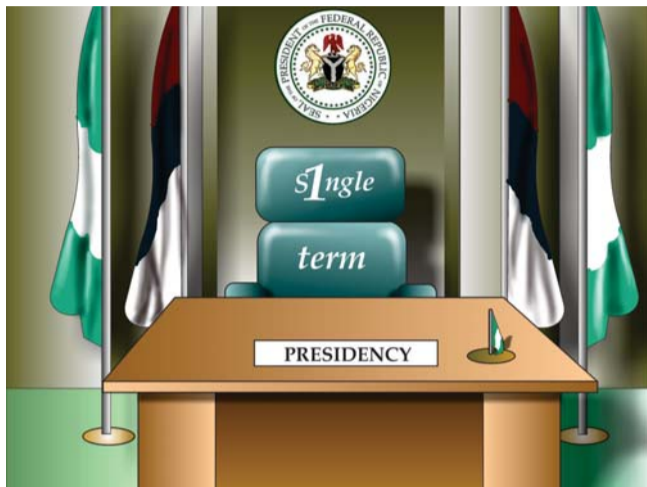
PRESIDENCY AND THE SINGLE-TERM PROPOSAL

There's nothing fundamentally wrong with the two-term presidency. What's lacking is good governance

To address concerns about regional imbalances and promote national unity, the presidential candidates of the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and his Labour Party (LP) counterpart, Mr Peter Obi have suggested tinkering with the constitution on presidential term limits. They both spoke, following the Supreme Court affirmation of the election of President Bola Tinubu which they challenged. According to Atiku, a single term of six years for the president should be rotated among the six geopolitical zones to "prevent the ganging up of two or more geo-political zones to alternate the presidency among themselves to the exclusion of other zones." While endorsing the idea of a single term, Obi said his preference would be for "a five-year tenure which would go for 30 years rotational."

We understand that those enamoured by a single-term for the president may be worried about the trajectory of our democracy, particularly the recurrent election pressures on the system and the ethno-religious divides that continue to dog the country. But it is also very telling that proponents do not anchor their argument on delivering public good despite the challenge of governance in Nigeria today. It is all about political control. We are disappointed that at a time the country is confronted with a barrage of challenges that border on the security and welfare of the citizens, opposition politicians who should be putting the incumbent on his toes are setting agenda for another distraction.

Meanwhile, the idea for a single presidential term has been around for some years now. In 2011, for instance, President Goodluck Jonathan canvassed it early in his administration on the basis that it would stem political acrimony during change of government and cut down drastically on costs of electioneering. The Senate Committee on the review of the constitution, chaired by then Deputy Senate President Ike Ekweremadu, also recommended a one-term of six years based on similar grounds that it would be healthier for the nation. The argument at the time was that six years is long enough for any chief



The challenge of our present system is not in the number of years or terms, but rather the lack of good governance across board

executive to execute policies that would impact on the people and that it was necessary to give every part of the country a sense of belonging. Ekweremadu in fact believed that the six-year single-term presidency as practiced in Mexico was what Nigeria needed "so that the money we spend in running elections and the problem of chief executives concentrating to come back, using resources and instruments of state can be overcome".

We endorse the idea of fair representation in the country and politicians must work for such inclusion. However, even with all its limitations and imperfections, a two-term presidency of four years each, as presently practiced, is a better alternative to an 'imperial presidency' of only one term of five or six years. A single-term, according to most analysts, is not only a constraint to continuity and predictability, but a 'blow to presidential accountability.' Besides, in all the African countries where term limits have been tampered with, it has become an instrument for tenure elongation by incumbents

who, after only a few years, would suggest going back to the previous arrangement in what has become a vicious cycle in democratic manipulation. Whatever may therefore be the imperfections of the election and its outcome, what should dominate discussions afterwards are serious issues of governance and how to address the challenges of the people. Not on political permutations.

We are particularly concerned that this issue always crops up after every presidential election. Yet, what Nigeria sorely lacks and needs, especially at this period, is good governance, not another sterile debate about terms of office. The challenge of our present system is not in the number of years or terms, but rather the lack of good governance across board. The problem is not how long or short the tenure is, but who we elect, how we elect them and the structure of the institutions. At a most difficult period for most of our citizens, what Nigerians demand, and deserve, is not the subterfuge of tinkering with the tenure of office holders but rather serious governance anchored on meeting the aspirations of the people, at practically all levels.

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Letters to the Editor

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LETTERS

NIGERIA: THE YEARS THAT WERE WASTED

For all our human and material resources, Nigeria has not become a technologically advanced and economically prosperous country. And the country is bedevilled with infrastructural deficit and rot. So why is Nigeria, a country that is blessed with human and material resources, large arable land, and equable weather conditions, still trapped in the morass of national underdevelopment? The answer to this question is not far-fetched. We have not got it, right, politically.

Without good and visionary political leadership, no country on earth can realize her potential. In Singapore, that country's greatest leader, Lee Kuan Yew, formulated political, economic, and technological policies, the implementation of which leapfrogged Singapore from an underdeveloped country to a developed country. Today, Singapore, which is less-endowed than Nigeria, as to human and material resources, has outpaced Nigeria in the areas of economic and

technological development.

Similarly, Malaysia, which was at par with Nigeria in many areas in 1960, when our country became a politically independent, has achieved economic prosperity. The country owes her successes in many areas to the good political leaders that piloted the affairs of the country in the past. And Chairman, Mao Tse Tung, laid the ideological framework and groundwork for the rapid development of China. China is, now, a superpower country whose influence is felt in many countries.

But since our country's attainment of political freedom in 1960, good and purposeful political leadership has continued to elude the country. And between 1966 and 1979; and between 1983 and 1998, our country laboured under asphyxiating military dictatorships, which halted the developmental strides of Nigeria.

Worse still, over the years, an egregious variant of political culture, which is predicated

on the subversion of the people's political will or choice, has evolved in Nigeria. Imposition of political leaders on the populace by the kingmakers through underhand means has become an intricate part of our political culture. And the president's and governors' use of the power of incumbency is also a despicable part of our unwholesome political culture.

While the departing British imperialists played a big role in the emergence of Alhaji Tafawa Balewa as our Prime Minister in 1960, the kingmakers assisted Alhaji Shehu Shagari to shake off the political challenge of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe to become Nigeria's first executive President in 1979. The duo of Awolowo and Azikiwe were the political superiors of Alhaji Shehu Shagari.

And did Chief Olusegun Obasanjo become the President of Nigeria based solely on the people's choice? The overriding need

to save Nigeria from implosion by placating the indignant Yoruba people, who were denied the presidential seat in 1993, swung the pendulum of power in favour of Chief Obasanjo. And his successor in office, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, confessed to the fact that the presidential election that brought him to power was deeply flawed. The factors of the providential intervention in human affairs and happenstance propelled Dr. Goodluck Jonathan to the presidential seat following the demise of Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua.

In 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari rode to power on the coattail of his popularity with the people, ascetic lifestyle, and his so-called zero tolerance for corruption. He used the power of incumbency to win his re-election bid.

*Chiedu Uche Okoye,
Uruowulu-Obosi, Anambra State*

GLITTERATI

A THIS DAY WEEKLY PULL-OUT

12.11.2023



NATASHA AKPOTI-UDUAGHAN

THE DEFIANT STEEL MAGNOLIA

With the recent Court of Appeal ruling affirming her as the winner of the Kogi Central Senatorial election held last February, politician and entrepreneur, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan proves that she is more than just a pretty face; she's an embodiment of the delicate strength of the iconic flower steel magnolia- resilient, determined, and beautifully defiant, writes **Vanessa Obioha**

ASSISTANT EDITOR OLUFUNKE OLAODE/victoria.olaode@thisdaylive.com.

COVER

I am out to Prove to Nigerians that Womenfolk are Intelligent

The news of her victory at the Appeal Court in Abuja spread like wildfire, evoking laudatory remarks about her resilience. The court in its ruling affirmed that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) senatorial candidate for Kogi Central, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, won the election instead of the All Progressives Congress's (APC) candidate, Abubakar Sadiku-Ohere.

It was only a matter of time before Akpoti-Uduaghan became the poster woman for female politicians. In a whirlwind of celebratory messages, her triumph underscored the unwavering resilience, determination and doggedness that secured her victory, inspiring a wave of hope in the realm of Nigerian politics. Former Presidential Adviser on National Assembly Matters, Senator Florence Ita-Giwa called her a classic example of the calibre of woman politician that she has been advocating for over the years.

In a statement, the senator applauded her doggedness in the face of intimidating odds, stating that the trait has deservedly earned her a seat in the Senate.

"Even though she is not a member of my party, all the same, I salute her political courage," the statement read.

The former presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Atiku Abubakar hailed her on the platform X (formerly Twitter) as an excellent example of a woman in politics.

"Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan is an excellent example of a woman in politics. She is bold and courageous. Her hard fight to reclaim her seat in the Senate tells of her remarkable character," the post read.

Akpoti-Uduaghan's triumph garnered extensive celebration for multiple reasons. Her victory arrived during a period when faith in the judiciary, especially concerning election matters, had dwindled. It served as a beacon of hope for Nigerian politicians embroiled in legal disputes, contrasting with recent events such as the failed cases of the PDP and Labour's Party presidential candidates, Abubakar and Peter Obi. Their unsuccessful attempts to overturn the victory of the incumbent president, Bola Tinubu of the APC, from the tribunal to the Supreme Court underscored the rarity of successful challenges in the judicial system.

Therefore, Akpoti-Uduaghan's victory marked a significant milestone for politicians seeking to reclaim their victory in elections. A good example is the governorship candidate of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in Kogi State, Muritala Ajaka, who has boldly stated that he is drawing inspiration from the Appeal Court decision that declared Akpoti-Uduaghan as the rightful winner of Kogi Central Senatorial District in the last general election.

"Once more, the judiciary has rekindled hope that electoral victory procured through violence and manipulation can only be temporary," he said in a statement signed by his spokesperson, Farouq Adejoh. He added, "But thanks to your indefatigability and the resolve of the judiciary to do justice without fear or favour, you have ended the era of electoral impunity in Kogi State today."

Akpoti-Uduaghan was the governorship candidate of the SDP in the 2019 Kogi election. With the number of female politicians who had bowed to pressure and shelved their political ambitions, Akpoti-Uduaghan's success serves as a remarkable example of how perseverance and doggedness can pay off. As rightly stated by Senator Ita-Giwa, the Nigerian political landscape is unfriendly to female politicians.

"Natasha's epic battle with powerful men in her state is sadly the lot of most women in politics who have to battle unprincipled male politicians for political space. In the course of my political career, I have had to confront and beat back unscrupulous male politicians who have continually tried to intimidate me politically."

Indeed, Akpoti-Uduaghan was intimidated in her bid for the Kogi Central senatorial election. A few days before the senatorial elections held in February, it was alleged that the Kogi State government excavated portions of the road linking to her senatorial district. This was seen as a



Akpoti-Uduaghan

deliberate act to forestall the transportation of electoral materials to the district elections.

However, the government justified this action as a measure to prevent access by hoodlums who had made the route a thoroughfare. Despite these challenges, the election took place, and Sadiku-Ohere of the APC was declared the winner.

Dissatisfied with the outcome, Akpoti-Uduaghan contested the decision at the Kogi State National Assembly Election Petitions Tribunal in Lokoja. She highlighted electoral discrepancies and omitted results from key areas in the senatorial district: Ajaokuta, Adavi and Okehi, arguing that these votes constituted her winning margin over Sadiku-Ohere.

After reviewing the evidence, the tribunal affirmed Akpoti-Uduaghan as the legitimate winner, recognising her fulfillment of constitutional requirements for victory.

The tribunal Chairman, Justice K.A. Orjiakoim ruled that she scored 54,064 votes to edge out Sadiku-Ohere, who polled 51,291 votes. He directed Sadiku-Ohere to pay Akpoti-Uduaghan the sum of N500,000 as the cost of litigation for the petition.

Sadiku-Ohere appealed the verdict, yet on Tuesday, October 31, a three-man panel of the appellate court dismissed his appeal for lacking merit. The court highlighted the appellant's failure to present convincing evidence to invalidate Akpoti-Uduaghan's victory, validating her persistent pursuit of the Kogi Central senatorial seat.

While Sadiku-Ohere as well as the governor of Kogi, Yahaya Bello, had congratulated her on her victory, Akpoti-Uduaghan found the latter's congratulatory message pretentious. In an interview, she tackled the governor for describing her victory as "the beauty of democracy."

"He (Yahaya Bello) said this is the



beauty of politics," she said. "You don't endanger people, you don't destroy properties, and you don't frustrate the electoral process just because you want your candidate to win and call it 'the beauty of democracy.'"

Akpoti-Uduaghan embodied the steel magnolia, a symbol of feminine beauty and resilience. Like the flower, she adapted and persevered without resorting to unscrupulous tactics common in politics, relying on intelligence and factual support to assert her victory in the senatorial elections.

Born in 1979 to a mixed-race heritage — her father was a Nigerian and her mother, a Ukrainian — Akpoti-Uduaghan's journey began in the challenging political landscape of Nigeria. Her childhood days were spent in Ihima, Okene Local Government Area but following her father's death in 1998, the family had to relocate. The mother of three got married to the Alema of Warri, Chief Emmanuel Uduaghan on March 5, 2022.

Her educational pursuits in law and her tenure in investigative endeavours elevated her prominence before her plunge into politics in 2018.

Akpoti-Uduaghan studied law at the University of Abuja and was called to the Nigerian Bar in 2005 upon graduation from the Nigerian Law School in Abuja. In 2011, she proceeded to the University of Dundee for a master's degree in law. She holds an MBA in Oil and Gas Management from the University of Dundee.

After her stint as a legal counsel at Brass NLG, she established the Builders Hub Impact Investment Program (BHIMP) in 2015. She gained national attention by presenting an investigative report to the National Assembly on corrupt practices linked to the Ajaokuta steel mill. The report revealed repeated misallocation of government funds and ongoing embezzlement, a factor contributing to the steel mill's stagnation. Despite opposition from the Federal Ministry of Mines and Steel Development, and allegations from small-scale steel dealers, a High Court in Abuja ruled in Akpoti's favour, ordering publishers of libellous content to pay her N10 million in damages.

In 2018, she commenced her political journey by announcing her governorship bid for Kogi State under the SDP in 2019 where unprecedented violence and threats to her life were meted out on her. Even some of her properties were destroyed and burnt.

Subsequently, she shifted to the PDP and triumphed in the party's primaries for the 2023 Kogi Central senatorial elections in May 2022. With her landmark victory at the Appeal Court, Akpoti-Uduaghan is keen on making a bold statement about female participation in politics.

"Our people want good representation and they voted for it. I am out to prove to Nigerians that women folk are intelligent," she said.

"Once more, the judiciary has rekindled hope that electoral victory procured through violence and manipulation can only be temporary," he said in a statement signed by his spokesperson, Farouq Adejoh. He added, "But thanks to your indefatigability and the resolve of the judiciary to do justice without fear or favour, you have ended the era of electoral impunity in Kogi State today."

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Adeola

Is Senator Olamilekan Adeola's 2027 Game Plan Feasible?

Pursuing power and relevance is not a new thing. Since civilised man decided to advance through societies, this pursuit has been ongoing. Accordingly, Senator Olamilekan Adeola's bid for the governorship of Ogun state is not strange. The only question is its feasibility.

Senator Adeola, fondly called Yayi by friends, is a charming man. Since arriving on the political scene as the Lagos State House of Assembly member for Alimosho State Constituency 2 in 2003, it has been something of a smooth ride. But the path swerved to blurry political obscurity, especially since Yayi appeared to have his eyes on the Ogun governorship position.

Indeed, few have enjoyed as consistent a political life as Yayi who is also the Aremo Oba of Yewaland. From being a House of Assembly member in Lagos, Yayi hopped into the senatorial seat in 2015, representing Lagos West. He kept this position for eight years and only retired from it in 2023. Immediately after, Yayi hopped sideways and became the senator representing Ogun West.

Yayi's political forays have been the source of many debates and commentators bashing their heads. Should an individual be able to represent multiple senatorial districts in an unbroken sequence? But Yayi did it and looks set to do it again, adding a gubernatorial flavour to his senatorial streak.

Yayi indeed intends to be Ogun state governor come 2027. This dream has been many years in the making. Some observers are convinced that this is the root cause of Yayi's many philanthropic endeavours throughout the years. Perhaps, empowering enough people would get him into their good books and they would in turn get him into the Ogun number one seat.

Some people think that Yayi's governorship ambition is a pipedream. Others believe that nothing is impossible, especially since the Nigerian Constitution has nothing to say about it. In truth, only time will tell. But in the meantime, the people of Ogun West are assured of the best of Yayi for another year.

Olufi of Gbonganland Set to Honour Dele Momodu and Wife with One of the Highest Chieftaincy Titles

Things do get better with time. One can chase after the wind to catch a bird only to return home to find the bird waiting by the fireplace. Aare Dele Momodu, Chairman of Ovation Media Group, has found favour in the sight of the Olufi of Gbonganland, Oba Adetoyese Odugbemi I. Even his wife, Mobolaji Momodu, gets to share in the radiance to be granted by the king.

The date for Aare Momodu's honour due to the considerations of Oba Odugbemi is here. Come November 25, 2023, the media mogul will be installed as the Akinrogun of Gbonganland, while Lady Mobolaji will be installed as the Yeye Akinrogun of Gbonganland. These chieftaincy titles are to be personally handed out by Oba Odugbemi on his 25th anniversary.

According to the missive from the palace, the decision to grant Momodu a chieftaincy title in Gbonganland in Osun State came due to the recognition of his many selfless contributions to improving humanity. Of particular focus is Momodu's aspirations to



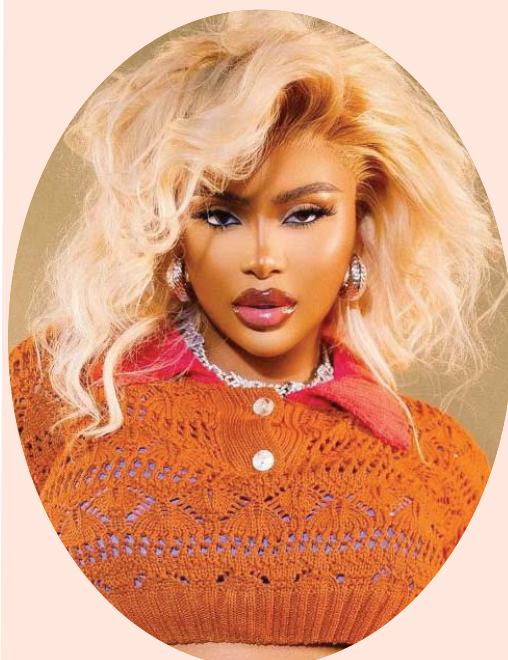
Momodu

report the dynamics of governance at various levels, letting the public know the goings-on in the hearts of their leaders and front-runners.

