

Fitch Revises Nigeria's Outlook to Positive, Affirms 'B-' Rating amid Market-friendly Reforms

● Welcomes policies to restore macroeconomic stability ● Maintains high debt service, rising inflation remain risks to outlook

Nume Ekeghe on Nigeria's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) to Positive from Stable, and affirmed the IDR at 'B-'. In its latest rating released yesterday, which was obtained by THISDAY, the global agency pointed out that the positive outlook partly reflected reforms over the last year to support the restoration of macroeconomic stability and enhance policy coherence and credibility. It noted that in Nigeria, Exchange **Continued on page 5**

Sule Lamido Weighs in on Ihedioha's PDP Exit, Says Gale of Resignation from Party Out of Frustration... Page 5

Saturday May 4, 2024
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THIS DAY

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N400

No Compromise on Press Freedom, FG Assures Media... Page 15

For Reinvestment in Mobil, Shell, Agip, Equinor Oil Blocks, NUPRC Gives Two-week Ultimatum

● Offers 10.9m barrels of oil, 90.7 Bcf of gas for sale

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja gas reinvestment and divestment process in the country, totalling 26 blocks, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) yesterday issued a two-week deadline to all parties involved to choose from two options and revert within 14 days. The companies involved in the process are: Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC), which intends to sell its assets to Oando; Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPNU) which has Seplat Energies as the buyer; Equinor, which is selling to Chappal and Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), which has the Renaissance **Continued on page 5**

Salako: Works Ministry Issued Preliminary ESIA Approval on Lagos-Calabar Highway

Bennett Oghifo

The Minister of State for Environment, Izaq Salako, yesterday, said the Federal Ministry of Works was given preliminary Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) certification for scoping and site clearing of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway.

Salako, who disclosed this during an interview on Arise News Channel, said the Federal Ministry of Works applied for the environmental and social impact assessment of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway, stating that the, "Ministry of Environment has done its preliminary assessment and I can confirm that we have issued a preliminary impact assessment certification for site clearance and scoping for compensation."

He also said because it was a long road, "the issuance of the certification would be done in phases. The project can go on and we can also be doing our own bit of it."

On which comes first between

Continued on page 5



COSMOPOLITAN WOMEN CLUB INVESTITURE...

L-R: SSG Lagos State, Bimbola Salu-Hundeyin; Mrs. Onikepo Oshodi; First Lady of Lagos State, Dr. Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu; President Cosmopolitan Women Club (CWC), Dame Marie Fatayi-Williams; and HRM, Erelu Abiola Dosumu, at the Investiture of Dame Marie Fatayi-Williams as the 4th President of Cosmopolitan Women Club (CWC), in Lagos...yesterday **MUBO PETERS**

African Union Writes Nigeria, South Africa on AFRIMA Hosting Rights... Page 16

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GUARANTY TRUST HOLDING COMPANY PLC

STATEMENT TO THE NIGERIAN EXCHANGE AND THE SHAREHOLDERS ON THE EXTRACT OF UNAUDITED IFRS RESULTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The Board of Directors of Guaranty Trust Holding Company Plc is pleased to announce the Group's unaudited results for the period ended 31 March 2024