This is not the first time that Momodu and his wife are being honoured with chieftaincy titles. Back in October 2021, the Oluwo of Iwoland, Oba (Dr.) Abdulrasheed Akanbi, Telu I, installed the pair as Aare Tayese of Iwoland and Yeye Aare Tayese of Iwoland, respectively. The Oluwo recognized Momodu's steadfastness to his ideals, refusing to turn his back on what he thinks is right.

The Gbonganland titles are consequently coming at the right time. After the Supreme Court judgment of President Bola Tinubu's legitimacy as Nigeria's head, Momodu declared his decision to remain with his political party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) despite the overwhelming might of Tinubu's All Progressives Congress (APC).

Undoubtedly, that declaration has reinforced the desire of the people of Gbonganland to have Momodu as their Akinrogun. This is honour meeting truth, leaving the beneficiary radiant and visible to all.



Naeomi

Talents abound in Nigeria; from sharp business minds to soaring artistic minds and every imaginable endeavour. Naomi Nwaokoru, known

The Unusual Artistry of Naeomi ... As She Releases New Hot Single 'I Like'

professionally as 'Naeomi' fits the second category. Progressively committed to being different but true to herself, Naeomi is rising to a new height and defining a new branch of musical artistry.

'I like' is one of the latest songs to hit the internet. It is one of the hot singles among a cluster of songs released by Nigerian artistes in recent weeks. Her new single, however, comes from a unique mind gushing out an unusual artistry, the mind of Naeomi, the lady from Abia State who grew up in the busy streets of Port-Harcourt.

Naeomi's latest song is the newest after "No Pressure." It expresses Naeomi's desire to be loved and spoiled with unrestrained affection. Her lover in the song, although left to the imagination of her fans, is saddled with the responsibility of making her happy. But knowing what we know of Naeomi, this desire is not

unwarranted.

Versed in music, modelling, and films, Naeomi brings a distinct flavour to her craft. It is just dynamic enough to get her listeners bouncy, but also interspersed with wisdom to indicate the creative arithmetic of her young mind. This would explain why she is loved by virtual and real-time friends, and having a following reaching over half a million on social media.

Naeomi is a 'Miss Nigeria UK' and she has a grasp of what it takes to sway the hearts and minds of observers. As such, she is a super influencer, one that engages her audience thoughtfully, never having to rely on a morally nomadic lifestyle.

With "I Like" and other songs from this lady, listeners are reintroduced to a young lady who is simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary. Like Naeomi, the song shows a girl who knows what she wants, not bowing to the pressure of outsider expectations.

Real Reason Governor Makinde Stays on the Fence Between Wike and Fubara

Diplomacy is the gentleman's favourite gadget. Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State has shown remarkable mastery of this gadget. Even when his good friend, Nyesom Wike, Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Minister, had issues with Rivers State Governor Siminialayi Fubara, Makinde kept his cool and managed to remain unstained.

Two weeks ago, the main gist on social media was the collision of interests between Wike and his godson and governor-successor, Fubara. It looked like a powerplay at first until Wike's loyalists took drastic steps to get rid of Fubara through an impeachment. However, President Bola Tinubu got involved and the dust settled with the combatants shaking hands and reinforcing loyalties.

But Makinde, who was expected to step in minded his business through it all. He did

not only hide away from the drama but also continued to run Oyo without blinking an eye. Some commentators think that there is nothing odd about this as Makinde has his own state to govern. But others have revealed an understanding of the goings-on in Makinde's mind.

The main thing the latter group put forward about Makinde's silence is that the collision of heads between Wike and Fubara reminded Makinde of former President Olusegun Obasanjo's intervention a few weeks ago. The former head of state had directed Oyo traditional leaders to get up in recognition of Makinde's appearance.

Although Makinde was the person defended in that situation, he had to face some of the fire. He had to say something about it later, although he did not, seeing as anything he said would offend either party. Some people think that



Makinde

Wike and Fubara's wahala was cut according to the same cloth and Makinde wisely repeated what he did back then—nothing.

There is a lesson here. Sometimes, the best thing to do when others are quarrelling is nothing. Unless your interests are at stake and doing nothing gets you out of job.

Three Scores and One for African Giant, Femi Otedola



Otedola

A conscience that is alive, a calm head, and a heart that is sensitive - this is Femi Otedola in brief. Many people can only see the Geregu Power PLC chairman in wealth and manufacturing smart investment choices. But at 61, the man is more than his business mastery and money.

November 2023 is coming across as a bright month. Otedola's birthday made it brighter. As is the case every November 4, well-meaning people from all over the world shared some of the accomplishments of the businessman and philanthropist, inspiring others to follow in his footsteps if granted the opportunity.

For any other individual, people might be excited that old age is consistently knocking at the door. But not for Otedola, whose ageing is celebrated by people because it is accompanied by increased wisdom and compassion.

Otedola is a very interesting man. Many

similarly wealthy people are either self-effacing as they donate all that they have to the less privileged, or they are wasteful and mindful of every penny. Otedola has an entire corner to himself, knowing how to spend on himself without losing his sensitivity towards the needs of others.

Didn't he hire a yacht that cost around three million pounds to celebrate his birthday last year? But has that stopped him from meeting the needs of the poor and others around him? No. To this man whose brain churns out super profitable business ideas every minute, money is a tool to be used effectively.

This year, again, Otedola will be celebrated for the genius he is. At 61, he has achieved heights only dreamed of by many of his forebears. But he is paving the way for many others to follow in Africa and beyond.



Otti

Alex Otti and His New Mayors

To the individual who insists on leaving their mark in this world, recognition is a matter of time. Alex Otti, the Governor of Abia State, is gradually reaching this level. With his attempts at overhauling the state of affairs in Abia, more scrutinising eyes are turning to Otti, intent on seeing the outcome of his undertaking.

Abia is currently undergoing something of a cleansing and readjustment process. The latest gist from the state is that Governor Otti has appointed 17 mayors along with their deputies. Each of these mayors is in line to serve as a transition council chairman for a Local Government Area (LGA) in Abia. Thus, all 17 mayors cover the entire state.

As of the time of compiling this report, Otti's 17 mayors are yet to be confirmed by the House of Assembly. However, the governor had already submitted their names for screening. If they pull through, Abia will welcome 17 new heads to its LGAs, completing Otti's bid to unite the state in theory and practice.

Whether or not the development is welcomed by members of the other political parties, Otti's bid to have full control over the gears of governance is appreciated by stakeholders of his Labor Party (LP). Even though this exercise might cost a bit more than necessary, it consolidates Otti's achievements since coming into gubernatorial power.

Indeed, Otti is currently celebrated across Nigeria for his apparently visionary method of governance. Although such evaluations are a bit too early, Otti shows promise of being a responsive leader, one that seldom delays when things need to change.

As some commentators have pointed out, this means that Abia could potentially climb up the ladder of progress faster than its sister states or fall to the very bottom. It all depends on the outcome. With the addition of 17 new mayors to represent the interests of Abians and execute Otti's will, nothing is set in stone but things are looking promising.

All Set for Diaspora Investment ... Over 2000 Investors Registered to Attend the High-Octane Event

The horizon is fat and favourable for Nigerians. With the efforts that Honourable Abike Dabiri-Erewa and many others like her are putting in, it would be bizarre if the economy remains backward. Moreover, Dabiri-Erewa's efforts are focused and intended to get more hands involved, so the future is bright.

Preparations are all but complete for Dabiri-Erewa's Nigeria Diaspora Investment Summit (NDIS). This is the sixth edition and the Chairman/CEO of Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM) has reported more than 2,000 registered participants. With such a number, hope in Nigeria's future as a sustainable nation and economy has been kindled.

Dabiri-Erewa has composed a robust framework to ensure that the three-day summit slated for November 13 to 15, 2023, matches her design. So far, it is confirmed that the individuals registered for the event include 72

Nigerian Diaspora investors, 88 public officials from various Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Nigeria, 148 stand-ins for private sector entities, 196 small business owners, and 1,250 expected virtual participants.

The goal of this NDIS edition is to pull diaspora direct investments to Nigeria. Themed "New Vistas, New Aspirations - The Diaspora and National Development" and already causing hearts to beat in expectation of its outcome, the event returns business focus to the agricultural sector in Nigeria, and how it can be used to ensure food security and sustainable economic growth.

Listening to Dabiri-Erewa and her lineup of business professionals, accomplished visionaries, and policy experts helps the informed mind grow confident in Nigeria's future. Whether it is in the area of leadership, management, or innovation, Dabiri-Erewa's team are motivating Nigerians to do better and



Dabiri-Erewa

be better for themselves and for the nation at large.

With this edition of the NDIS and Dabiri-Erewa's involvement, it is a new day for Nigeria and its economy. The seed of over 2,000 registered participants will certainly yield anticipated fruits in due course.



Oyebanji

Olayemi Oyebanji: An Amazon Who Ticks All the Boxes at 53

and First Lady of Ekiti state, these virtues abound. At 53, this amazon is graceful and gracious, accomplished in all ramifications.

When it comes to top governors in Nigeria today, Governor Oyebanji is gradually climbing the ladder to the top 5. The air around him can thus be overwhelming, but even that is not enough to eclipse the grace and presence of his lovely wife, Dr. Olayemi. She is a genuine plus for the Ekiti people, an amazon that ticks all the boxes at 53.

Granted, First Ladies in Nigeria are considered state mothers. Dr. Olayemi represents this concept, always striving to deliver on behalf of all the men, women, and children who are natives and/or residents of Ekiti. This is why project after project in the state has her shadow or that of her husband behind them, testifying to their commitment to bringing positive change to Ekiti for the

people's sake.

The Widows and Orphans Hope Project (WAOH Project) is the latest of Dr. Olayemi's grand contributions to the welfare of her people. Specifically designed to secure and cultivate hope in the hearts of Ekiti women and children, the WAOH Project was unveiled on Thursday, October 19. It is intended to give families some breathing room as they put in the work to ensure a good future for themselves.

What about Dr. Olayemi's community service at the Ekiti State University (EKSU), offering to teach students for free? What about the countless times she provided financial assistance to people in need, whether for their health, education, or business?

At 53, Dr. Olayemi is a First Lady in truth. Her dedication to her duty is not measurable, but it compels observers to emulate her graciousness.

Tony Elumelu Makes Another Bold Step ... Nigeria's Private Commodities Exchange AFEX Aims to Raise \$50m

One of the things that makes for a great person is a spirit of adventure. People like Tony Elumelu, the ultimate force at Heirs Holdings, Transcorp, and United Bank for Africa (UBA) demonstrate this truth. It is acknowledged that he has achieved this much due to his daring mindset. Apparently, rubbing shoulders with Elumelu causes the same mindset to spring up in others.

Many businesses have a reason for a partnership with Elumelu. AFEX Commodities Exchange Limited (AFEX Nigeria) is one such business entity, and the daring of its CEO, Ayodeji Balogun, indicates the presence of

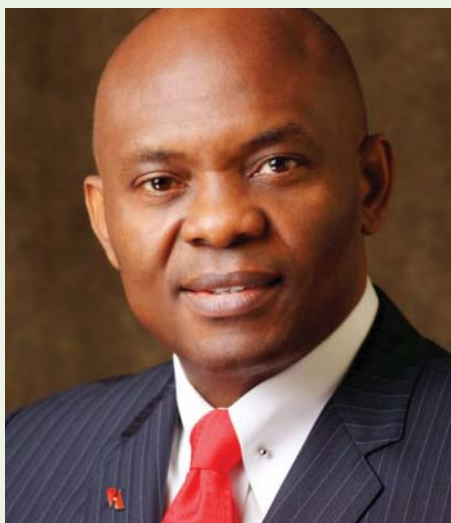
Elumelu somewhere in the background.

Based on the recent reports, Balogun has decided to increase the volume of AFEX Nigeria's doings. This boost to the organisation's presence in Nigeria comes in the form of Balogun's aim to raise \$50 million. Once this aim is achieved, AFEX Nigeria stands the chance of occupying a top rank among the best-performing and most promising businesses in Nigeria and Africa.

Tracing the history of AFEX Nigeria, Elumelu's shadow is clearly seen. According to Balogun who started from the Tony Elumelu Foundation

(TEF), Elumelu's vision helped to shape the borders of the dream to penetrate the agricultural sector. Today, AFEX is achieving this little by little along this dream.

Elumelu's boldness is nothing new. Since forever, the man has advocated the concept of Africapitalism, which can be simplified as a way to wake up Africa's economy by relying on local and private businesses. So far, Elumelu has demonstrated the wisdom of his concept through the support of numerous local and private businesses. AFEX is shaping up to be number one among these.



Elumelu

LET'S STRENGTHEN RUFAI OSENI

We seem to have lost a huge class of social critics. Great men who fought the military to a standstill seem to have lost their guts today. Maybe with age, they have lost their bite. We now see them struggle to support an anaemic system that seems to be growing in size despite the huge public cry. These social critics of yesteryears with their huge grey afro hairs, their stuttering Ekiti intoned English, amongst others, fumble and wobble their way as they try to defend naked treachery, risking their long and hard-won reputations in the process and turning themselves into public caricatures. Today, we seem to have just one very lone and fiery voice. Rufai Oseni is today the conscience of the nation, taking over from the very old turncoats who had their days in the 80s and 90s but seem to be in bed with their kinsman. Daily Rufai spits venom, and fires directly at the evil of naked democratic authoritarianism. He is fearless, courageous and bold. He sits in

the ARISE TV studio, takes aim and fires without even blinking, not caring for personal safety. He receives threats daily, was once physically attacked in an elevator in Abuja and has become public enemy number one to a tribe of vultures who scavenge and feed fat from the ruins of a once prosperous land. Today, Rufai is being attacked from all angles. The strategy is clear: go at his credentials, erode his credibility, render him ineffective and possibly get him kicked out of the studios



all in a vain attempt at silencing him. The barrage has been ferocious, hard-hitting and persistent. Write-ups, interviews, long essays and threats of lawsuits have all been deployed in this savage attempt at silencing the lone voice that millions of Nigerians now depend on to fight for them. It is for these reasons that I have decided to strengthen Rufai Oseni. Give him the much-needed fillip to withstand all the barrage and keep him in good shape to continue with the battle. The battle will be long and arduous and he would need all

the energy and girth to withstand and remain steadfast. I have decided to feed him. Take him to the most illustrious afang eating enterprise in Nigeria and feed him with the most delicious and sacrilegiously made afang complete with periwinkle, snails and dry fish and served with the smoothest pounded yam he would have seen in his entire Ijebu life. While eating, he will be entertained by the sweetest and most deliciously looking, ravishingly enticing virgin damsels, brought in specifically from the beautiful waterside of Oron. They will dance for him, caress his big head and titillate him with the wondrous moves of the creek. All this is to encourage him, energise him and most importantly, say to him – well done, we appreciate you. It cannot be easy, waging a one-man war against the establishment. It cannot be easy my brother.



Uzodinma

HOPE UZODINMA AS A PERSONA NON GRATA?

I am in serious prayers and supplication that this person will lose in the polls. My prayer points are very clear: Jehovah should step in and wrestle down the establishment that would obviously be working for his return for a second term. No right-thinking person will ever be in support of the carnage, misgovernance, thuggery and all that can ever go bad that is happening in Imo State and since Mr. Hope is in charge, all bulk must end at his table. The savage beating up of the NLC president is another notch on his belt. I am not saying he did it, but it was done under his watch. Imo must be rescued. Imo is under occupation and held in captivity by some very strong forces and this is why I support very strongly the declaration of the man as persona non grata by aviation industry unions, banning all flights to his Imo.



Obi

The NLC has joined by declaring a full strike. Everything has to be done to end this madness. Hope must go, he must be chased out as Imolites will remain a hopeless people in this situation.

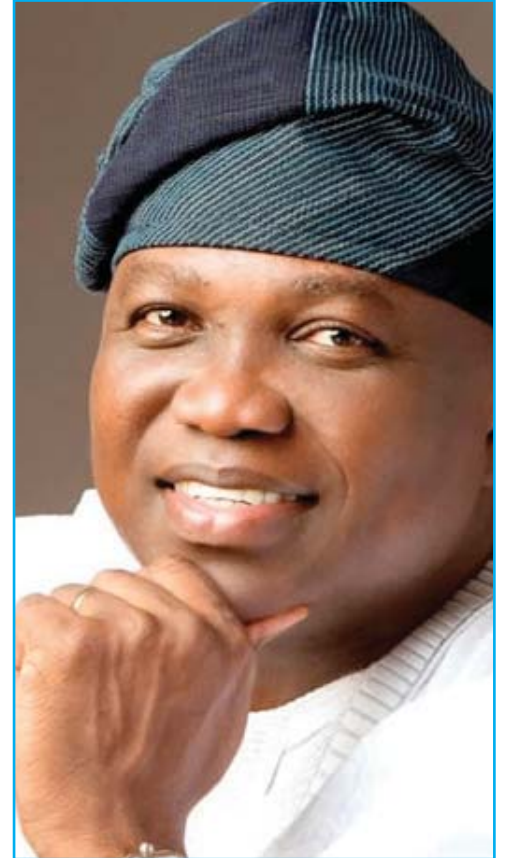
PETER OBI AS THE MOSES OF OUR TIME

Even his most stringent of opponents will attest to his brilliance. His astuteness, his frugal disciplinary, approach to leadership and his passionate love for Nigeria. As is usually the case, the beautiful ones never emerge. How can they emerge from the stymying gutter of our national politics? Only the very dirty can emerge in this variant of democracy. A system that I want to label democratic Ebola. A pin-straight talking, integrity driven and people-loving-fueled politician cannot even win an election in church or estate talk less of Nigeria. To win a national election or any election for that matter,



Bello

you must have taken classes in thuggery, understood how to manipulate electoral officials, have educational certificate challenges, understand the power of the dollar and naira at various levels of constituent mobilisation and then finally have a PhD in stomach infrastructure deployment two hours to vote casting. Then and only then can you be sure of being sworn in at Eagle Square under the hot sun with Nigerian Air Force planes pouring black smoke above your head and the Nigerian Army soldiers farting at you as they match pass. My brother Peter Obi, lacking in all of these, was just a miracle waiting to happen which didn't happen. He however pulled enough punches to rattle the establishment. He placed his footprint on the sands of time and showed us for the very first time and very powerfully, that it can be done and will be done. He is the Moses of our time,



Ambode

he has taken us through the wilderness and pointed to the promised land but will not lead us to it. He has played his part and has guided us to the mountain top, but will not enter. It is over, he should now go and rest. He should go on the lecture circuit, and beg his girl, Chimamanda, to refer him to all those universities so he can be speaking. If that one no work, he can come and be lecturing our local universities on his experience and his vision because to come back again for election? He no go "werk." He has lost steam; the movement has lost focus and its strong members are now distracted. The cohesion is gone and those who "won" this election with the power of incumbency will be far far stronger than the walls of Jericho. I swear, do not despair, a stronger leader who will emerge before 2027 will not make any dent but by the second term would have gathered enough strength to clear

the stables. It will just not be Peter Obi; he has served his time. Finish.