Consolidated and Separate Statements of Financial Position as at 31 March 2024	Group Mar-2024	Group Dec-2023	Company Mar-2024	Company Dec-2023
	N'million	N'million	N'million	N'million
ASSETS				
Cash and bank balances	3,736,034	2,309,619	60	60
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	22,552	28,067	-	-
Derivative financial assets	29,118	28,961	-	-
Investment securities:				
– Fair value through Profit or Loss	3,948	3,948	-	-
– Fair value through other comprehensive income	1,993,116	894,064	-	-
– Held at amortised cost	1,422,544	1,571,317	-	-
Assets pledged as collateral	73,856	86,553	-	-
Loans and advances to banks	75	67	-	-
Loans and advances to customers	3,023,531	2,480,183	-	-
Restricted deposits and other assets	2,347,213	2,012,815	11	-
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	162,957	162,957
Property and equipment	295,666	224,299	774	798
Intangible assets	34,181	33,076	-	-
Deferred tax assets	20,391	18,286	-	-
TOTAL ASSETS	13,002,225	9,691,255	163,802	163,815
LIABILITIES				
Deposits from banks	305,912	136,054	-	-
Deposits from customers	9,202,651	7,410,834	-	-
Financial liabilities at fair value through profit or loss	3,475	809	-	-
Derivative financial liabilities	-	-	-	-
Other liabilities	1,006,135	493,326	16,065	16,483
Current income tax liabilities	76,680	41,303	89	89
Other borrowed funds	287,850	72,120	-	-
Deferred tax liabilities	113,298	59,681	12	12
TOTAL LIABILITIES	10,996,001	8,214,127	16,166	16,584
CAPITAL AND RESERVES				
Share capital	14,716	14,716	14,716	14,716
Share premium	123,471	123,471	123,471	123,471
Treasury shares	(8,126)	(8,126)	-	-
Retained earnings	931,234	580,034	574	169
Other components of equity	923,230	737,547	8,875	8,875
Capital and reserves attributable to equity holders of the parent entity	1,984,525	1,447,642	147,636	147,231
Non-controlling interests in equity	21,699	29,486	-	-
TOTAL EQUITY	2,006,224	1,477,128	147,636	147,231
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	13,002,225	9,691,255	163,802	163,815

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON 26 APRIL 2024:

FRC/2013/CAN/00000004318

Banji Adeniyi
(Group Chief Financial Officer)

FRC/2013/CAN/00000001319

Cathy Echeozo
(Non-Executive Director)

FRC/2013/CIBN/00000001782

Segun Agbaje
(Group Chief Executive Officer)

Consolidated and Separate Income Statements for the period ended 31 March 2024	Group Mar-2024	Group Mar-2023	Company Mar-2024	Company Mar-2023
	N'million	N'million	N'million	N'million
Interest income calculated using effective interest rate	273,303	96,565	-	-
Interest income on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	8,350	7,515	-	-
Interest expense	(54,352)	(21,929)	-	-
Net interest income	227,301	82,151	-	-
Loan impairment charges	(13,488)	(3,442)	-	-
Net interest income after loan impairment charges	213,813	78,709	-	-
Fee and commission income	55,989	32,429	785	785
Fee and commission expense	(3,738)	(2,493)	-	-
Net fee and commission income	52,251	29,936	785	785
Net gains on financial instruments held at fair value through profit or loss	17,795	10,628	-	-
Other income	324,942	10,956	-	-
Net impairment reversal on other financial assets	(123)	-	-	-
Personnel expenses	(22,277)	(10,391)	(318)	(283)
Depreciation and amortisation	(13,886)	(9,382)	(24)	(24)
Other operating expenses	(63,166)	(36,367)	(37)	(87)
Profit before income tax	509,349	74,089	406	391
Income tax expense	(52,214)	(15,922)	-	-
Profit for the period	457,135	58,167	406	391
Profit attributable to:				
Equity holders of the parent entity	455,039	57,138	406	391
Non-controlling interests	2,096	1,029	-	-
	457,135	58,167	406	391

Consolidated and Separate Statements of other comprehensive income for the period ended 31 March 2024	Group Mar-2024	Group Mar-2023	Company Mar-2024	Company Mar-2023
	N'million	N'million	N'million	N'million
Profit for the period	457,135	58,167	406	391
Other comprehensive income to be reclassified to profit or loss in subsequent periods:				
- Foreign currency translation differences for foreign operations	189,527	(16,612)	-	-
- Income tax relating to foreign currency translation differences for foreign operations	(56,858)	4,984	-	-
- Net change in fair value of other financial assets FVOCI	(12,818)	(2,948)	-	-
- Income tax relating to change in fair value of other financial assets FVOCI	3,845	884	-	-
Other comprehensive income for the period, net of tax	123,696	(13,692)	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the period	580,831	44,475	406	391
Profit attributable to:				
Equity holders of the parent entity	574,250	44,367	406	391
Non-controlling interests	6,581	108	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the period	580,831	44,475	406	391
Earnings per share for the profit attributable to the equity holders of the parent entity during the period (expressed in naira per share):				
– Basic	16.24	2.04	0.01	0.01
– Diluted	16.24	2.04	0.01	0.01
Gross Earnings	680,378	158,093	785	785
Total impaired Loans and Advances (N'million)	108,753	109,582	-	-
Total impaired Loans and Advances to Gross Loans and Advances (%)	3.13%	4.19%	-	-

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PAGE FIVE

Sule Lamido Weighs in on Ihedioha's PDP Exit, Says Gale of Resignation from Party Out of Frustration

● Faults Anyanwu's retention of position of national secretary ● Declares no plan to defect to APC

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

Former governor of Jigawa State, Alhaji Sule Lamido, has described the ongoing resignation by members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), especially in Imo and few other small State as a result of frustration occasioned by the leadership of the party and the judiciary.

Speaking in a telephone chat with THISDAY, he blamed the current crisis in the party as the handiwork of the court, saying if the supreme court did not upturn the election of Hon. Emeka Ihedioha as Imo Governor, he would have remained a sitting governor of the State by now.

Also, he said that if the court did not insist that Senator Samuel Anyanwu was the National Secretary, when he (Anyanwu) went and contested for the Imo State governorship election, the

position of National Secretary would have gone to another person from Imo State

According to Lamido, "Emeka Ihedioha and other chieftains of the PDP that resigned from the party were humiliated and frustrated out. They were humiliated by the leadership of the party, with the help of the judiciary.

"Ministers resigned to contest election. Other government officials and even party officials resigned to contest elective offices. Senator Anyanwu ought to have resigned to contest the governorship election in Imo state

"What did he (Anyanwu) do. He held to the office of national secretary and contested for the governorship election. You cannot eat your cake and still have it back. You cannot appropriate the two positions. You are the national secretary and the governorship

candidate at the same time. This is not done."

He added: "So, when the stakeholders from Imo state complained, the judiciary aided him and affirmed his position as National Secretary when he lost his governorship election

"So, Ihedioha and his group felt frustrated and humiliated by the action of the leadership of the party by failing to stand up for justice. So, as a person, I don't blame Ihedioha and his associates. I can understand why he and his associates left. Some external influences are tele-guiding the party."

On the defection of the former Governor of Katsina moving to the APC, he said that the State was formally under the control of the All Peoples Party (APP), saying it was the influence of former President Olusegun Obasanjo that made the PDP to win the State in 2003.

He, however, pointed out that with the influence of former President Muhammadu Buhari and all his political associates it went back to the APC.

"I see it as he wants to meet them. I don't believe that he went to APC because of the EFCC. Though, I remember what the former national chairman of APC, Adams Oshiomhole said that when you defect to the APC, all your sins are forgotten," Lamido stated.

Speaking further on the situation in PDP Imo State, he maintained that the leadership of the party was "extremely unfair to Ihedioha who first asked if Anyanwu will contest for governor and when Anyanwu said yes, Ihedioha left it for him and yet, Anyanwu still did not leave the post of National secretary. It is not fair."

On the role of the judiciary in the plights of the PDP, he cited the case of the Supreme Court

on Ihedioha's case, arguing that, "if not the ignoble role of the Supreme Court, Ihedioha will still be governor and the same courts was used to support Anyanwu retaining the office of the National Secretary and the Governorship candidate.

"When the history of the PDP is to be told, the role of the courts must occupy a special place. This is especially with the southeast geopolitical zone."

When asked if he was likely going to join the APC, he said, "No, they will not accept me. Go and ask President Bola Tinubu, if he and his APC will accept me."

So far, those that have left the party in the State include former Military Administrator, Air Commodore Luke Ochulor; Former Deputy Governor, Engr. Gerald Irona; Former Ministers of the Federal Republic, Engr. Charles Ugwu, Chief Chuka Odom and

BOT member of the party - Chief Chris Okewulonu.

Others that dumped the PDP were former NEC member of the party- Chief Henry Ekpe; Former elected members of House of Representatives - Hon. ThankGod Ezeani, Hon. Mayor Eze, Hon. Uche Onyeguocho, Hon. Ugonna Ozurigbo, Hon. Obinna Onwubuariri and Hon. Jonas Okeke.

The list also included Chairman PDP elders' committee - Prof. Jude Njoku; Secretary PDP elders' Committee - Prof. Obioma Iheduru; Members of the South-east Zonal Executive Committee, Chief Stanley Ekezie; Chief Augustine Elochukwu; Two senatorial candidates of the party in the last election- including Chief Emmanuel Okewulonu, former local government chairmen, several House of Assembly candidates of the party, among others.