BISHOP KUKAH: YAHAYA BELLO IS A STAR

This Bishop has the gift of the gab. If you listen to him, you will be mesmerised. Thankfully he is a Catholic Bishop and I suppose has taken the oath of celibacy otherwise, with that kind mouth, he would have been finishing our women o. Kai!

But Baba got it wrong with Yahaya Bello. He was reported to have said that Mr. Bello was not a poster boy for the youths. I beg to disagree. Please Mr. Bello who is said to be the youngest governor has been nothing but a shining example of the kind of leadership that our youths can bring to the table.

How many leaders of your age Mr. Bishop will dig gullies to prevent people from going to vote as has been reported? If that is not the work of a genius, I don't know what else that is. Even the very beautiful Senator Natasha was quoted as saying that she was offered N70 million in two tranches to forgo her ambition. Is that not negotiation, is that not our "boy" bringing commerce to the table and when she said she refused, did he beat her? Did he burn down her house?

Mr. Bishop, have you not seen him in his gym? Such a dedicated sportsman. He used to do like 50 press-ups at a go. Can you do it? This one that you are calling him names, tell me, can you do it? Such a respectable young man. Didn't he say that his "father" Buhari asked him to step down during the primaries the other day when it was very clear that he was coasting to victory?

I think at times when some people have nothing to say, they should check if the washman washed their cassocks very well instead of calling out one of the very best in young leadership that we have o.

Mbok, you people, should kindly leave my Yahaya Bello alone o. The man is quietly training for a post-governance career in kickboxing and we are here distracting him instead of pushing for Catholic reforms.

AKINWUMI AMBODE: HOW ARE YOU, MY FRIEND?

I last saw His Excellency at my brother Yemi Odusanya's birthday party somewhere on Victoria Island. The great Yemi, who is an Executive Director at Keystone Bank and shares the same birthdate with me, was celebrating his birthday at a very posh restaurant when my longtime friend walked in.

For those of you who know me very well, you will agree that Mr. Ambode is my favourite politician of all time. I even walked that Ojota waka when they came for him. We carried placards and made all of the noise.

I walked up to him, shook his hands and hugged him. He smiled at me and asked how I was faring. That was then. The next time was a phone call where he

tried to get me to "calm down" on our government. "Duke, you have to calm down o, this is our government," and I said, "My lord no be me o. you know I can do anything for you but this one..."



L-R: Asue and Ituah Ighodalo

ITUAH AND ASUE IGHODALO A LITTLE-KNOWN SECRET

Last Sunday, these very accomplished brothers strolled in very quietly into the Agip Recital Hall of the Muson Centre, took front-row seats with the people and watched very closely the play 'Fajuyi.' While the huge crowd which included the Ekiti State Governor, His Excellency Biodun Oyebanji, two former Governors, Niyi Adebayo and Kayode Fayemi, and the Senate Majority Leader, Senator Opeyemi Bamidele, watched the play with varying emotions, for these two brothers, it was a whole lot different for them. What most Nigerians do not know is the fact that their mother was a very influential and powerful woman in the then-South-west. She was very instrumental in the enthronement of an Ooni of Ife and in fact, through her, can trace some form of filial relationship with the present Ooni of Ife who calls Pastor Ituah uncle.

Well, she was a principal secretary to Col. Adekunle Fajuyi who was then the Military Governor of the South-west states. She was so effective and influential as we have heard that Fajuyi relied on her counsel for some of his major decisions. It was as a result of her pole position that her work hours used to be very long and tedious.

Well, this is just a shout-out. I felt I should just say hello after I read his speech at St. Jude's Anglican Church something. He spoke about the purpose of life and said some very wise and deep things but the only thing I took out of that

So, to ensure a veritable work-life balance, she took her little boys – Asue and Ituah - to the office at times. They would sit nearby as she worked, playing with whatever were the toys of the day. The Ighodalo brothers had a personal relationship with the late Fajuyi even at that age through their mother, hence the emotionally laden look on their faces as they watched the tragic story of this hero.

As the play went on, I kept looking at them. Ituah looked more touched as his face went from anger, to pity, to sadness but mostly in a frown. Asue na hard man, not too many emotions from him but a pensive look like say he want fight. They both sat mostly with hands folded on their chest as the story must have transported them back to those days in Ibadan, bringing back lovely memories of their mother and those beautiful days in Ibadan.

Today, thanks to the early training they got from their parents and the exposure to the astute leadership their mother's brilliant career must have exposed them to, they both have built very brilliant careers in law, accounting and leadership and it is looking like one of them will soon step out to be counted in leadership. I cannot wait.

very brilliant speech was the fact that he rode a donkey at 10 years of age pretending to be Jesus. Your Excellency, please do you have any picture of you on that donkey and I hope you fed it very well after that very tedious ride because I have heard that you used to be very "big" those days. Ambode in my estimation is a very brave and courageous leader with the vision only the Lord could have given him. His infrastructural revolution is thankfully being completed, expanded and re-engaged by equally brilliant Governor Sanwo-Olu, another gifted leader ensuring that Ambode's legacy in government will never be forgotten. Well done my brother, well done.

ABIMBOLA DAYO-AIYETAN AND N44M WAYS TO FIGHT BACK

Now I have read that this damsel has taken her former employers, a huge financial behemoth to the cleaners. She was said to have been harassed into resignation because she refused to play ball in contracting and procurement. As a result of her insistence on due process, she was pushed, verbally abused and all sorts and made to resign after which they gave her a paltry N14 million and pushed out. She quietly went to court and after some years won the battle and was awarded N44 million. My advice to her is to take that N44 million and buy shares in that place and force herself into various shareholders' audit committees and use her insider knowledge and rescue the place.

You see, these big firms are populated by thieves, simply. There are no other colourful names to call it. Just thieves, that is all. Abi, you set up company, sell shares to the public, use their money to hold down the place, set up auxiliary companies headed by your wife or side chick and now contract everything to that company. Abasiiii.

Then you will borrow money from the place at whatever rate and use the money and buy another company and now use the same formula. What we have today is incestuous investment vehicles. Investment vehicles that have been set up to steal within a grouping without recourse to best practices, corporate governance, amongst other such internationally sanctioned principles of governance.

So, you see why I am in pure ecstasy with the bold step from this my sister. This could be the Rosa Parks' moment in Corporate Nigeria. This should be the trigger that we need to pursue robust reforms in the corporate governance of our firms. Thank you, my sister, and God bless you

MR. IBU, MAY GOD BE WITH YOU

The report of Mr. Ibu's health challenge has hit me with a thud. All I can say at this point is for us all to join him and his family in prayers as he navigates this next but very challenging stage in his life. God be with him and his family. Amen.

SOCIETY WATCH

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Onyema

For the Umpteenth Time, Allen Onyema Soars Higher

Allen Onyema has once again bested his own exploits. The founder and Chairman of Air Peace has proven to be a distinguished nerve in the business community with his Air Peace brand thriving, and the effects are getting far-reaching.

Onyema's name and that of his company have become household names in Nigeria. In fact, the business has continued to expand within the lengths and breadths of the African continent and beyond.

The business he started nine years ago has become the firmament and a leading light in Nigeria's aviation sector. The airline has maintained its number one position and has not rested on its oars, as Onyema himself continues to spread his wings wider, soaring like an eagle.

It is no longer news that the Nigerian aviation topshot tycoon has earned a name for himself through his visionary contributions to Africa's airline business. He has redefined it, stamped his feet and remains a strong authority whose name would be mentioned in glowing terms when the history of those in the sector is being talked about. His record of incisive investment and vision for the sector remains unequal.

Where many see a difficulty, Onyema sees an opportunity and will never slide by without grabbing it by the lapel.

Last week, the trained lawyer hit another unprecedented landmark as he announced that Air Peace has gotten a permit to operate in the UK and some other cities in Europe. This, as gathered by Society Watch, has been regarded as a major milestone in the nation's aviation sector. He has been commended for his audacity which would further launch Nigeria in a global world and polish its image.

Oyo Speaker, Debo Ogundoyin, Gets More Ambitious

"Great achievements are born from audacious dreams combined with unwavering perseverance," so says a quote by an unknown author.

The Speaker of the Oyo State House of Assembly, Hon. Debo Ogundoyin, has proven this quote right. As in the past, he has dared where many of his age-mates fear to tread and come out triumphantly.

That the son of the late multimillionaire businessman, Femi Ogundoyin, has continued to show that he was born a leader is an understatement, the 36-year-old politician has proven beyond doubt his leadership quality. Perhaps, this has given him more audacity and courage to dream bigger.

Society Watch gathered that the speaker is rumoured to be eyeing the governorship position in 2027. Although our source revealed that the ambition is still being

discussed in whispers and hushed tones across the state.

Sources revealed that he is banking on his close rapport with the incumbent governor, Seyi Makinde and other influential figures in the state to turn his dream into reality.

While some believe that it is too early for political calculation, as the governor has just spent six months out of his four years, others believe that any serious-minded politician wouldn't waste time in perfecting his aspiration. Also, some political watchers in the state say that he has lots of Herculean tasks to surmount for his ambition.

Our source hinted that achieving his heart desire would not come that easy, as there is the likelihood that other top political gladiators, such as the Minister of Power, Bayo Adelabu, and the boss of the Federal Inland Revenue Service, Zaccheus Adedeji, would want to be great obstacles to his ambition.



Ogundoyin



Tinubu

About Wale Tinubu's Great Impact on Child Education

Most billionaires around the globe, including Nigeria, have some vanities they choose to spend their money on. Some pump their money into bizarre projects, while others care about leaving lasting legacies. Both serve symbolic purposes for these wealthy individuals.

The trained lawyer has a firm belief in the quote of the late American-born Benjamin Franklin that says, "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest, it yields immeasurable economic and social rewards for individuals and nations."

Since the man, with out-of-the-ordinary milk of kindness established the Oando Foundation in 2011 as an independent charity to support the federal government in actualising its Universal Basic Education (UBE) goals, the Foundation has taken a multifaceted approach to education that delivers a superior learning environment for both pupils and teachers alike.

As gathered, several billions of naira have

since been expended for this purpose

Today, the Foundation's flagship programme in its Adopt-a-School Initiative (AASI), strives to address the needs of students, teachers, school leaders and the education community through infrastructure development, establishment of ICT/Creative centres, early childhood care and development centres, teacher capacity building and scholarship programs.

Some of the Foundation's notable achievements include the adoption of over 100 public primary schools across the country, enrollment of over 60,000 out-of-school children, building and renovating 300 classrooms, distributing over 30,000 teaching and learning aids and the award of scholarships to brilliant, under-served children from adopted schools to transit and complete secondary school.

Real Estate Top Player, Alex Nwoseh, Throws Bash for Birthday

Successful businessman and man-about-town, Alex Nwoseh, turned 59 recently, and to make the anniversary a memorable one and in appreciation to his Creator, the Delta State-born rolled out the drums and hosted a gig, where his friends, family, and associates were in attendance to felicitate him.

The event was sure to be well-attended, with the crème de la crème of society as well as important personalities in the house to celebrate a man worthy of their presence.

Oftentimes, an impression of what a bash would look like begins with the venue of the event, decorations, arrangement of the event arena, and all that is usually deployed for an event. In the case of Alex Nwoseh's anniversary, all were highly graded, as all deployed were made to have an inscription of class. Without mincing words and, of course, not taking for granted the supportive effort of his beautiful wife, the birthday boy proved to be a great host to his guests, as all was perfectly done to leave a great and lasting impression on the invitees. The soiree

was tailored to ensure the guests were treated to a great and memorable experience.

Beyond the sound of music and beams of excitement that pervaded the ceremony arena, the gathering was more of an avenue to celebrate the grace and accomplishment of the man whose grace has helped to make his dream a reality. Nwoseh sits atop flourishing business concerns that include Adonai Estate & Property Management, Alex Plastic Limited, Adonia Shopping Mall, and Hotel & Lodge.

Intentional and unpretentious, the making of the business guru is an interesting case study in human growth and development. From consciously working on how to be better in life, he also didn't spare any cost, as long as it was within the ambit of the law to build networks and influence. It's with the same energy that he diligently executed whatever briefs he handled, and gradually, these qualities became his selling points that endeared him to many in his business circle.



Nwoseh

Gracefully, Nwoseh is today a voice in the business community, as he's created a niche for himself. On the whole, he's successfully built an image and personality for himself that's reputable and respectable.

Yet Another Laurel for Princess Rosemary Osula



Osula

Ambassador Rosemary U. Osula, a successful businesswoman and consummate philanthropist has been honoured as the Grand Patron of the International Student Film Festival and the recipient of the Oodua Influential Special Recognition Award respectively.

The ISFF founder, Ambassador Dr. Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen revealed that Princess Osula was unanimously selected by the Board of Advisers headed by Prof Backleys Ayakoroma and her emergence as the Grand Patron of the Film Institute is the sequel to her monumental contributions to humanity.

However, the OSRA Awards organisers also described her nomination as a reward for her meritorious service and selfless efforts toward the Oodua Heritage. In the words of Desmond Tutu, "...do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." She has demonstrated, through her life work, and social change, that

we can individually make small and big differences.

Osula, an epitome of beauty and brain, has variously been described as an accomplished business mogul, a role model extraordinaire, an educationist par excellence, and an invaluable African-doting mother, whose life has become, in our times, the true definition of a mother's sacrifices.

Right from an impressionable age, Osula has distinguished herself as a multitiered star whose ascendancy to the topmost strata of society was unstoppable by any terrestrial forces, largely of her abiding faith in God.

Consequently, she has amplified this trait by her belief that it is only God who gives and gives for a good purpose—to serve humanity.

Consistent with her promise to use her God-given wealth to alleviate human suffering, the Rosula Foundation is unrelenting in providing succour to our various ailing communities.

GLITZ FEATURES

Paternity Palaver Portends Fresh Troubles in Marriages

The spate of paternity fraud in Nigeria today is worrisome and portends fresh troubles in marriages, **Vanessa Obioha** plumbs the various factors contributing to this malaise

It was a surreal moment on Kokoro Alate, a Yoruba-speaking radio station when an Ibadan woman confessed that out of her six children, only one was fathered by her husband. As she made her confession, listeners who tuned in to the programme could not conceal their shock, wondering if this was a Nollywood drama series. Even the human rights lawyer, Olóyè T.D, was in disbelief. But it was reality, a harsh one for the estranged husband who was in the studio with her.

The woman whose name remains undisclosed explained that four out of her six children were fathered by her pastor, one was fathered by a meat seller, and just one is her husband's biological child.

When asked about the prospect of seeking forgiveness and returning home with her husband, the man, visibly stunned and shattered, emphatically declared that he would never welcome her back into his life as his wife.

A Worrisome Trend

The unsettling narrative of paternity fraud in Nigeria is becoming a worrisome trend. From shocking confessions to DNA revelations, stories abound, prompting a reflection on marital infidelity.

It's no surprise that a survey emerged, ranking countries with the highest levels of unfaithful wives worldwide. Much to the dismay of Nigerian women, the survey conducted by condom manufacturer Durex a few years ago placed them at the top of the list, surpassing 35 other countries, including Western nations, sampled in the marital infidelity assessment.

According to the survey in which 29,000 people in 36 countries were interviewed, the top two countries with cheating women are Nigeria, with 62 per cent, and Thailand, 59 per cent. Thirty-nine per cent of Malaysian women also confessed to having betrayed their partners. Russian women came fourth at 33 per cent while Singaporeans are fifth at 19 per cent.

The survey revealed that Thailand men are the most unfaithful in the world, with 54 per cent of them admitting to cheating on their spouses. South Korea came in second with 34 per cent, while Malaysia ranked number three with 33 per cent.

An independent survey also conducted in Africa by AE recently affirmed that Nigeria with a population of over 200 million tops the chart for cheating women. It noted that corruption and a general distrust among citizens are largely responsible for this.

A recent Tiktok video, which named Nigerian married women as the highest cheaters in the world, is currently making the rounds on social media. The video went viral after a Tiktok user listed eight different countries with the highest rate of women cheating on their husbands.

According to the user, whose research on the subject cannot be ascertained, the number of women cheating in the United States is 14 per cent, 16 per cent for France and 19 per cent for Singapore.

Similarly, a female academician said the percentage of Nigerian women who cheat is higher than men. She revealed this to THISDAY while educating people about the extent of adultery and paternity fraud in the country.

According to the academician who pleaded anonymity, Nigeria has the highest rate of paternity fraud in the world. She expressed concern that if men discover how many of their children are not biologically theirs, most marriages in Nigeria would fail. She therefore suggested that the federal government make DNA testing mandatory for couples as soon as a child is born.



google.com

Factors Contributing to Paternity Fraud

Infidelity in marriage, a timeless aspect of human existence, is considered a crime in various societies and religions. Consequently, stringent measures are implemented to curb this behaviour. In certain societies, the repercussions can be as severe as death, especially when a woman is involved. Conversely, in some countries, it is gradually becoming normalised, prompting reflection on why it has evolved into a legacy passed down through generations.

Since the inception of society, traditional practices have advocated virtues such as spousal love and fidelity. Loving one's spouse and maintaining exclusivity are among these cherished norms. However, some married couples deviate from these ideals, engaging in extramarital affairs and becoming a source of marital discord and instability.

Analysts assert that the definition of infidelity hinges on the expectations within a relationship. For instance, in marital bonds, exclusivity is commonly assumed. When infidelity occurs, it can inflict psychological harm, inducing emotions like rage, betrayal, diminished sexual and personal confidence, and even post-traumatic stress disorder.

Ojenike Anne Ifechukwudeni of the Department of English and Literary Studies of Delta State University, Abraka, revealed that studies have found that men are more likely to engage in extramarital affairs if they are unsatisfied sexually, and when they are far from home, while women are more likely to engage in extramarital sex if they are unsatisfied emotionally.

Another contributing factor to the high rate of infidelity in marriages, she said, is the proliferation of sex chat rooms and dating apps. These have provided ample opportunities for people in committed relationships to engage in acts online and offline. Such online acts include cybersex, where two or more individuals engage in discussion about sexual fantasies usually accompanied by masturbation, hot chatting and flirting. It's believed that if a partner engaged in cybersex this constitutes an act of infidelity.

Beyond the sexual and emotional shortcomings, infidelity extends to various motivations, such as acts of revenge or a seeking of attention. In some cases, individuals may resort to cheating when inebriated or under the influence of substances. Moreover, modern infidelity is influenced by romantic ideals and the pursuit of self-fulfilment, adding complexity

to the motives behind such actions.

Quoting a relationship expert, Esther Perrel, who believes that people cheat to transform regret or to express an identity, Ifechukwudeni added that infidelity can also be traced to an inability to understand the concept of marriage counselling.

She posited that some men tend to develop a mental barrier against their wives, suspecting that their wives might engage in similar behaviour. In a broader context, these men argue that they are simply attempting to assist women who may struggle to find a partner. They claim that engaging in infidelity is a means to rescue women they perceive as unwanted, offering them love and companionship.

Additionally, she highlighted another unconventional reason for infidelity, pointing out that individuals raised in polygamous homes may perceive cheating as a normal deed, influenced by their parents' entitlement to multiple spouses. Furthermore, she asserted that frustration can catalyze cheating in certain cases. "One measure of infidelity is a paternal discrepancy, a situation that arises when someone who is presumed to be a child's father is in fact not the biological parent. Frequencies as high as 30 per cent are sometimes assumed in the media. Some studies suggest that only a small percentage of couples that experience infidelity actually improve their relationship," she said.

"In terms of negative responses to infidelity, the report had it that after hearing a partner's infidelity, reactions have included rage and increased aggressiveness, loss of trust, sadness, depression, damaged self-esteem, fear of abandonment, and a surge of justification to leave the partnership. Other negative consequences have included damage to relationships with children, parents, and friends as well as legal consequences. If divorce results from infidelity, research suggests that faithful spouses may experience feelings of low satisfaction and self-esteem," she further explained.

Consequences of Infidelity

Ifechukwudeni emphasised that loyalty is possible in committed relationships as long as there is no room for infidelity. She

underscored the damaging impact of infidelity which in her words "can scatter even the strongest relationship, leaving behind feelings of betrayal, guilt and anger."

"Nothing rocks a person's self-trust and marriage more than infidelity," she continued. "It leaves people questioning their sanity as well as everything they believe to be true about the spouse and the viability of their marriage. Infidelity is crippling."

She also addressed the misconception of infidelity by a few couples who believe that infidelity is reserved for only celebrities and public figures.

"Around 25 per cent of marriages and 40 per cent of unmarried relationships face issues with infidelity, with the number increasing when also considering solely emotional affairs."

Nigerian Women are Faithful

Reacting to the Durex survey, an entrepreneur and mother of three, Vivian Ige, firmly argued in defence of Nigerian women, adding that they are reputed for their solemn reverence for religion, more than their counterparts in any part of the world.

Ige wondered if Durex's claims were true, why do most Nigerian men in the diaspora come back home to Nigeria to pick a wife? She said Nigeria is not a society where adultery is treated with impunity, unlike the Western countries where married couples jointly patronise so-called 'Elite Sex Clubs' where they have sex with other men and women.

"If you ask them, they will tell you our women are more faithful in marriage than their counterparts abroad. They have lived both in Nigeria and abroad but still prefer our women," she said.

"Despite our exposure and enlightenment, a typical Nigerian woman still holds firm to the dictates of tradition, either of her background or that of her husband's. Our men are even too egocentric to allow their wives that liberty. A man can kill any woman suspected of infidelity, whether true or not. It's seen as a slap on the man's face and not an emotional slip," she said.

The impact of infidelity extends beyond individual relationships, influencing the very fabric of our societal norms. Therefore, it requires not only acknowledgement but a collective commitment to understanding and addressing the underlying issues.

GLITZ ENTERTAINMENT

Enitan Aina: Most Music Managers Don't Understand Music Publishing

Growing up in a music family, Enitan Aina's trajectory seemed predetermined. He studied music at the University of Lagos and even attempted to be a rapper. However, his genuine calling emerged as he ventured into artist management, commencing with a former contestant from the bygone music competition, Project Fame. Over his eight-year sojourn in the music industry, Aina affectionately known as Giovanni, has donned myriad roles — from road management, and booking expertise to artist representation. Presently, he assumes the pivotal role of Director of Operations at Troniq Music, a record label founded in 2019 and boasting talents like the afrobeats sensation, Oxlade. In a chat with **Vanessa Obioha**, Aina delves into the multifaceted landscape of the music industry and teases an upcoming project.

With your background in music, did you ever entertain the thought of becoming a musician?

Oh yes. I tried to be a rapper but it didn't work. I played a few musical instruments like the saxophone. I learnt the piano but drums was my major and I used to sing in the choir.

When exactly did you delve into the music business?

In 2016, I started with Dapo, a former contestant of the defunct Project Fame.

Trust is a very hard currency in the music industry. How did you manage that back then and now at Troniq?

I never wanted to become a music manager. So, for me, it's all about self-awareness. You're dealing with an artist's career, putting their life in your hands. So you have to be true to yourself. Artists get scared because a lot of people are taking advantage of the industry. We've had a lot of bad deals in the industry, people signing the wrong management contracts, wrong label contracts, and people not exploiting their talents the right way. Sometimes not always the fault of the label. Sometimes the artists don't understand the business so they don't know what they're actually looking for, what it entails. I just learned about the business. I just do what I'm supposed to do and give you the results, and that pretty much eclipses everything else. At Troniq however, our deals are very fair. Every artist signed to us gets value from the onset and the key component in this business is the music, but every other thing such as the merch is split from the get-go. We try to be as fair as possible as we understand that these artists need to be happy doing what they love.

What really sets Troniq apart from other labels?

Vision. Our vision has always been to position ourselves in places where we can collaborate with existing industry brands, management companies or major labels like Sony Music. We've always had that vision to expand. My goal has always been to build a career in the music industry. Let people see that there are actually different career paths in the

music industry, not just being an artist manager. There are other key components.

Can you shed some light on the key components?

So one thing that has been picking up in conversations around music in the last few months is publishing. Music Publishing is very big. It's the soul of music. A lot of managers don't understand publishing. They don't know what it is. Catalogues are being sold worldwide. I had the opportunity to work with a music acquisitions company that was founded by Roc Nation, they purchase catalogues from these artists. Speaking with artists, I could understand that they didn't know what it was about what it means to sell a catalogue. Your music can be remade into various forms. So having somebody that understands publishing, that music can be remade 100 years from now into another sound. Some people specialise in that. So in the music industry, you can be a lot of things. You can specialise in A&R, you can be a publisher, a marketer, a PR or even specialise in merchandise.

You seem to have a good relationship with Oxlade?

Yes, we grew up together in Surulere.

What subgenres of afrobeats have you noticed recently?

Afrobeats is not a genre. It is a music style derived from the afrobeat genre that was popularised by the late Fela Anikulapo-Kuti. Afrobeats as a style is still a Fusion. Just like you add African elements to r&b and hip-hop. There are elements in music that make up a genre and a music style like when you're talking about periods in music such as Renaissance music, baroque, and romantic styles. It switched from Europe to America where you started having jazz, and other new styles. So one style influences the other but we have not gotten to a point whereby our music scholars name our new popular style of music. Back in music school, they called it African pop music because you're trying to be hip and trendy but also using African style because of the lyrics, composition and everything that adds up to make that style.

What other projects are you working on currently?



Aina

I'm trying to set up a DIY marketing platform. Still in the incubation stage. It's an app called Vayrel. Artists can basically upload their songs and get influencers to use their songs in their content. It's a way of promoting their songs.

emPawa Publishing Achieves Milestone N1bn in Royalty Payouts



emPawa founder, Mr Eazi, and Willard Ahdriz
lyke Bede

At a recent fireside chat hosted by emPawa Africa, its founder, Oluwatosin Ajibade, famed as Mr. Eazi, unveiled that the company's publishing division has disbursed a substantial N1 billion in publishing royalties since its inception in 2020.

It accomplished this achievement by fostering partnerships with various publishers like Kobalt Music Group to guarantee global recognition and rewards for the creations of its in-house talent.

The event themed 'Demystifying Music

Publishing' unveiled the strategic approaches adopted by emPawa to ensure the protection of intellectual property for creatives on its roster, including Tekno, Killertunes, Joeboy, Type A, and more.

Recognising the marketability of Nigerian music, particularly with the global growth of the afrobeats genre, Mr Eazi emphasized the role of education in closing gaps in the publishing ecosystem and promoting transparency. He believes emPawa is on track to bolster efforts in this regard.

"One thing that is very important to me is freedom," he stated. "I wanted to be able to have a deal or a structure that was in place so that when we start to give our writers and producers a deal, we would be able to give them the freedom to choose."

He continued: "I remember having a conversation with Killertunes when we wanted to start the business, he said, 'I don't want an advance, I just want to make sure all my works are properly registered, I want proper accounting, and I want an opportunity to be able to work.' That was the basis of the deal."

Alongside Mr Eazi, Willard Ahdriz, the founder and Chairman of Kobalt Music, which partnered with emPawa to provide key insights into earning and offer access to facilities, technology, and expertise, highlighted the ongoing need for infrastructure to ensure transparency and efficiency in the sector.

"If you are efficient and transparent, you have everything in order, then it is significantly easier for all of us in music publishing to negotiate and also make sure that the people, even posthumous ones, can monetise this music," Ahdriz noted.

Well attended, some of the prominent figures who graced the event include Kenny Ogungbe, I.D Ogungbe, Olisa Adibua, Pretty Okafor and executives from the Musical Copyright Society (MCSN).

Nickelodeon Unveils November Extravaganza with New Episodes and Special Stunts

The family entertainment channel Nickelodeon has unveiled an array of new and exciting episodes for its November lineup. It includes the beloved dynamic duo, SpongeBob Squarepants and The Patrick Star Show, which takes centre stage in the much-anticipated "Squeeze That Sponge!" stunt. The duo continues their adventures through Bikini Bottom while The Patrick Star Show steals the spotlight with Patrick hosting his wacky talk show, airing on Nickelodeon and Nicktoons. Nicktoons is also airing The Casagrandes as Ronnie Anne and the rest of the family make memories in Great Lakes City.

Over on Nick Junior, the fun continues with The Adventures of Paddington. The marmalade-loving bear returns for more delightful escapades, while Bossy Bear and his best friend Turtle create mischief in Pleasantburg.



Nickelodeon spongebob stunt

ARTS & REVIEW

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Priming LIMCAF for the Next Level

With the recent conclusion of its ever-exciting awards night, the annual Life in My City Art Festival, also known as LIMCAF, is well on its way to becoming a more lively and sustainable platform that may ultimately attract global participants. **Okechukwu Uwaezuoke** writes

It is encouraging to see that, at the recently conducted Life in My City Art Festival competition's award ceremonies, obviously figurative works—which conceptual art die-hards tend to denigrate as outdated, even sometimes as run-of-the-mill—have resumed their winning ways. Recall that a significant number of the past overall-winning works, the most recent being that of the 2021 edition (a drawing by Chichetam Okoronta), toed that line. And hopefully this trend continues, even if it is only to keep the fire of draughtsmanship and creativity alive in the industry. That is besides the fact that it sends encouraging signals to the annual competition's future contestants, many of whom, obsessed with the idea of winning, seem to vacillate between figurative and non-figurative expressions.

Thus, the choice of "Decayed Decades," a razor-blade-aided work done in pyrography by Lagos-based Kelvin Ijiko, as the overall winning work by the Ayo Aina-led seven-member jury, after "navigating the complex process of selection," seems to be a tacit validation of this traditional approach to creative interpretation. To have been deemed worthy of the one million-naira prize for the overall-winning work, Ijiko, a self-taught artist from Benue State, must have scored high on the interpretation of the theme, Fix It!

Speaking just before the awards presentations that Saturday, October 28 evening, at the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu's International Conference Centre, Ayo Aina, as the chairman of the jury, made this clear enough. Through him, the jury, which also included Ato Arinze, Professor Nkemdilim Angela Udeani, Professor Etido Effiong William Inyang, Dr. Jacob Enemona Onoja, Dr. Sukanthi Visagapperumal-Egharevba, and Otunba Oladotun Olatunbosun Alabi, explicitly stated: "The extent to which artists channelled this theme into their creations was a pivotal point in our deliberations."

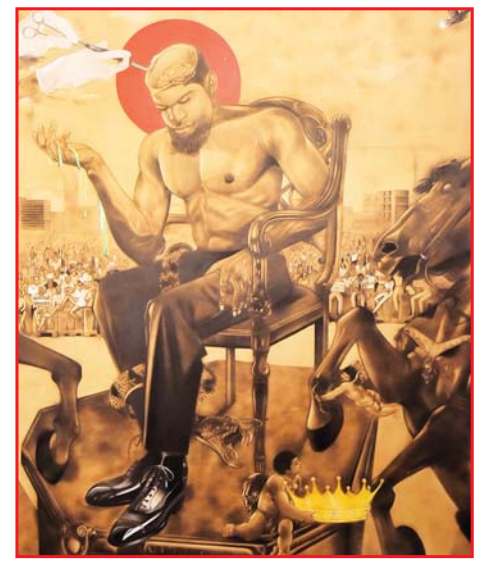
Yet, while this overall-winning work does indeed drip with despair as it dredges up the memories of the tragic Lekki Toll Gate shootings of October 20, 2020, in Lagos during the EndSARS protests, it offers no answer or solution to the implied expectation of the theme. Even the artist himself admits this fact in an accompanying statement published in the grand finale's exhibition. "In contemplating Nigeria," he writes, "I no longer see the national emblem; only the pain and the hidden suffering come to the forefront of my mind... Can we 'fix it'? The answer remains elusive, like hands from the clouds. My hope may be small, but one day it will vanquish the deceitful and crown the right leader."

Really, the inclination to skirt around—oftentimes glossing over the competition's themes—has long dogged the candidates and, at a point, led some of the stakeholders to mull doing away with themes altogether, an idea that was swiftly shot down by others. A cursory look at this year's winnings at virtually all, if not all, of the top-winning works shows that the artists are more interested in highlighting the issues that need fixing than proffering solutions to them.

Interestingly, among the Dak' Art-bound top six winners, a.k.a. category prize winners, from which Ijiko had emerged as the best in painting and mixed-media, only the best in the ceramics category—Abuja-based Audu Philip Ikoroko's installation "Together We Can"—stands out as



A section of the exhibition hall at the Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu's International Conference Centre



The overall-winning work, "Decayed Decades" by Kelvin Ijiko



The winner in the sculpture/installation category, "For the Rainy Days" by Mayi Ekoja



The winner in the textile art/fashion category, "Almajiri Syndrome" by Priscilla Oryina.

obviously non-figurative. The rest—Abuja-based Mayi Ekoja's metal and driftwood sculpture "For the Rainy Days" (winner in the sculpture/installation category), Zaria-based Priscilla Oryina's yarn in jute work "Almajiri Syndrome" (winner in the textile art/fashion category), Enugu-based Ezichi Nkwocha's charcoal on paper's "Fix Our Cultural Identity" (winner in the drawing category), and, of course, Abuja-based Adebayo Ebenezer's video art, "The Assault" (winner in the graphics/digital art/photography/video art category)—seem to gleefully carry the torch for this easily intelligible form of artistic expression.

Still on the prizes, there are also such winners in the endowed prize categories as Ondo-based Hezekiah Obidare (whose acrylic on canvas painting "Use of Technology: The Engine of Progress" won the Justice Anthony Aniagolu Prize for Originality) and Lagos-based Edward Samuel (whose "Work and Pray" won the Dr. Pius Okigbo Prize for Technical Proficiency). Umoren Edidiong Akpan (whose wire mesh sculpture, "Reconnection of the Broken Line," won the Mfon Usoro prize for best entry from

Uyo/Calabar Centre), Benin-based Gift Esohe Usawaru (whose acrylic painting "Going Back to History" won the Lawrence Agada Prize for Most Promising Artist), Enugu-based Nnamdi Hector Udoka (whose mixed media work "More Panes, No Gains", won the Vinmartin Ilo Prize for Best Entry from Enugu Region), and Ibadan zone's Mercy Ola (whose charcoal and graphite on paper with gold leaf "Ola, Ti Ekun Terin" won the Felicia Okorafor Prize for Most Promising Female Artist).

As for the recently-added category prizes, the Most Creative Female and the Special Award for Person with Disability, they were won by Ondo-based Aishat Oyetunde Owoade's clay and pen work, "Not Beyond Repairs" and Lagos-based Isa Musa Ali's oil on canvas painting, "Dilapidated Buildings and Buried Bodies", respectively. They are joined, as consolation prize-winners, by Tochukwu Orazulike, Hezekiah Obidare, Chukwuebuka Ugwuanyi, Christian Imolohone, Olushola Adewuyi, Joann Akayi Kotso, Godstime Uche, Emmanuel Eweje, Motorola John, Sayeed Momoh Onovoiza, and Kingsley Ndubuisi Onwe.

Meanwhile, one of the most important takeaways from the judges' suggestions is their strong recommendation to separate the awards so that, for instance, drawing and painting could be distinguished as distinct fields while acknowledging the unique skills and media employed by artists in these two categories. However, the proposal to merge photography, video, digital arts, and graphics on the grounds that they share common technological tools and contemporary themes, making their consolidation a practical step to reduce redundancy and streamline the judging process, seems superfluous. This is given the fact that they are already in one category.

Ultimately, the crux of the judges' recommendations—the thing that matters most—lies elsewhere: in the desire to transform the yearly youth-focused art fiesta, which is supported by the Ford and MTN Foundations and has been in existence since 2007—possibly the longest-running visual arts event in Nigeria—into a more vibrant and long-lasting platform that may eventually welcome participants from outside the country.

ARTS & REVIEW \ POT POURRI

Abuja, the Open House and the Afterglow...

Segun Ade-Martins

No sooner had the dust settled on the Abuja Open House 2023, whose theme was Catalytic Synthesis, than everyone returned to their respective lives.

However, in various corners, participants are plotting ways to add value to the art world. "My plan is to encourage young artists like myself to do more with their art," an attendee, Anne Ishaya, says.

The thing about gathering artists and creatives for one event is that it galvanises the creative mind. It 'catalyses' their thoughts to produce art or to continue to build relationships. "I plan to write stories that are deeply inspired by my experiences and collaborate more with visual artists," another attendee, Kindness Olugbenga, who is also a writer, says.

There are three things Abuja Open House offers to Abuja, Nigeria, and the world: discovery, connections, and learning. "The event is not a panacea to all that ails the art scene," an art critic and editor of the THISDAY art pages, Okechukwu Uwaezuoke, who featured as a panellist at the opening event on October 26, had written in an earlier publication.

This is true; not all problems can be solved in four days. When art spaces can be discovered, awareness comes to the concerned public. After this, connections are there to be built open, hence the 2022 edition's theme: 'Convergence' and 'Catalytic Synthesis' is this year's theme.

The theme is meant to build on the connections gained last year and create a lasting platform to develop cohesiveness in the Abuja art scene. This should allow Abuja to continue



One of the exhibitions at the Abuja Open House

VISUAL ARTS

to attract national and international attention, not to compete with Lagos but to support it with variety and nuance in a serene environment. Step by step, Abuja Open House takes us closer to achieving this.

'Eclecticism' summarises Abuja Open House 2023: Catalytic Synthesis. A sample of the highlights of the fair include keynote talks from the director of the Yemisi Shyllon Museum of Art, Dr. Jess Castellote; the artist, art educationist, and historian, Dr. Kunle Filani; and renowned artist and writer Victor

Ehikhamenor, representing experience and international acclaim.

There was also an injection of youth with two exhibition openings at unusual art spaces. At the Nordic Hotel in Mabushi, Orlu Ozangebuoma, Peter Eneji, Stanley Ugonabo, and Bakare Shariff had standout paintings and sculptures expressing bold and vibrant ideas. Their message was "Time in Perspective."

Yunus Emre Institute, the Turkish cultural centre, showed more youth but with a message of reconciliation and peace: "Harmony Unveiled: Negotiating Peace through Art." Helen Nzete displayed her series "The Year of Knots," multimedia relief paintings conveying

the pain that a child grows into adulthood, with knots on ropes representing individual trauma moments. Also exhibiting were young artists Isaac Oluwatope, Ibukun Adeleye, and Awosola Michael Angello, curated by Roland Goyit.