FOR REINVESTMENT IN MOBIL, SHELL, AGIP, EQUINOR OIL BLOCKS, NUPRC GIVES TWO-WEEK ULTIMATUM

Consortium as its prospective buyer.

Speaking at an industry dialogue in Abuja, organised by the NUPRC to trash out pending issues hobbling the completion of the process, some as far back as three years, the Chief Executive of the commission, Mr. Gbenga Komolafe, stated that the meeting was necessary to give insight and guidance to the process.

The commission listed the short term option which would see it sign off on the four ongoing deals by June or the long term option, which would see conclusion of the deals extend to August.

Specifically, the commission proposed that the divesting entities should either agree to the grant of ministerial consent to the divestments, on the condition that they would retain the liabilities until its investigation was concluded and the liabilities allocated to the proper party.

In this case, it posited that the divesting companies would be required to issue an undertaking to retain the liabilities until confirmation of the release by the commission of all or part of the retained liabilities.

Alternatively, it stated that the entities could agree that ministerial consent would not be granted until it had identified and assigned all liabilities to the capable party.

In this situation, the divesting entities, it stated would also be required to issue a waiver, waiving their rights

to deemed consent as provided in Section 95 (7) (b) of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA).

He stated that it was also meant to consider due diligence and interrogation on compliance with the laws and processes that govern the proposed divestment of oil and gas assets by International Oil Companies (IOCs) to indigenous companies.

"Please note that the commission expects the divesting parties to indicate their preferred option and issue the applicable instrument within two weeks of the date of this workshop," Komolafe stated.

A number of the deals which had been in the pipelines had been delayed, thereby hobbling the country's efforts to meet its Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) production quota.

For the first time, the NUPRC has now laid a framework of requirements for divestment which must be met by the IOCs, a move that will remarkably see the expeditious completion of negotiations, minister's consent as well as regulatory approval.

Komolafe added: "A total of 26 blocks are proposed to be divested. These blocks have an estimated total reserve of 8.211 million barrels of oil, 2,699 million barrels of condensate, 44,110 billion cubic feet of associated gas and 46,604 billion cubic feet of non-associated gas.

"This is a significant contribution

to the nation's hydrocarbon resources. Additionally, these blocks contain P3 (possible) reserves estimated at 5,557 million barrels of oil, 1,221 million barrels of condensate, 14,296 billion cubic feet of associated gas and 13,518 billion cubic feet of non-associated gas.

"It is worth noting that a substantial part of the P3 reserves is located in or near producing assets. This means that a competent successor could easily mature them to 2P reserves."

Additionally, he stated that the current average production from the blocks is 346,290 bpd, with NAO's 28,018 bpd, MPNU's 159,378 bpd, Equinor's 36,155 bpd and SPDC's 122,739 bpd.

However, he noted that the technical production potential was much higher, standing at 643,054 barrels as NAO will ramp up to 147,481 bpd; MPNU to 244,268 bpd, Equinor to 39,203 and SPDC is expected to increase output to 212,102 bpd.

According to Komolafe, the blocks have the potential to significantly boost the national oil production, which would benefit all stakeholders.

According to him, the regulatory goal, he said, is to ensure that parties in the divestment process conform to the approved divestment guidelines, with the aim to ensure that the companies that take over the blocks have the necessary financial resources and possess the technical expertise required.

Furthermore, the NUPRC chief executive maintained that it will ensure the inherent environmental, host communities and end-of-life liabilities, including decommissioning liabilities, are accurately identified and assigned to the party best equipped to bear the associated risks.

He stressed that President Bola Tinubu had directed the commission to ensure a smooth entry and exit framework for the ongoing divestments by IOCs, explaining that measures were being implemented to streamline regulatory procedures and eliminate unnecessary barriers to investment. He relisted the divestment framework consisting of seven cardinal pillars as technical capacity, financial strength, legality of the entity, which must be manned by 'fit and proper' persons and adherence to decommissioning and abandonment regulations.

Besides, the commission stated that there must be compliance with the Host Community Trust/Environmental Remediation Fund, resolution of all industrial relations and labour issues and data repatriation by the divesting companies.