The last moments of note were a talk by decorated photographers Aisha Augie and Tersoo Gundu, moderated by Theo Allanso at Windsor Art Gallery. They discussed the state of photography's role in the wider visual art classification and guided eager audience members to understand art photography. "[Photography] is deeper than the story," Augie says.

The closing day presented a talk and exhibition featuring Dr. John Owodemi, Akachukwu Chukwuemeka, and Ejiro Fenegal. Again, eclecticism is abundantly at play here. Owodemi's Durbar paintings display untethered wealth and power, known as "Padanci" in the Hausa language. Akachukwu's dye paintings depict seminal moments in African literature. Rounding out this mix are the busts of women by Fenegal using bonded marble, contrasting youth and femininity in various guises.

This gallery-hopping fair is not a magic bullet for putting this art scene on the global map, but it is a jumping-off point. The International Institute for Creative Development (often abbreviated as IICD) and its creative director, Nduwhite Ahanonu, are the architects of this fair. IICD's motto states, "Where people who know something get to meet people who know something else," again driving home the intention of the fair. With the wealth of experience in attendance, sharing contacts, and gaining knowledge, the fair, in its third edition, is leading Abuja on a path to becoming another key cultural centre in Nigeria.

• Ade-Martins writes from Abuja

With 'Yahoo Yahoo', Mr Bigger Condemns Cyber Crime, Criminal Profiling

Yinka Olatunbosun

Gospel singer, Bigger Ibekwe is not exactly your typical musician. His creative flow oscillates between gospel and conscious music as his latest music video, "Yahoo Yahoo" is just a case in point.

The video is created as a campaign against cyber and financial crime as well as the abuse of criminal profiling procedure by the Nigerian law enforcement.

Mr. Bigger, who held a media chat in Lagos recently announced that the video is now streaming on YouTube, Music Max and other platforms.

The graduate of theatre arts from the University of Benin is a man of many parts. Having studied journalism at Nigerian Institute of Journalism, Bigger worked in print media and was largely involved in the movement into the advancement of democracy during the late military rule in Nigeria.

Like many prominent pro-democracy activists of the period, he left the country in pursuit of greener pastures. While away from Nigeria, he studied Chinese, Japanese and Tagalog languages

MUSIC

at Furen Catholic University, Hsinchuan-Taipei, Taiwan

Upon his return to Nigeria, he decided to pursue music, an interest he would attribute to his roots.

"My mother was a composer and whenever my community in Anambra wanted to have an event, she would be engaged," he began. "I strongly believe I inherited my love for music from her and my maternal grandfather is an artist. He draws and by then, drawing was not so popular. Still, he used charcoal to draw and the person would be surprised."

His couldn't pursue music professionally in his younger years due to financial constraints. While recounting an incident that triggered the inspiration of the new release, Mr. Bigger revealed a personal experience while travelling to shoot his music video.

"As we got to a police checkpoint, they stopped us and concluded the boys with me, because of their dreadlocks, were 'Yahoo Yahoo' fraudsters. We were harassed by the security men owing to their perception of young boys with dreadlocks.

"Security operatives, like the song implies, need to calm down and discharge their duties professionally. Frankly speaking, they need training and retraining to attain professionalism in their job.

"So, the song is a compilation of what I think society should be. The society should appreciate the policemen and they, in turn, should calm down in handling situations."

He called on young people to desist from fraudulent activities, adding that incidents of fraud should be handled professionally.

With four albums in his kitty, he has a steady style of weaving through social realities to develop some of the thematic foci for his music. For instance, with the album titled "One Nigeria," he promotes the spirit of oneness, unity and progress in Nigeria.

"Sometimes, I am moved to use a song to comment on a particular relevant issue," he continued. "The last work I did was Umuaka meaning 'Children.' It is a work that promotes the value that we have in children; advising that we take it easy with the children. It was made for UNESCO.

With this latest release titled "Yahoo Yahoo," Bigger condemns cyber fraud and criminal profiling that sometimes target innocent youths. While reacting to the latest news on the unlawful



Mr Bigger

arrests of some undergraduates—some medical students—of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife on the allegation of cyber fraud, the singer said although his song was recorded before the incident about two months ago, it is very relevant to the social reality in Nigeria.



Odugbesan

In Lagos, All Set for Another 'Culturati'

Yinka Olatunbosun

A high-octane cultural staple, Culturati is set to return on November 16 in Lagos. This much was announced in Lagos recently during a press conference held at the Freedom Park Lagos to signal the start of cultural activities.

A pre-event symposium with the theme: Enhancing Africa's Economy Through Investments in Culture, Arts & Tourism, will hold on Thursday, 16, 2023 at the Afe Babalola Hall, University of Lagos. The symposium will feature several top-notch leaders in contemporary art. Chioma Ude, the founder of the African International Film Festival,

FIESTA

will deliver the keynote address at the event that will bridge the gap between the young and the old in Nigeria's cultural landscape.

The four-day event itself will kick-off on Thursday November 30 at Sol Beach and continues till Saturday, December 2 at the same venue. On Sunday, December 3, the event continues at the Balmoral Convention Centre, The Federal Palace Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos at 6pm.

The theme for this year's Culturati is "Exploring Opportunities in African Culture for Economic Development

via Strategic Investments in Tech, Tourism & Art." While reflecting on the mammoth of activities lined-up, Tiwasayo Odugbesan, the Project Coordinator, Culturati revealed that this edition will offer a rich variety of the entire artistic and cultural spectrum that will cater to everyone regardless of nationality, ethnic origin or cultural orientation. It's African culture on a global canvas.

As the premier cultural fusion event on the continent, Culturati is expected to serve as a catalyst for the creative economy, consistently creating opportunities for African creatives and SMEs to leverage on. Ours is a celebration and exploration of the many aspects of Africa's rich and diverse culture in an attempt to establish culture and the arts as veritable tools for social cohesion, youth development, tourism and economic empowerment.

IN THE ARENA

Need to Appoint Supreme Court Justices

Though the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Olukayode Ariwoola, has promised that efforts were ongoing to elevate judges to fill the vacant seats at the Supreme Court, his predecessor made a similar pledge, which was not fulfilled. **Alex Enumah** writes that there are concerns that the drastic depletion of justices in the apex court hinders speedy dispensation of cases

The law provides that the Supreme Court should have a full team of 21 justices drawn from across the six geopolitical zones for proper representation. But the last time the court came close to realising that feat was in 2020, when the bench had 20 justices.

As at the beginning of last year, there were 17 justices on the bench of the apex court. However, between May 2022 and September 2023, about six justices of the apex court had either retired voluntarily after attaining their mandatory retirement age, or died.

Currently, there are only 10 justices at the court, including the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Olukayode Ariwoola.

Others are: Musa Muhammad, Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, John Okoro, Uwani Abba-Aji, Garba Lawal, Helen Morenikeji Ogunwumiju, Ibrahim Saulawa, Adamu Jauro, Tijjani Abubakar and Emmanuel Agim.

This low number of justices is not only affecting speedy dispensation of cases at the apex court, it is putting enormous pressure on the justices and affecting their health.

Speaking at the valedictory session organised in honour of Justice Musa Dattijo Mohammed recently, Justice Ariwoola lamented the lowest number of justices at the apex court in Nigeria's history which he said found it challenging to tackle the heavy workload of pending cases in the court. He however, promised that efforts were on top gear to elevate judges to the bench of the court.

But many do not know when this would be achieved, given the fact that similar pledges made in the past were not fulfilled.

"With Justice Musa Dattijo leaving us today after the retirement of Hon. Justice Adamu Amina Augie a few weeks ago, we are now left with just 10 Justices on the Supreme Court Bench; being the lowest we have ever had in contemporary history of the court.

"However, I can confidently assure all the litigant public that efforts are in top gear to get on board a sizable number of Justices to boost our rank and complement the tremendous effort we have been investing in the business of the court."



Ariwoola

But Justice Mohammad during his valedictory speech had also lamented the low number of justices at the apex court, insinuating that the delay in replacing justices of the court was a deliberate policy. He added that the replacement of the retired justices and those who had passed, should have been done long ago, if drastic steps had been taken.

Also, at the valedictory organised in honour of Justice Amina Augie during her retirement from the court last month, Justice Ariwoola had equally lamented that the bench was overlaboured partly because of the litigious nature of Nigerians. According to him, "political cases, especially, are taking a monumental toll on our dockets. Indeed, the times we are in are not pleasant, to say the least.

Recently, human rights lawyer, Femi Falana (SAN), became so worried that he warned that it would be dangerous for the bodies vested with the appointment of justices to the Supreme Court to wait longer to fill the vacancies. He lamented that the number of justices reduced to just 10 is uncomfortable and wondered why the bodies that should replace the vacancies

waited till now.

Falana lamented that even though there is a process on, the wheel of the process is too slow and should fasten up. He said he had personally reminded some of his colleagues in the appointing bodies to do something fast and avert a crisis that might arise from the lean bench.

"It is a matter of law and equity that all geopolitical zones of Nigeria are represented at the Supreme Court bench, and the process should be fastened to bridge that gap because if we wait longer it might raise a constitutional crisis."

Speaking on the issue, Prof. Yemi Akinseye-George, (SAN), said the depletion of the court did not augur well for the administration of justice. He noted that there were many excellent justices of the Court of Appeal who should be elevated to the Supreme Court.

"The justices are obviously over-worked. The CJN and Justice Augie who has just retired highlighted the problem associated with the depletion of the court. The Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Lateef Fagbemi has equally hinted that efforts are underway to fill the vacancies. I'm aware that the

process has started.

"There are many excellent justices of the Court of Appeal who should be quickly processed for elevation to the Supreme Court. The depletion of the court does not augur well for the administration of justice," he said.

Another senior lawyer, Mr. John Baiyeshea (SAN), said this depletion is not good for the adjudicatory system at all.

"The truth is that even if the court has the full strength of 21 justices, it is still not enough for the tremendous workload in that court", he said.

While describing the development as a catastrophe, he expressed concern about the welfare and well-being of the justices.

"Imagine the election cases alone are taking a toll on them because as you know, Nigerians don't let go on anything until they end litigation at the apex court.

"Some of the present election cases from 36 states on election will go up to the Supreme Court, on appeal, so also the presidential appeal. The justices certainly cannot cope.

"The normal cases are no longer being heard at the court because of the priority given to election cases that are time bound. And before we conclude the election cases for this season, another election year will set in, and the vicious cycle continues".

While calling for immediate reform of the system, Baiyeshea charged the President and the National Judicial Council (NJC) to immediately start the process to appoint more Justices to the Supreme Court, adding that otherwise, the whole legal system of the country will collapse.

"We don't want our Judges and Justices to die prematurely because of the horrendous pressure of litigation.

On his part, Mr. Abdul Balogun (SAN), called on the NJC to do the needful by replacing the justices to aid speedy dispensation of justice.

According to him, the apex court justices already have so much in their hands and can no longer afford to have their numbers reduced.

"The NJC should do the needful by screening and appointing more justices to the apex court to aid justice delivery. Already, they are not many, and to further have them reduced is a problem to justice delivery in the country for the apex court," he said

POLITICAL NOTES

At Last, Relief for Ikenga Ugochinyere



Ugochinyere

It was a big relief for the member representing Ideato North and South Federal Constituency of Imo State, Hon. Ikenga Ugochinyere Ikeagwuonu, when the Court of Appeal, sitting in Lagos, on Wednesday, unanimously affirmed him as the validly elected member of the House of Representatives.

Ugochinyere of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had suffered a miscarriage of justice when the Imo State National and State House of Assembly Election Petitions Tribunal nullified his election and ordered the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct a supplementary election within 90 days.

But in a unanimous judgment, the Appeal Court panel headed by Justice Abubakar Babandi Gumel overruled the judgment of the tribunal.

The election petition tribunal had disqualified Ikenga and nullified his election based on a pre-election matter

of the primary election of the PDP despite plethora of authorities by the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal to the effect that Election Tribunals do not have jurisdiction over pre-election matters.

The tribunal's three-member panel of judges, had in an unanimous decision, held that Ugochinyere was not validly nominated by the PDP to contest the Ideato North/South Federal Constituency election held on 25 February.

Justice Anthony Akpovi, who chaired the panel, concluded that the PDP and its candidate should be excluded from the supplementary election.

Recall that insecurity had forced the PDP to conduct their primary elsewhere. Secondly, before the primary, Ugochinyere's residence and personal and campaign vehicles in his hometown were razed down by gunmen who were on a mission to assassinate him.

Insecurity had also forced the tribunal to sit in Nasarawa State instead of Imo State.

Yet, curiously, the same tribunal, had in its judgment sacked Ugochinyere, citing the failure of the PDP to hold the primary that produced him in his constituency.

The Appeal Court and Supreme Court had on several cases on "not validly nominated" or "improper nomination" called the petitioners "meddlesome interlopers".

The Presidential Election Petitions Court (PEPC) had ruled in Vice President Kashim Shettima's case, that the issue of nominating or not nominating a candidate validly by a political party is a pre-election matter and an internal affair of the party, which can only be challenged within 14 days of such nomination at a Federal High Court.

Many analysts had predicted rightly that the tribunal judgment in Ugochinyere's case would be quashed by the Appeal Court.

BRIEFING NOTES

Kidnap-for-ransom as a National Embarrassment

Last Wednesday's revelation by the Chairman of the Kaduna State chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Rev. John Joseph Hayab, that a ransom of N250 million was paid to secure the release of 121 students of Bethel Baptist High School in Kaduna who were kidnapped by bandits is another national embarrassment. **Eji for Alike** reports that for bandits to keep kidnap victims within the Nigerian territory for as long as two years until a ransom is paid without any trace by the various security agencies is an indication that government has lost control of public spaces

Despite the claims by the various government agencies that the registration of SIM cards and the National Identification Number (NIN) would curb kidnapping and financial crimes, kidnapping has remained a booming business for bandits and other criminals, who collect ransom from abducted Nigerians and foreign nationals, without a trace.

The silence by the promoters of SIM registration and NIN in the face of this unabating criminality has shown that most of these programmes of government serve the pecuniary interest of the implementing agencies without delivering any public good.

Several years after the SIM registration by subscribers was made compulsory, pre-registered SIM cards still flood the Nigerian markets for use by kidnapers and other unidentified criminal elements.

More worrisome is the fact that in most cases where ransom involves millions of naira, kidnap victims are kept within the Nigerian soil for many years, while contacts are being made with their families through phones without the security agencies successfully tracking the location of the victims or their abductors.

Another frightening dimension is the direct and indirect involvement of some agents of governments in the negotiation, and supervision of payment of ransom.

In most cases, such as the case of the eight Akwa Ibom State graduates kidnapped in Zamfara State on August 17, while they were travelling to the Sokoto State NYSC Orientation Camp, the parents and relations of the victims are abandoned to their fate to negotiate and pay ransom to the bandits.

The parents of the eight corps members had resorted to fasting and prayers on the fate of their children when the abductors initially denied them freedom after receiving N13 million ransom.

Another corps member, Miss Esther Akande, who was kidnapped on Wednesday, August 16, while on her way to the NYSC Permanent Orientation Camp in Magaji Dan Yanusa Keffi, Nasarawa State, and released on Saturday, August 19, had revealed that the sum of ₦1 million was paid to secure her freedom.

However, in the case of the victims of the March 28, 2022 Abuja-Kaduna train attack, the Chief of Defence Staff Action Committee (CDSAC) had secured the release of the last batch of 23 kidnapped victims after almost six months in captivity.

The setting up of the high-powered committee to secure the release of the victims after the alleged payment of an undisclosed amount of ransom was because some of the victims were high-profile Nigerians.

In June 2022, 11 of the abductees were released,



General Musa

while in July 2022, seven more abducted passengers, including Sadiq, the son of the Chairman of the Northern Elders Forum (NEF), Prof Ango Abdullahi, were freed.

Last Wednesday, the Chairman of the Kaduna State chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Rev. John Joseph Hayab, revealed that a ransom of over N250 million was paid to secure the release of 121 students of Bethel Baptist High School in Kaduna who were kidnapped by bandits in July 2022.

Bandits had in July 2021, stormed the school owned by the Nigeria Baptist Convention (NBC) in Damishi, Kaduna and abducted 121 students.

However, the NBC President, Dr. Israel Akanji, last week confirmed that the last victim, Treasure Ayuba, escaped from captivity on November 2, 2023.

Speaking while leading Ayuba's parents on a courtesy visit to Governor Uba Sani of Kaduna

State, the CAN chairman in the state, Rev Hayab, noted that a total sum of N250 million was paid as ransom to rescue the 121 students.

"We are here to welcome back Treasure Ayuba, the last of the kidnapped students of Bethel Baptist High School, Kaduna, matched out while in their sleep in the school hostel and kidnapped on the night of July 5, 2021 by bandits.

"To the knowledge of CAN, over N250 million was paid as ransom to get the 121 kidnapped children out from their captors, but for Treasure, his story became a heart-breaking one, further made worse by distorting the truth that the boy did not want to leave the den of the kidnappers," he explained.

Hayab added that: "To add salt to injury, on more than one occasion, the kidnappers abducted the persons sent with the ransom to get Treasure out of their hands, making his stay to become an infinite time

of agonising pain until God intervened.

"Accordingly, on Thursday, November 2, 2023, I received a call from Treasure's parents that the boy returned home safely after being in the hands of his captors for 28 months," Hayab explained.

The residents of the state had witnessed unprecedented killings and abductions between 2015 and 2023 when bandits, some of whom were believed to be state-sponsored, unleashed mayhem on the state.

However, the residents of the state are beginning to experience relief under the administration of Governor Sani.

In Borno State, most of the 276 schoolgirls abducted in April 2014 from the Government Girls Secondary School in the village of Chibok by Boko Haram militants, have remained in captivity for nine years.

Two of the schoolgirls - Hauwa Maltha and Esther Marcus - only regained their freedom in May this year with one having a year-old baby while the second gave birth to her second child a few days after her freedom.

In the South-east, rampaging gunmen kidnap and collect ransom for the release of their lucky victims and harvest the organs of unlucky ones for rituals.

Mrs Bianca Ojukwu, wife of the late Chief Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, had on Tuesday disclosed the existence of a mass grave in Anambra State.

The former Nigerian Ambassador to Spain, who did not disclose the location of the grave site, added that about 322 persons were verified as killed or dead as a result of violence as testified by the witnesses who appeared before the Anambra Truth, Justice and Peace Commission.

The Truth, Justice and Peace Commission was constituted by the state governor, Prof Chukwuma Soludo, in June 2022 to inquire into the violent agitations and restiveness in the state and the South-east.

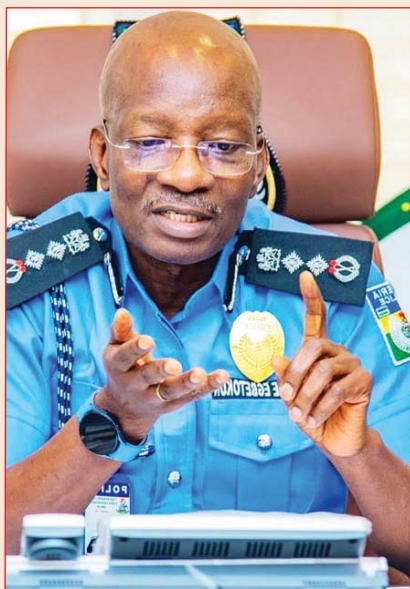
As kidnapers and bandits hold sway across the country, the heavily-guarded political leaders deploy state apparatus against opponents who are killed in state-sponsored terrorism while others are hounded and detained without trial by security forces who display maximum show of force on unarmed civilians and peaceful protesters.

For these kidnap victims to be held in captivity within the Nigerian soil for years without any trace by the various security agencies is an indication that the government has lost control of the public spaces.

Many have wondered what the job of the Department of State Services (DSS), the police and other security agencies is for this predicament to constantly befall Nigerians if not to gather intelligence needed to wipe out the criminals responsible for nefarious crime.

NOTES FOR FILE

Lessons Nigerian Leaders Can Learn from UK Police



Egbetokun

The decision by the Commissioner in charge of the Metropolitan Police in the United Kingdom, Sir Mark Rowley not to ban a pro-Palestinian rally and demonstration in London is a worthy lesson for President Bola Tinubu, the Inspector General of Police and all the state Commissioners of Police in Nigeria.

A coalition of groups, including the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Stop the War and the Muslim Association of Britain, had insisted that they would use yesterday to press ahead with the demonstration calling for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

But the English Defence League founder, Tommy Robinson, said they would also organise a counter rally to disrupt it.

This instantly raised concerns that breakaway groups from the main march could look for trouble, while counter-demonstrations may add to policing difficulties.

Based on this, political leaders, including Prime Minister Rishi Sunak tried to block the gathering. Speaking through his spokesman, the Prime Minister said the operational decisions on whether to ban the planned march were for the Metropolitan Police, but added that the government would "carefully consider" any application to prevent it.

"The prime minister himself does not think it's right for these sorts of protests to be scheduled on Armistice Day. He believes that is provocative and disrespectful," he said.

But Rowley resisted pressure heaped on the force by political leaders to block the gathering. He said he would not bow to 'political pressure' and would allow a pro-Palestinian march to go ahead on Armistice Day.

In a statement on Tuesday, he said intelligence surrounding the potential for serious disorder this weekend does not meet the threshold to apply to prohibit the march.

"The laws created by Parliament are clear. There is

no absolute power to ban protest, therefore there will be a protest this weekend. The law provides no mechanism to ban a static gathering of people. It contains legislation which allows us to impose conditions to reduce disruption and the risk of violence, and in the most extreme cases when no other tactics can work, for marches or moving protests to be banned," Rowley said.

This many believe is a lesson for President Tinubu, state governors, the Nigeria Police Force and its leaders to learn on how to run the police if they truly want constitutional order and progress in Nigeria. For too long, the police in the country are a ready tool in their political leaders, who use them for personal and selfish purposes.

A case in point was the recent arrest and blatant physical assault of the President of the Nigeria Labour Congress, Comrade Joe Ajaero by the Imo State government.

There is certainly no chance of making progress in a society where police paid with taxpayer money are willing tools to be used by state officials against her innocent citizens.

Bizarre Judgments of Appeal Court in Plateau

The conflicting judgments of the Court of Appeal in the disputes arising from the National Assembly elections in Plateau State may further erode the confidence of the people in the judiciary, **Seriki Adinoyi** writes

For many, the courts are expected to be sacred, but where the judges who preside over them are perceived to be biased, the sound of their gavels becomes a mere noise.

Recent developments in the judiciary in Nigeria, especially at the Court of Appeal, to many analysts, are becoming increasingly worrisome and source of serious concern.

Their lordships in the temple of justice are rather confusing 'unlearned Nigerians' who are now getting more and more disenchanted by the judgments.

Many Nigerians are bothered that judges are dispensing 'justice' in a manner that suggests that there are different versions of the Electoral Act, which make them to deliver incongruous judgments on same matters.

The existence of different versions of the electoral laws is the only tenable excuse to explain why Appeal Court judges give conflicting judgments and diverse interpretations to the same Electoral Act in cases that are similar and under same circumstance.

Both the election petition tribunals and Court of Appeal have nullified the election of many candidates of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the based on pre-election matters on the primary election of the party despite plethora of authorities by the Supreme Court to the effect that tribunals and Court of Appeal do not have jurisdiction over pre-election matters.

For instance, the PDP had in an appeal marked SC/CV/501/2023, sought President Bola Tinubu's disqualification by the Supreme Court on grounds of the alleged double nomination of his deputy, Kashim Shettima in the 2023 general election.

The party claimed that Shettima was nominated as the Borno Central Senatorial candidate and as Tinubu's running mate at the same time.

But the apex court, in a unanimous decision of a five-man panel, held that the appeal by the PDP challenging the validity of the Tinubu/Shettima ticket lacked merit.

Delivering the lead judgement on the suit, Justice Adamu Jauro upheld the concurrent decisions of the Court of Appeal and the Federal High Court in Abuja, which earlier dismissed the case.

The court ruled that the plaintiff lacked the legal right to meddle in the affairs of the All Progressives Congress (APC), which nominated the duo as its candidates in the election.

Describing the appeal as an activity of "a nosy busy-body and a meddlesome interloper", the Supreme Court stressed that the law does not permit a political party to dabble in the domestic affairs of another party.

The court agreed with the respondents that Section 285 (14) (c) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) and Section 149 of the Electoral Act, 2022, do not confer to them the legal right to question the candidature of Shettima on the ground of double nomination.

In another judgment delivered on October 20, 2023, the Court of Appeal sitting in Abuja declined to sack the member of the House of Representatives for Askira-Uba/Hawul Federal Constituency of Borno State, Dr. Midala Balami.

The appellate court, in a unanimous decision by a three-member panel of justices, dismissed an appeal that was brought before it by the APC and its candidate, Tarfaya Asarya.

The court held that it found no reason to set aside the judgment of the Borno State National Assembly Election Petition Tribunal which affirmed the PDP candidate as the valid winner of the House of Representatives election.

The petitioners had contended that the primary election of the PDP conducted, which produced Balami as its candidate, was done in breach of an order of the Supreme Court.



Justice Dongban-Mensem

However, the three-member panel of election tribunal, in a unanimous decision on August 25, 2023, dismissed the petition. The tribunal held that it lacked the requisite jurisdiction to entertain an issue bordering on the nomination of a candidate by a political party.

It held that the case of the petitioners contained pre-election issues that were not within the purview of an election petition tribunal.

Meanwhile, while upholding the verdict, the appellate court panel led by Justice Chioma Nwosu-Iheme, held that under Section 285(1) of the 1999 Constitution, as amended, the tribunal had a special jurisdiction to only determine whether anyone was validly elected.

It held that the scope of the jurisdiction conferred on the tribunal by the Constitution could not be expanded to include the determination of the validity of the conduct of primary election or nomination of candidates by political parties.

But in a bizarre judgment delivered in Plateau State, the Appeal Court became interested in pre-election matters when it held that the nomination of candidates can be contested as both pre-election and post-election matters.

The election petition tribunal in Jos had upheld the election of the Minority Leader of the Senate, Simon Mwadkwon, and dismissed the petitions by Mr. Chris Giwa of the APC and Mr. Gyang Zi of the Labour Party (LP). But the two went on appeal.

Delivering judgment on the matter in an Appeal Court sitting in Abuja, the lead judge, Justice E O Williams-Dawodu said that Section 84(14) was the basis to be determined; the issue is based on ground one which is the structure of the PDP.

The judge said: "In my solemn view, a pertinent question that springs forth and to be clearly

dealt with, flowing from the foregoing is whether there has been substantial compliance to the order of Plateau State High Court in Suit No PLD/J304/2020.

"This court made a positive finding and found that there was no complete and total compliance with the order of the court by the PDP. Until an order is complied with, it remains in force and is binding on all the parties to it."

She said it is her view that the court order for PDP to conduct a fresh congress was not fully complied with by the party as 12 LGAs didn't participate in the repeated congress. He agreed with the appellants that the party had no valid structure and could not have claimed to have validly nominated the candidate for the election.

She said in her considered view, and giving the findings of the court, the appeal succeeds. He therefore nullified the election and ordered that all parties go back for a rerun within 90 days.

Unlike in the previous judgments of the Appeal Court and the Supreme Court in similar cases, the judge said, "Nomination of candidates can be a pre-election as well as post-election if it's contested by another candidate of a different party." This to many observers, is where the tribunal missed the point.

"It is on Section 134(1) that the appellants had the locus standi to file their appeal. Though the third respondent has the right to nominate candidates, it cannot do that within its whims and caprices."

These conflicting judgments have upset the indigenes of Plateau State

who are now worried that the Court of Appeal is trying to force leaders on them against their choice at the polls.

Speaking on the matter, a former Speaker of the state House of Assembly, Istifanus Mwansat, rejected the judgements of the Appeal Court in the state, describing them as a miscarriage of justice. He added that the Appeal Court rulings seemed designed to pit the people of the state against one another.

Mwansat also observed other inconsistencies, noting that where the Labour Party (LP) came second in the nullified elections, the court ordered a rerun, but where the APC came second, the court outrightly awarded victory to the party without an order for a rerun.

Citing examples such as the Plateau North Senatorial District, where the Appeal Court ordered a rerun because the LP candidate came second and the APC came third, Mwansat said that similar judgement was delivered in the case of Bassa/Jos North Federal Constituency, where the PDP won decisively and the PRP came second, the Appeal Court called for a rerun involving all political parties.

But in the case of Shendam/Quanpan/Mikang Federal Constituency, Mwansat noted that the Appeal Court sacked the PDP candidate and awarded the victory to the APC candidate who came second without ordering for a rerun like it did in other cases.

He alleged that the Court of Appeal is doing the bidding of the APC. He criticised the judgements, describing them as conflicting.

According to him, the judgments were a deliberate attempt to deny the PDP candidates of their overwhelming victories in the state.

Mwansat urged the Court of Appeal to review these judgements thoroughly and ensure justice prevails in view of their implications to the peace and security of the state.

Meanwhile, a new twist has emerged on the matter as the former governor of the state and current Minister of Labour and Employment, Simon Lalong has been fingered on the travail befalling the PDP.

Lalong is from Shendam Local Government Area (LGA) of Plateau State just as the President of the Court of Appeal, Justice Monica Dongban-Mensem. They are both from the same ethnic group, Goma.

Lalong contested for the Senate and was outrightly defeated by the PDP at the polls.

However, the tribunal nullified PDP's victory on the same ground that the party lacked the structure to nominate candidates.

The Appeal Court sitting in Abuja also last Tuesday upheld the judgment of the tribunal which declared Lalong winner of the Plateau South Senatorial election.

There are speculations that the former governor used his contacts in the Appeal Court to impose himself on the people as senator representing Plateau South.

Apparently banking on Lalong's alleged contacts in the Appeal Court, the member representing Pankshin/Kanke/Kanam Federal Constituency in the House of Representatives, Mr. Yusuf Gaggi, and member representing Wase Federal Constituency, Mr. Ahmed Idris Wase were alleged to have boasted that the PDP Governor in Plateau State, Caleb Mutfwang would definitely be removed to pave the way for the APC candidate, Dr. Nentawe Yilwatda to take over.

Though these allegations are not substantiated and may be politically-motivated, the judiciary needs to avoid soiling its hands.

Appeal Court justices are perceived to be men of integrity, and should review these controversial judgments and do everything possible to earn and retain public trust.

Smuggling those who were rejected by the people at the polls back to power by the judiciary will breed public unrest and lawlessness.

The judiciary is believed to have caused enough harm to Nigeria's democracy and should desist from causing further harm.

Inching Closer to Winning War against Sexual Abusers

Campaigns for sexual abusers to face legal consequences have been raging on for years. With the recent sentencing of the medical doctor who sexually abused a teenager and the charges filed against the University of Calabar's professor, Nigeria appears to be finally experiencing its '#MeToo moment', in a bid to win the war against sexual abusers, **Vanessa Obioha** writes

For years, movements worldwide have sought to hold sexual abusers accountable for their actions. In 2017, a #MeToo movement began in Hollywood, exposing high-profile celebrities for their sexual abuses. This movement led to powerful figures facing legal repercussions, including Hollywood mogul, Harvey Weinstein and singer, R. Kelly.

In Nigeria, similar cases have often faced obstacles in the pursuit of justice due to cultural, legal, and social complexities. Victims frequently face intimidation to withdraw charges, and influential figures often evade accountability. However, recent events, such as the sentencing of Lagos-based doctor Olufemi Olaleye to life imprisonment for sexually assaulting his spouse's niece, and the criminal charges brought against the suspended Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Calabar, Prof. Cyril Ndifon, by the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), signal that the country may be gradually approaching its #MeToo moment.

Olaleye, who heads a cancer clinic, Optimal Cancer Care Foundation, was arraigned in November 2022 on two counts of rape between December 2019 and July 2022. He was accused of sexually assaulting the girl for over a year before his wife, Aderemi Olaleye, found out and reported him to the police.

During the trial, Aderemi, one of the six witnesses who testified, revealed how she uncovered the abuse after the girl, now 18, confided in her aunt and the family's driver. Aderemi provided details of how the doctor repeatedly abused her niece and threatened to kill her if she disclosed his actions, even forcing her to watch pornography.

Olaleye also testified in his defence, supported by his forensic physician, who disputed the medical evidence presented by the prosecution. However, during the verdict on October 24, Justice Rahman Oshodi of the Lagos Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Court, Ikeja, emphasized that the evidence "strongly incriminates" the defendant. The judge labelled Olaleye a "dangerous" offender devoid of remorse. He cited Olaleye's prior confession to the police as proof of his guilt. As a result, the doctor received a life imprisonment sentence, and his name was added to the Lagos State sex offenders register, signifying Nigeria's judicial stance against sexual violence.

A few days after the doctor's verdict, the ICPC pressed criminal charges against Ndifon, following an investigation into allegations of his sexual harassment of students. The anti-graft commission is arraigning the lecturer on a four-count charge, involving sexual harassment, official corruption, and abuse of office contrary to Sections 8, 18 and 19 of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, 2000.

One of the counts reads, "That you, Professor Cyril Osim Ndifon (M), between June and September 2023, at Calabar, within the Jurisdiction of this honourable court, and while being a public officer charged with responsibility for the certification of students as fit in learning and character, as a prerequisite for the award of Bachelor's degree in law and admission into the Nigerian Law School, used your office and position as the dean, Faculty of Law, University of Calabar, to gratify yourself by soliciting nude photographs and videos from one Ms. ABC (not real name), a Year 2 Diploma student of the university, through WhatsApp chats on your telephone number, 0803****, and thereby committed an offence contrary to



Dr. Olaleye



Prof. Ndifon

and punishable under Section 19 of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, 2000."

Ndifon, a law professor, was suspended as dean of the faculty after female students of the faculty held a protest rally on August 14, accusing

him of sexual harassment. This led to a public outcry, prompting the university to form a panel to investigate the professor.

The lecturer, denying the allegations, claimed that some colleagues, uncomfortable with his leadership style, instigated the students against him.

However, the panel's report in early October outlined Ndifon's abuse of power, intimidating and seeking sexual favours from female law students. One student, testifying before the panel, recounted an incident where the professor allegedly coerced her into oral sex in his campus office.

Consequently, on October 4, the ICPC, in collaboration with State Security Service personnel, arrested the professor after he allegedly evaded multiple invitations.

This is not the first instance of such accusations against Ndifon at UNICAL. In 2015, he faced suspension for allegedly raping a 20-year-old law student in his office but was reinstated a year later under unclear circumstances.

Ndifon's case highlights the pervasiveness of sex-for-grades in Nigerian universities, a troubling trend addressed in Eedris Abdulkareem's 2003 song 'Mr Lecturer'.

A 2022 research report and advocacy strategy conducted by the Women Advocate Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) and supported by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa revealed under-reported incidents of sex for promotion and other sexual and gender-based violence among staff.

"The major reason for not reporting is a lack of knowledge of where to go and who to tell, the expectation of not being believed, followed by fear of negative consequences. In some quoted instances, reporting did indeed lead to further injustice for the victim," the report reads.

The data collected from 20 universities with 7,178 participating students indicated that the main perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence are predominantly students and academic staff, including instances of non-academic staff sexually harassing students during admissions and accommodation processes.

Last July, the Nigeria Police Force, Lagos State Command, said it recorded 111 sexual assault cases between April and June 2023.

The command's spokesperson, Benjamin Hundeyin, expressed concern about the increasing number of sexual assault cases in the state, noting that within the same period, 14 rape cases and 56 domestic violence incidents were recorded, leading to 99 suspects being charged to court.

Also, the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency revealed that the state recorded 5,624 cases of sexual abuse between August 2022 and July 2023.

"The agency now receives an average of 250 clients every month. For adults - 91 per cent of survivors were female, and nine per cent were male; while for children - 45 per cent of survivors were boys, 55 per cent were girls," said the Executive Secretary of the agency, Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi.

The prevalence of sexual abuse cases in Nigeria continues to draw attention, advocating for justice for the victims and addressing the urgent need for societal change. The recent judgment on Olaleye and charges against Ndifon signal progress but highlight the ongoing journey towards a comprehensive #MeToo movement in Nigeria. The significance of these cases lies not only in the legal ramifications but in their potential to spark social change.

Continued advocacy, reforms, and societal support are crucial as Nigeria navigates a pivotal moment in addressing sexual abuse and harassment.

The imprisonment of Olaleye and the prosecution of Ndifon will send strong signals to sexual predators that the government is determined to win the war against sexual abusers, no matter the social status of the personality involved.

INTERNATIONAL

National Revenue and Security in Nigeria: The Conflict between Domestic and Foreign Policy

Foreign policy has been defined severally, but simply put, it is generally considered as an extension of domestic policy in different ways. As a prolongation of the domestic setting, the particular issue of agents of domestic revenues and maintenance of national security are necessarily raised. At the domestic level, and without whiff of doubt, national revenues and national security are taken as a desideratum and critical issues in political governance and foreign policy. They are critical issues because, without revenue, there will not be any funding for security. In the same vein, without security, the environment of revenue generation cannot be conducive. This simply means that revenue generation and maintenance of national security must go *pari passu* in ensuring economic growth and productivity in political governance.

In the context of international relations, a State must be solvent enough to be able to give development aid to another State. Solvency should not be simply seen in the context of cash liquidity alone. Solvency, in this case, also involves adequacy of technological capacity to share with others, unflinching political will to grant development aid to others, social or human security for the people as distinct from state security, and socio-political contentment.

And true enough in Nigeria, there are many revenue generation agencies: Customs Service, Immigration Service, Federal Inland Revenue Service, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC), Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), Ministry of Steel Development (MMSD), Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), etc. These agencies generated N14.38trn to the Federation Account in the past two years. Hence they are quite important.