As earlier reported by THISDAY, Komolafe stated that the commission has engaged two leading global oil and gas decommissioning consultants, S&P Global Commodity Insights (SPGCI) and Boston Consulting Group (BCG) to carry out due diligence on the assets

to be divested.

"Their role is to work with the commission as independent consultants in defining all end-of-field life and abandonment legacy liabilities in compliance with divestment guidelines.

"They will also manage the operational risk across the entire asset portfolio, create a workflow for estimating total onshore decommissioning CAPEX liabilities, determine the host community's obligations based on three per cent OPEX stipulated in the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), benchmark best practices on asset sales, and provide case study reports that draw lessons based on best practices.

"One of the objectives we hope to achieve in this workshop is to ensure that the environmental, host communities, and end-of-life liabilities associated with these assets do not become the financial responsibility of the federal government," he emphasised.

Besides, he explained that the NUPRC was dedicated to ensuring that investment processes are smooth, transparent, and efficient.

He stated that the requirement to sign an undertaking or waiver

was solely aimed at preventing any unwarranted financial obligations from falling back on the federal government.

"I assure you that the commission is eager to close the divestments within the shortest timeline upon the receipt of any of the required instruments," he noted.

In his remarks, the Executive Commissioner, Development and Production, Enorens Amadasu, said that the commission was out to protect the interest of the country in the outcome of the divestment.

He expressed the hope that the dialogue will also help to reduce the risk of divesting companies evading legacy obligations and transferring them to new investors.

Amadasu, who gave a rundown of the process, said this will hasten getting regulatory approval and then ministerial consent, describing the process as clear, focused and well structured.

Also, the Secretary and Legal Adviser, NUPRC, Olayemi Anyanedi, said Nigeria was trying to avoid the Australian situation, wherein the government spent taxpayers' money remedying what was created by the oil companies.

SALAKO: WORKS MINISTRY ISSUED PRELIMINARY ESIA APPROVAL ON LAGOS-CALABAR HIGHWAY

scoping, for which the ministry gave preliminary certification, and the Environmental Impact Assessment, the minister explained, "The Environmental and social Impact Assessment goes through eight stages and scoping is one of the stages of EIA. The way it goes is that the proponents submit an application and proposal, then we do an internal screening on it and on the basis of that screening we can now categorise the project."

He said thereafter their staff moved to the site to see how to move the project forward.

When reminded that the EIA Act of 1992 had a provision that a project of the magnitude of the coastal road required an EIA, Salako said, "When laws are made, there is also usually a provision for regulations that can help make those laws effective and implementable. Besides the EIA Act itself there are also regulations that are developed from the EIA Act. For example, I have just talked about eight steps in the EIA."

Salako said further, "The fact of the matter is that most of the time when a project of this magnitude is to take off and proponents apply, often we issue a preliminary approval because, sometimes, such preliminary approval to access funding, but there is a limitation of what you can do with the

preliminary approval. The regulations supporting the Act actually allows us to give preliminary approval."

Shown a letter purportedly signed by the Federal Controller of Works, dated April 18, 2024, that invited the public to meeting on Saturday April 20, 2024, to discuss the scoping of the road project, the minister said he could not confirm or deny its authenticity since, at his pay level, he did not sign such letter, the technical people do.

On the likelihood of potential damage being done to the environment if a comprehensive EIA was not done before that huge coastal road project began, the minister said, "The EIA process is not necessarily designed to reject projects. Oftentimes, the EIA process is to evaluate the impact and to set off mitigation factors/negative impact of the process is put into its implementation to ensure mitigation."

He said the Environmental Impact Assessment Law was mandatory for some categories of projects, both public and private.

"We take it very seriously; we don't joke with it. As a matter of fact, in recent months, we have noticed a few loopholes in the existing Law and we are already approaching the Federal Executive Council to plug these loopholes."

FITCH REVISES NIGERIA'S OUTLOOK TO POSITIVE, AFFIRMS 'B-' RATING

AMID MARKET-FRIENDLY REFORMS

rate and monetary policy frameworks have been adjusted, fuel subsidies reduced, coordination between the ministry of finance and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) improved; Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) financing of the government scaled back, with administrative efficiency measures being taken to raise the currently low government revenue, as well as oil production.