As regards the security agencies, they include the law enforcement agencies: the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), National Emergency Management Agency, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Nigeria Prisons Service (NPS), etc. All agents of both the revenue-generating agencies and security agencies operate in Nigeria's international and domestic airports where they compete rather than collaborating. Unfortunately, foreign policy interests are compromised as a result.

Revenue and Security

The aviation authorities, as reliably informed, have a policy of selling all available spaces at the airports in Lagos without due regard to the implications for Nigeria's foreign policy image. Two issues are noteworthy in this regard. At the Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos, a new terminal that has just been constructed and opened for aviation activities, does not provide for a mini diplomatic or protocol office at the arrival and departure levels of passengers.

In this regard, the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), has informed 'the travelling public that flight operations have been moved from the Old Murtala Muhammed International Airport terminal (T1) to the new terminal (T2)'. More important, the FAAN statement says the 'FAAN uses this medium to appeal to passengers to always get to the airport "at least three hours" before their departure time to ensure that check-in activities are concluded in good time. The directive was given by the Minister of Aviation, Festus Keyamo, on September 7, 2023. The directive was that the relocation of all airlines to the new terminal should be completed not later than October 1, 2023 to allow for renovation works in the old terminal. Some airlines are yet to comply with the directive, but this is not really the problem.

The problem is that there is no provision for a Protocol Office in the new terminal. One possible assumption can be that the Foreign Service Officers at Terminal One should operate from their old base, rather than having another desk office in the new terminal. The need to save costs cannot but be a main rationale in this case. Indeed, this consideration is further buttressed by the



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Tinubu

fact of existence of a main diplomatic lounge on the first floor of the old terminal. What is noteworthy here is the need to avoid any confusion of the diplomatic lounge with a protocol desk where information about very important people travelling out of Nigeria or arriving in Nigeria is processed for action. The protocol desk office does not have the reception luxury in the proper diplomatic lounge on the first floor of the old terminal.

From my enquiries, every space to be occupied by anyone or any agency, governmental or non-governmental, at the airport must be paid for. The Aviation Ministry is more concerned about revenue and not much about foreign policy dimensions. Additionally the Ministry undoubtedly expects that every Ministry of Government seeking to have an office space at the airport must arrange and pay for it. The implication of 'this policy of non-payment no space allocation' raises many issues of foreign policy.

First, since the official protocol office at the airports are under the supervisory authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, why is there no arrangement to ensure a well secured space at the airport? At the old terminal, what is called protocol office or desk at the arrival level is nothing more than an aluminum-glass fenced area, open to all passers-by. Even though it is very near Gate D where there are different uniformed security agents controlling the access to the

arrival hall, the strategic importance of the office and its location is yet to be well appreciated by the people and officially-recognised by other government ministries, departments and agencies.

Whether one likes it or not, any international airport, like any land border frontier, is always the first point of contact and source of first impression of any incoming passenger: what is the aesthetic look of the airport, the functionality and cleanliness of facilities at the airport, the friendliness shown by immigration and customs agents, safety of baggage, social and official courtesies shown, quality of intra-airport transportation, availability of airport communications, etc. If any in-coming foreigner develops a negative impression on arrival, it may take greater efforts to re-polish that impression thereafter. This is why business transaction in any international airport in Nigeria should always be taken very seriously. And it is against this background that the second issue, which is about inter-agency rivalry, is undertaken for further analysis here.

I was at the Murtala Muhammed airport on November 6, 2023 to receive a guest. Some security agents refused to submit themselves for checking and the other security agents similarly refused to let them pass. The security agents that refused to identify themselves appeared to be armed and they forced their way through. A bit of violent hullabaloo occurred thereafter. The questions in this case are: why is there no operational framework for all security agents working for the same Government of Nigeria in the same place? Should they know or not know that they are working for the same purpose? Should they know themselves in the same airport? If a security agent is an intelligence officer, must he identify himself or herself in an open manner? Will his identity be well protected by unnecessarily introducing himself as a security officer? Shouldn't there be a mechanism for inter-agency cooperation at the international airport? This is one problem that has the potential to unnecessarily taint Nigeria's image abroad.

Thirdly, the reported directive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Chargés d'Affaires of Nigeria's diplomatic missions abroad is a different kettle of fish entirely. The directive, signed by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Adamu I. Lamuwa, and dated November 3rd, 2023, was purportedly meant to lock out Nigerian diplomats who are either required to return home but have not done so, or those of them that are ready to return home but who have not been paid their entitlements to enable them fly back to Nigeria. Perhaps this is not really offensive. What appears to more irritating is that Nigeria's plenipotentiaries abroad have reportedly called out Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusufu Tuggar for allegedly inciting junior workers to lock Ambassadors out of their offices and residences and stop them from using their official cars.

This story is most unfortunate because of the circumstances that might have warranted the Honourable Minister's directive. There is no disputing the fact that whenever there is a change of government, the new incumbent President would want to change his principal representatives abroad. It is a diplomatic tradition. The main problem however has always arisen at the level of political ambassadors who, in many cases, actually behave unprofessionally or in ways incompatible with the status of a diplomatic agent. Unlike career ambassadors, political ambassadors often bypass the Foreign Ministry, preferring to relate directly with the Presidency.

There was the case of Nigeria's ambassador in Gabon in 2005. Political ambassadors might be those refusing to return home as directed. Could they be ambassadors-designate who are itching to resume duty and therefore are pressurizing the incumbent ambassadors to quickly return home by inciting junior staff to embarrass their Principals? Is it even possible for the junior members of staff to embarrass any ambassador since the junior ones are likely to be mostly locally-recruited staff? To what extent can the home-based junior members of staff be used to attack their bosses?

Without doubt, there has always been a friction between career diplomats and political diplomats. The careerists uphold the diplomatic tradition while the political ambassadors are guided by their own political interests. They operate in the manner of a holier than thou. Thus, while it is normal to ask ambassadors to return home for whatever reason, this must always be done with decency and due respect. More often than not, when ambassadors complete their tour of duty, or are recalled for consultation, or are given a Siberian treatment, the returning has hardly been promptly funded. The delay has generally not been the fault of the diplomats.

Whatever is the case, the directive of the Permanent Secretary has also raised the questions of revenue and security: what is the cost of bringing home the ambassadors? What is the security implication of the embarrassment of the ambassadors, if true, by the junior staff?

Foreign Policy Implications

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has come up with a new diplomatic doctrine, called the '4D Renewed Foreign Policy Doctrine'. The four Ds, which are Democracy, Development, Demography and Diaspora, are conceived to be quadrilateral pillars of a new foreign policy the details of which are yet to be made crystal clear. PBAT's conception of Democracy in Nigeria is that it is 'essential for regional stability and human rights protection'. Considered as an essential need, Nigeria should actively support democracy in West Africa to prevent military takeovers and address security challenges while pursuing strategic autonomy.'

For instance, the two main and critical problems in the world of today are the Russo-Ukrainian war and the Israel-Gazan war. Nigeria's foreign policy attitude to the Russian-Ukrainian war never reckoned with the national interest of Nigeria, contrarily to the country's policy of non-alignment, under the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. Nigeria simply followed the American lead and instruction. As regards Israel-Palestinian conflict, Nigeria is neither a Muslim State nor a Christian State. Nigeria's 1999 Constitution as amended, provides for a secular state, but the conflict has sharply divided the country into Muslim and Christian proponents. The Christians support the Israelis and the Muslims support the Palestinian Gazans. In this case, to what extent can the 4Ds of the new foreign policy be useful in dowsing the tension in Gaza? One cannot but agree with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo who has called for a re-thinking of democracy in Africa. And perhaps, most importantly, Nigeria needs a foreign policy of national restructuring. The notion of Nigeria must first of all exist in the minds of the so-called Nigerians, because it is when there is Nigeria that is generally acceptable, that the culture of patriotism can be developed and that the 4Ds can be consciously promoted and adhered to. The Nigeria of today cannot boast of true Nigerians. To put it more bluntly, Nigeria must truly exist first as a nation and as a people before any foreign policy doctrine can be appreciated.

ENGAGEMENTS

with Chidi Amuta
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Fiction, Journalism and Power

An academic colleague and close friend in an American university asked me to contribute some thoughts to a faculty discussion platform on the changing face of journalism especially as reflected in the interplay between legacy and social media as well as the interface between 'fake news' and factual reporting in media activity around Nigeria's last general elections. This was part of a project on the future of global media culture.

Here was my take:

Nigeria's last election cycle sprang so many surprises. Beyond the electoral outcomes which largely defied most enlightened polls and the deeply divided opinion at home, the election season in general came up with challenges in the area of mass communication and media activity. Almost like the Nigerian electorate, the media was perplexed by the new trends that the 2023 election season revealed.

First, the pattern of media economics and the news business defied familiar traditions and conventional expectations. In the past, it had been the rule that legacy media—print, electronic and outdoor—would experience a boom in terms of patronage and advertisement revenue at election time. There would normally be a deluge of political reporting and advertising as political interests jostle for visibility and topicality. Advertising agency budgets usually balloon, media houses reap a harvest, political reporters don new sneakers for increased activity.

In the past, political parties and candidates would usually pre-book and pre-pay for advertisement and supplement spaces. All manner of PR agents and political media consultants would have a field day. Available reporters would be overly engaged with trying to keep pace with the campaign schedules of key candidates. The scramble and jostle would normally be heightened by the rather large expanse of the Nigerian political landscape.

It is a multiverse of candidates and a market place of ambitions. You had over 80 parties each expected to present presidential candidates. Each of them was expected to present a candidate for each of our 36 state governorships, candidates for close to 400 Federal House of Representatives seats, 90 Senate seats, any number of state Houses of Assembly seats etc. This is literally an army of political contestants each requiring media attention and seeking to be heard by a population of over 100 million voting age adult Nigerians and a limitless international market place of media hungry people who want to hear or read about Nigeria.

But contrary to expectations and projections, the media budgets of both traditional advertising agencies and the media themselves witnessed a rude shock. For some reason, Nigeria's last election season defied all the 'normal' expectations and projections. It was like no season before it. Advertisement revenue was scanty for both legacy and online titles and even the advertising agencies who now had to cope with the demands of new formats, technologies and changing audiences.

Political parties and key candidates held back on their spend till the last moments and even at that point, the advertisement bookings were scanty in relative terms.

On the whole, the legacy print media said they all fared rather poorly in terms of political advertising revenue and traffic. But for a few belated wrap-around front page advertisements, not so much space bookings were made. Television and radio fared slightly better. This is probably because we live in a festival inspired African society in an age of visuals and audio. This is the age of talkatives and gossips! Political candidates dress themselves up like merchandisers seeking for colour and dramatic presence. Closely following this is the culture of robust and loud expression for which Nigerians are now world famous. Every Nigerian wants to be heard loudest. So all manner of noisy audio clips got aired on any number of AM, FM and satellite radio stations all over the country and the Nigerian diaspora.

But the emergence and explosion of the social media was perhaps the decisive difference. Online media platforms mushroomed into numerical dominance over and above legacy media outlets. No one has an accurate count



Idris

of the number of titles and platforms.

For the first time, ownership of the media itself became democratized instead of merely serving the ends of democracy. It is not just in the ownership of the tools of communication—cell phones, computers, tablets etc. The individualized use of these devices to communicate across a democratic space marked the decisive departure towards a new democratization of media communication in the service of democracy and freedom.

In other words, the term social media connotes the unbundling of communication from the 'fourth estate' concept to the era of universal freedom. The fourth estate of the realm is now more a description of the function of the media rather than a designation for a specialized professional undertaking and its privileged institutions. For the first time in human history, the fourth estate of the realm is now Everyman, Woman, Child or destitute wielding a cheap cell phone from Vietnam or Shanghai.

The key revolution in communication is that, for the first time, both the voters, the political parties and the candidates themselves all became active communicators. Party online media platforms multiplied and posted their own real time stories and photos. Individual candidates wrote their own news stories, updated and posted their own photo feeds on the go and directed their own Op-Ed commentary warfare and news reports on the go. Since most registered online platforms do not have the necessary funding to be as mobile as the politicians they were reporting at rallies and campaigns, they were less instantaneous and current than the subjects they were

reporting on. The politicians went around with their own cell phones and handheld production crew to shoot and broadcast their won videos and push them onto the world stage at the speed of lightening.

Both the voters and election officials also became reporters, commentators and value judges themselves. Therefore, not much media spend by politicians and political parties went to the legacy media or to the numerous new online platforms. Much of the campaign budget stayed in the pockets and bank vaults of parties and political actors.

What Has Fiction Got to Do With It?

The world of fiction is a world of make belief. It is at the same time a true reflection of reality but essentially a lie because it tells life's truths based on the laws of a 'lie'. Some scholars have spoken of the truth of literature and fiction as a world of 'truthful lies'.

A work of fiction exists as an objective reality. We can see and touch a novel, a play or a book of poems. We can listen to recordings of folk tales. But the world which a work of literary fiction recreates does not exist as an objective reality. Its content is never a three-dimensional touchable reality. As audience, we read, perceive and listen in suspended disbelief. We know it is a 'lie' but believe it because it reflects truths that remind us of our own experiences in reality. King Lear is not exactly the king in the next town. But the choices he has to make and the experiences he goes through as a tormented fictional sovereign speak of real experiences and the torments of high office when faced with the forces of change. He becomes every king of influence and authority in our real world. We fear for ourselves because we are 'human' like the demented king but overcome his torment because we know he is imaginary.

Critics, theorists, publishers and other people who make a living out of producing and popular-

izing literature take themselves and their trades seriously. They are teachers, scholars, publishers, publicists, printers and even students engaged in real life objective engagements and productive pursuits. Their efforts are not make belief, or fictional fantasies. Literary critics and theorists like myself make value judgments about the fictional people and actions we experience in literature. They do what we as journalists do in our job as witnesses to history in a hurry. We all take ourselves seriously in a world ruled by division of labour and professional specialization.

Where Fiction and Journalism Meet in Politics

Politicians who contest today's democratic elections around the world have a lot in common with the heroes that dominate the world of literary fiction. Similarly, journalists who report and comment on the actions of these politicians are more like the chorus in Greek tragedy or even comedy. Through us journalists as chorus and cheer mongers, the public as participant/observers in a democratic process are able to draw their conclusions and make up their minds as to which candidate to support or vote for.

A political campaign in full steam takes on the guise of literature in the form of drama. Politicians, like comedians, wear garish costumes. They speak in unserious esoteric language, pretending to be what they are not. Even the things they say are far removed from their authentic beliefs. They speak a language that can be called 'political speak' in which everything is promised and very little is verifiable or intended to be held as an article of faith. Consistent deniability is the hallmark of 'political speak'.

This is a realm that is in direct opposition to the real world of real people who face poverty and deprivation. These ordinary people go out to listen to political campaign speeches to assuage their adversities and nurture some hope. It is like going out to watch a choreographed piece of dramatic presentation. Nothing approximates dramatic literature better than a political campaign 'performance'.

Fake News as Fiction Toppling Reality

The rise of 'fake news' is the nearest we get to journalists admitting their proximity to fiction makers and creative fiction artists. In 'fake news', some 'journalists' and commentators put on the garb of fiction writers. But fake news is disturbingly real. It is however more dangerous than factual news. Fake news has a readier likelihood to upset social and political order by inciting riots, mob upheaval and civil disobedience than factual reporting. When we now add the emerging tricks of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to deepen the impact of fake news, we are well within the realm of dangerous journalism and destructive literature. The pen as the ultimate sword! The road to universal political Armageddon is paved with doses of fake news and 'creative' reporting! In terms of their destructive potential, fake news animated by AI could be as catastrophic as when AI overwrites the command protocols in the defense computer network of a nuclear super power.

When former US President Donald Trump speaks of 'alternative truths' and 'alternative reality', he is actually licensing journalists to become fiction writers. Above all, he is deliberately engaging in destructive propaganda as we saw in the January 6, 2022 mob revolt and invasion of the US Capitol. When a journalist concocts fiction and posts it online as fact, he blurs the dividing line between fiction and reality. The reading or listening public is lost as to where to draw the line. Dangerous people fed bad ideas through fake news can be a lethal threat to the world as we saw in the Washington Capitol armed invasion of January 6.

In that event, the parameters for judging news and genuine journalism meet and mix with criteria for literary evaluation because fiction take on a viral life and life itself takes on a literary garb.

The Triumph of Ultimate Power

When we are tasked to assess a major political event such as the last elections in Nigeria, we have a task of disentangling or separating reality from fiction in the actions and behaviors of political actors.

Read full article online - www.thisdaylive.com

SUNDAYSPORTS

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Trossard Scores Arsenal's 1,000th Goal to Level with Leaders City

PREMIER LEAGUE

Duro Ikhazuagbe with agency report

Leandro Trossard bravely nodded in at the far post for Arsenal's 1,000th goal at Emirates Stadium against Burnley as the Gunners moved level on points with Premier League leaders Manchester City.

After Arsenal were beaten at Newcastle in their penultimate game, the Gunners had struggled 3-1 to break down a disciplined Claret side for much of the first half but broke the deadlock when Trossard nodded in the goal.

Burnley equalised eight minutes into the second half when Josh Brownhill's low shot was deflected into the net by Gabriel, but the visitors were level for only three minutes before William Saliba headed in Trossard's corner from point-blank range.

Oleksandr Zinchenko completed the scoring with

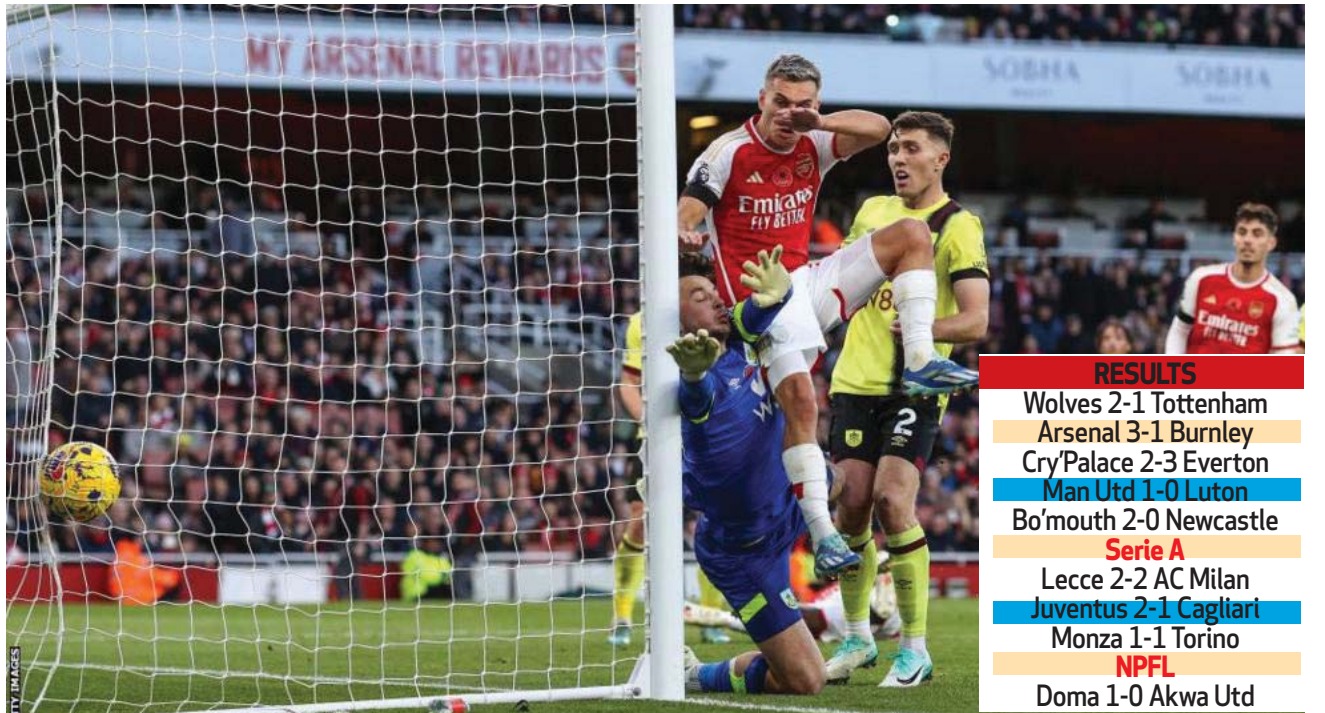
an acrobatic finish into the top corner after Dara O'Shea had inadvertently steered another Trossard corner onto the crossbar.

Arsenal finished the game with 10 men after second-half substitute Fabio Vieira was shown a straight red card for a studs-up challenge on Brownhill, but the Gunners held on comfortably.

Burnley stay in the relegation zone while Arsenal trail league leaders City on goal difference - although Pep Guardiola's team can restore their three-point lead with victory at Chelsea on Sunday.

"I'm very happy with the performance," Gunners boss Mikel Arteta told BBC Sport. "The way the team dominated the game, we fully deserved to win."

"They were defending really deep [but] we generated a lot today and looked a threat every time [we came forward]. The timing of the equaliser was perfect."



RESULTS	
Wolves	2-1 Tottenham
Arsenal	3-1 Burnley
CryPalace	2-3 Everton
Man Utd	1-0 Luton
Bo'mouth	2-0 Newcastle
Serie A	
Lecce	2-2 AC Milan
Juventus	2-1 Cagliari
Monza	1-1 Torino
NPFL	
Doma	1-0 Akwa Utd

'Onuachu's Goal Good Enough to Win FIFA's Puskas Award'

Paul Onuachu has got the football world buzzing after his audacious scorpion-kick goal for Trabzonspor Friday night.

The ball was ahead of Onuachu inside the box, but he somehow jumped and extended one of his long legs to connect in spectacular fashion beyond the Konyaspor goalkeeper in the 85th minute.

Trabzonspor coach Abdullah Avci simply described the acrobatic goal as "Goal of the Year", while Onuachu's Turkish club have already picked it for the Puskas Goal of the Year Award presented by FIFA.

"Oh my world, Paul Onuachu really scored a goal worthy of the Puskas award, this is the best goal in Europe so far this season," gushed @annabellamarvy on X.

"Paul Onuachu might have just won the 2023 Puskas Award with this goal for Trabzonspor," further celebrated @AFCTrae.

Added @ChampionsTV: "Paul Onuachu just scored this Puskas worthy goal. Nigerian strikers are on fire."

Southampton loanee Onuachu has now netted six goals and an assist in eight games.

IBB Golf Club Rolls out CNN Campaign to Elevate Nigerian Golf

In its continued efforts to take Nigerian golf to a new level, IBB Golf and Country Club Abuja has rolled out a special golf tactical campaign starting this November.

The promotional and educational campaign which will be the first of its kind is aimed at promoting golf, sportsmanship, the spirit of unity among enthusiasts and the potential of Nigeria emerging as a top golf nation.

This groundbreaking IBB Golf Club campaign, running from November-December on peak time evening spots will also specially highlight the 2023 Independence Golf Tournament.

This golf event set an all-time record in attendance, atmosphere, sponsorship, executive presence, community engagement, and the grand car prize from PAN Nigeria.

The high profile headline sponsors include; PAN

Nigeria, Access Bank, BUA Group, Glenfiddich, Sterling Bank, TAJ Bank and Hope PS Bank. Others are; Landmark Africa, WaltersSmith, Premium Pension, Stanbic IBTC, Golden Construction, MOUNA MO and Interglobal.

JSP Communications, "the luxury PR agency" was the official public relations and marketing agency of the IBB Golf Club

The 2023 IBB Golf Club event also featured a historic special golf exhibition by the Director General of National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) and the President, Nigeria Golf Federation (NGF), Otunba Olusegun Runsewe.

The special CNN campaign is designed to elevate the profile of the IBB Golf Club, showcase the world-class facilities it offers, and emphasize the importance of golf as a sport that transcends

boundaries, and goes hand in hand with nature.

The CNN campaign will give a quick photo panorama of the IBB Golf Club, exploring the club's history, world-class facilities, lush greens, breathtaking surrounding and the natural habitat which is also a home to various mammals and captivating crocodiles.

The Captain of the IBB Golf, Dr Banjo Obaleye pointed out that: "The game of golf is growing in Nigeria. We have courses that can compete globally. Our fairways and greens are in impeccable shape and condition. You can come to Nigeria and do your business and also enjoy playing your golf here."

"We are also looking at the youth development and grassroots promotion, because golf is not just about elites. We are confident that maybe tomorrow, Nigerian can produce the next Tiger Woods."

The Vice-Captain of the Club and Chairman of the Independence Cup Organizing Committee, Mr Ibrahim Babayo also emphasized that "we are taking this golf beyond just play the game. We are looking at how we can improve our social capital and at the same time, how we can improve tourism."

"The potential of Golf tourism is over \$19 million. We are excited to be at the centre of history and rewriting the story of golf in Nigeria."

The CNN feature on the IBB Golf Club rounds up with a powerful tip by the Tournament champion and winner of the PAN Nigeria car, Joe Poromo: "You never know when it's your day. So anytime you show up on the golf course, keep your head down and play against the course. Greatness could just be a shot away."



•Paul Onuachu...scores wonder goal on Friday night

Medallists Emerge in 100m & 400m at MTN CHAMPS Ibadan

The finals of several events were concluded on Day 2 of MTN CHAMPS Ibadan, throwing up potential stars who set the track and field of the Lekan Salami Stadium alight with their inspiring performances in the 100m and 400m across all three age categories, as well as some field events.

Mariam Jegede clocked a lifetime best of 12.02s in the semis of the Youth Girls 100m, eventually storming to GOLD ahead of Kehinde Okunola and Ayomide Omotosho, both of Apata Ajele Community School.

In the Youth Boys 100m, Kehinde Ifeoluwa Ojo inspired a 1-3 for Best Legacy International School, while Emmanuel Oyetunde of Cornerstone Group took the Silver, while Abdulqudus Ajibona settled for Bronze.

Aishat Abiodun Muraina emerged the fastest girl in the Cadet category, storming to a new PB of 13.16s to strike GOLD for Best Legacy International ahead of Olivet Baptist School's duo of Alimat Qasim and Precious Ayeniyi.

Olamilekan Oladapo of Asegun Comprehensive was the fastest boy in the same category, crossing the line first ahead of Joel Timilehin and Olusodo Isreal of Fortress College.

It was a 1-2-3 for Altivelis in the Girls' 100m Juniors as Tunmininu Sanyaolu led the way for teammates Mary Adediran and Ifeoluwa Owolabi. Adediran would then upgrade to GOLD in the Long Jump.

Aina Precious Oluwakoye of Kwara State was the fastest Junior boy. He was followed by Oluwademilade Ajayi and

Kabitu Muhammed respectively.

Brightville College claimed a GOLD Medal in the Cadet Girls 400m courtesy of Peace Ogundeji who was the Girl to beat in the event. Adesolape Adeniyi of Agege Government College and Omolara Adekunle of Abonde Community Grammar placed 2nd and 3rd respectively.

Samson Alabi did Apata Ajele Community proud in the Cadet Boys 400m, out-dipping Samuel Adeboola of Oba Akinbiyi High School and Idowu Adebayo of Zumuratul Hujaj Community respectively.

Taiye Okunola, Progress Eribo and Ojonla Islamiat were the Top 3 finishers in the Youth Girls' 400m while Stephen Adejumo of Olivet Baptist, Jamal Adeniran (Cornerstone Group) and Abdulqudus Abdulmojeed

(Eleyele Jericho High) finished in the same positions in the Boys race.

Eniola Shiro of No Sweat Athletics Club was the Junior Boys 400m Champion, with Emmanuel Omotosho of Kwara State University and Abeebe Oyekanmi taking 2nd and 3rd respectively.

Ruqqayah Kemi Mustapha dominated the Junior Girls Shot put and Discus events. She was followed by Favour Osagie and Suliyat Oyewumi respectively.

Titilayo Adebayo of Queen of Apostles won the Youth Girls Discus title ahead of Mary Kolawale of Oluyoro Grammar and Alimat Sadiq Ibadan Grammar, Molete.

More than 150 schools and teams are competing at MTN CHAMPS Ibadan, with entries received from 2000 Athletes.

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"In so many places, it is either the INEC staff refused to sign the result or refuse to upload. You saw what happened here. It took the intervention of security operatives who came here before they started uploading the results. The machine they said could not upload suddenly started uploading" - The Labour Party governorship candidate in Imo State, Senator Athan Achonu, decrying the high level of electoral manipulations that took place in the state.

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Sacrifice is for the Poor

Long ago, I read the story of a young boy whose mum gave two 10 kobo coins on a Sunday morning. "This 10 kobo is for offering. The other one is for sweets after service," the mum instructed him. The boy kept the coins in his breast pocket. On his way to church, one of the coins fell out of his pocket as he jumped over a ditch. The boy shook his head and said: "Dear God, there goes your 10 kobo." Sense won't kill him! That is the selfishness always at play whenever the Nigerian economy is in a bad state: the little resources left are for the comfort of our leaders and the brunt of the crunch is to be borne only by the people. It always happens. Nothing ever changes in our dearly beloved country.

Nigerians have been going through hell in recent years and things could only get worse with the removal of petrol subsidy and the official devaluation of the naira. While these painful policies are inevitable — the truth is that we were living a lie and had refused to make necessary adjustments for too long — the message of "sacrifice" would have been more appealing if our leaders were, for Pete's sake, practising what they preach. So far, I have not seen any measure or behaviour under President Bola Tinubu to show that the message of "sacrifice" is for all. It is lowly Nigerians that always have to "sacrifice" to keep the champagne flowing for the leaders in their yachts and jets.

Where do I start from? Senator Sunday Steve Karimi, the senator representing Kogi West, was on TV some weeks ago trying to justify the decision of the National Assembly to buy "committee cars", each reportedly valued at N160 million. For those who may not know: before the introduction of the monetisation policy of the federal government in 2003 or so, every member of the National Assembly was given a new official car. However, with monetisation, the cost of a car is now calculated and paid, along with other allowances such as wardrobe and medical, on a pro-rata basis to the lawmakers. But they still go on buying "committee cars" to help them do "oversight" work.

If they truly need "committee cars", why buy for every member? Why can't they buy pool cars as their own "sacrifice"? Of course, they are having their egg and eating it at the same time. And you know what? Government assets are depreciated at 25 percent per year. By the fourth year, it has zero value. The committee cars will end up as personal assets at zero price. Sense won't kill these people! That may be why Karimi said foreign SUVs are the ones made for Nigerian roads. "If I go home once to my senatorial district, I come back spending a lot on my vehicles because our roads are bad," he said as per the suggestion that the lawmakers should kindly buy SUVs assembled in Nigeria.

Karimi was telling the truth. By the way, he is my senator. In fact, between 2011 and 2019, he was also the member representing my Yagba East/Yagba West/Mopamuro constituency in the House of Reps. By and large, he has been travelling between Abuja and Kogi West in SUVs since 2011. He knows the meaning of bad roads. The last time I travelled to my village to bury my grandmother, the roads were so, so horrible. As you go past Aiyetoro Gbedde on your way from Kabba, the rest is torture, from Mopa through Isanlu to Egbe, all in Kogi state, and then deep into Kwara. But unlike Karimi, most people don't have Prados to help them through the nightmare. Such a lucky chap.

Karimi's misadventure on Channels TV explains many things about the mindset of most of those ruling over us — and this is not limited to legislators. It includes the big guys in the executive and the judicial arms of government. For one, these people



Senator Sunday Karimi

don't understand why they are in office. When the roads are bad, they do not think it is their job, one way or the other, to get them fixed. Instead, they go and buy SUVs so that they can successfully enter the potholes and come out in flying colours. When there is insecurity, they travel under the protection of police, NSCDC and military officers. That is their understanding of why they are in power: to feather their own nests without let or hindrance.

Two, these guys — again, I mean the guys in power — are deaf and blind, as it were. At a time Nigerians are complaining about the price of petrol, what these guys are thinking about is the price of SUV. If these guys are really in touch with the people as they always claim, they will think less about personal comfort and more about the rising cost of living for the ordinary Nigerian who does not have access to the treasury, who does not sit on committees, who does not award contracts and who does not get "oversight" alerts. There is an almighty disconnect between those in power and the people on the streets. Not that it started today, but there is just no let-up despite our cries.

Three, Karimi made a Freudian slip and ended up exposing the mentality of many public officers. "Somebody that is a minister has more than three Land Cruisers, Prado, and other vehicles, and you are not asking them questions. Why us?" he asked. In truth, the competition in government is usually about "my Mercedes is bigger than yours". Ministers and legislators should be competing on the basis of how many roads, schools and hospitals they have used their influence to fix in their constituencies — not how many Land Cruisers, Prados and mansions they have accumulated while in "service" to fatherland. We can never fix Nigeria until we are able to fix this warped mentality.

Finally, Karimi's interview further exposed the sense of entitlement among those who rule Nigeria. They think Nigeria owes them everything. Last week, Pastor Sam Adeyemi preached a message straight from Matthew 20:25-28 on what Jesus told his disciples about the meaning of leadership: "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave."

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

In Nigeria, it is the other way round. To be a leader — either in government or private sector — is to be a tin god. Rather than serve, you are to be served. Rather than sacrifice your comfort for the good of the people, you make the people sacrifice for your comfort. That is why anytime there is austerity, as we are currently facing, our leaders will collect every kobo they are entitled to, and then say, like the little boy, "Dear Nigerians, there goes your 10 kobo." There will be no "cash backing" when it comes to delivering the goods to the people. There will be money to pay for presidential yachts and presidential jets but when it comes to funding education, the budget will start underperforming.

Pastor Adeyemi said you cannot be a good leader in any sphere of life if you do not love the people you are leading. Spot on! I agree wholeheartedly. If you have love, you will have compassion. That is a given. You cannot be a leader in a poverty-ridden society, where poor people are treated like rags at public hospitals, where the children of the poor are dropping out of school because they cannot afford the cost, where people are trekking to office because they cannot afford the transport fare — and your priority will be how to acquire the most expensive toys in town for "committee work" or to travel in chartered flights. No. Your conscience will not allow you to fiddle while Rome burns.

Make no mistakes about it: this is not just an Abuja problem. We don't even know how many cars the state legislators are buying for "committee work", or how much allowances they collect every month. We are not really interested in that. We do not know how the state budgets are padded or how the contracts are awarded. We do not know if yachts and jets are also a thing for some of the governors. We do not care that much. Those who control public discourse in Nigeria have fervently framed everything wrong with governance as an Abuja problem or some political structure. Everything starts and ends in Abuja. Unfortunately, that is how we see things and there is nothing we can do about it.

I have been saying this for a while and I accept that many Nigerians will never agree with me: the real division in Nigeria is not north and south, Christian and Muslim, six geo-political zones, 250 ethnic groups, or even APC, PDP and Labour Party. Rather, the real division is into two groups: Group A and Group B, in which Group A is for the elite in power and their associates and Group B is for the "other Nigerians". Those mismanaging Nigeria and taking advantage of the public treasury do not have ethnic, religious or partisan inhibitions. They are united in their insensitivity and squandermania. I have not seen any legislator from any party or ethnic group come out to reject the SUV bonanza.

On the other hand, those suffering the consequences of the waste and mismanagement are from all ethnic groups, parties, religions and regions. Inflation does not spare people because they are Hausa or Igbo, PDP or APC, northerners or southerners. You see, an egg can sell for N200, garri for N500 per mudu, petrol for N2,000 per litre and diesel for N2,000 per litre. It is none of the business of Group A. They will still eat in excess and waste much. They will still buy more cars and build more houses. They will still go for "summer". They will always take care of themselves — with the help of the "broke" treasury. The message of sacrifice is for the others: "Dear Group B, there goes your 10 kobo."

And Four Other Things...

MIGHTY MATAWALLE

Alhaji Bello Matawalle, minister of state for defence, has been under the spotlight over his actions and deeds as Zamfara governor from 2019 to 2023. The state government has published a long list and bundles of pictures of projects that Matawalle fully paid for but were totally abandoned or not executed. One was a N1 billion "catering centre" that is just a pile of blocks. In his response, Matawalle said the exposé is aimed at discrediting him and getting him fired as minister. I would advise Matawalle not to worry about that. With what I have seen and heard so far, I don't think any appointee should be worried about getting sacked by President Tinubu for corruption. Extravaganza.

SOLIDARITY SICKNESS

Members of the National Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) on Thursday disrupted flights at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, in solidarity with the NLC president, Comrade Joe Ajeiro, who was assaulted obviously by political thugs or police officers or both in — wait for this — faraway Imo state! The Abuja disruption is the height of irresponsibility. What is the business of other Nigerians with the fight between Ajeiro and his state governor, Senator Hope Uzodinma, who was seeking re-election and whom Ajeiro apparently doesn't want to return to office? The excesses of some of these unionists need to be curbed urgently. Rascality.

ISRAEL'S HAMMER

More than a month after war broke out between Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian militant group which also doubles as a political party governing Gaza, there are still no winners. Hamas had launched a surprise attack on Israel on October 7, reportedly killing 1,400 Israelis and taking 200 hostage. Israel typically responded with maximum force and over 10,000 people, mostly civilians, have reportedly died. But one fact remains: nobody is going to win this war. Bombs cannot. Guns cannot. Only common sense will. Israel will have to accept the two-state solution (by accepting Palestinians' right to have a country) and Hamas have to recognise Israel's right to exist. Compromise..

FINALLY...

Anytime MultiChoice increases its tariffs, it always attracts more attention than the prices of garri and onions — or any other price hikes in Nigeria. The National Assembly and some unions would threaten to shut down the pay TV company's operations in Nigeria. Meanwhile, costs of goods and services (particularly those paid for in dollars) have been on the rise for years because of the FX situation. Government fees and levies have been going up. But there seems to be an obsession with MultiChoice which I have never been able to understand. At this rate, the National Assembly may have to amend the constitution in order to declare pay TV as a fundamental human right. Weird.