"The reforms have reduced distortions stemming from previous unconventional monetary and exchange rate policies, resulting in the return of sizeable inflows to the official foreign exchange (FX) market. Nevertheless, we see significant short-term challenges, notably, inflation is high and the FX market has yet to stabilise, and the durability of the commitment to reform is to be tested.

"The CBN has stepped up efforts to reform the monetary and exchange rate framework following last year's unification of the multiple exchange rate windows, and the large differential between the official and parallel market rates has collapsed. Average daily FX turnover at the official FX window has risen sharply from 2H23, and

there has been clearance of \$4.5 billion of the backlog of unpaid FX forwards (the validity of the outstanding \$2.2 billion is being assessed by CBN), and weekly sales of FC to bureaux de changes (BDCs) have resumed (having been suspended since 2021).

"Greater formalisation of FX activity and monetary policy tightening has contributed to a significant rise in foreign portfolio investment inflows, and a fast appreciation of the naira at the official FX window, following the 71 per cent post-liberalisation depreciation between June 2023 and mid-March 2024, although the exchange rate remains volatile. However, Fitch views continued lack of clarity in the size of net FX reserves as a constraint on the sovereign's credit profile," it stated.

Fitch anticipated further increases in the CBN monetary policy rate in the second half of 2024, following the 600bp hike to 24.75 per cent since February 2024, alongside tightening of reserve requirements and, "strengthening of monetary policy transmission, after the recent resumption of open market operations at rates closely aligned to the MPR."

"We project inflation, which rose to 33.2 per cent year-on-year in March due partly to exchange rate pass-through and rising food prices, to average 26.3 per cent in 2024 and 18.2 per cent in 2025, still well above our projected 'B' median of 4.5 per cent.

"Fitch forecasts the budget deficit to widen 0.3 percentage point (pp) in 2024 to 4.5 per cent of GDP (but 0.5pp lower than we projected at our last review). This is due to improving non-oil revenue and partial fuel subsidy removal being offset by underperformance in oil profits from Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited (despite a potential improvement in oil production) and higher payments for debt servicing, personnel and capex.

"We project a two pp rise in general government (GG) revenue/GDP from 2023 to 2025 to 9.6 per cent, helped by increased mobilisation of non-oil tax revenue, to narrow the budget deficit to 4.1 per cent in 2025. Nevertheless, the GG revenue/GDP ratio would remain one of the lowest of Fitch-rated sovereigns. The government has sharply reduced recourse to its CBN Ways and

Means' overdraft this year, and banks' healthy foreign currency (FC) liquidity and strong demand for government securities support domestic financing capacity.

"We expect oil refining capacity to increase in 2024-2025 as the Dangote plant ramps up, with an eventual 0.65 mbpd capacity. This will reduce transportation costs and lower refined oil imports, which should ease FX demand. We anticipate an increase in crude oil production (including condensates) in 2024-2025, averaging 1.75 mbpd, from 1.58 mbpd in 2023, helped by improved onshore surveillance, but this is still well below the 2019 level, reflecting underinvestment in the sector and production outages," it added.

According to Fitch, "Nigeria's rating is supported by its large economy, developed and liquid domestic debt market, and large oil and gas reserves. It is constrained by weak governance indicators relative to peers, high hydrocarbon dependence, limited crude oil production capacity, weak net FX reserves, high inflation, ongoing security challenges, and structurally low, albeit improving, non-oil revenue."



CHIEF OF DEFENCE STAFF VISITS CBN GOVERNOR...

L-R: Deputy Governor, Operations Directorate, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Ms. Emem Usoro; Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa; CBN Governor, Mr. Olayemi Cardoso, and Deputy Governor, Economic Policy, CBN, Mr. Muhammad Sani Abdullahi, during the Defence Chief's courtesy visit to the Governor in Abuja... yesterday

FG Unbundles TCN, Removes System Operations from Transmission Firm

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) yesterday yanked off the control of the electricity sector Independent System Operator (ISO) from the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) in line with the new Electricity Act (EA) 2023.

Currently, the wholly government-controlled TCN has three functional departments: The Transmission Service Provider (TSP), The Market Operator (MO), and the System Operator (SO). The system operator, which has been subsumed under the TCN, controls the physical operation of the electricity system, including managing the transmission grid lines, ensuring reliability, and maintaining the grid's technical stability through planning, dispatch, and control.

NERC, in the new document signed on April 30 by its Chairman, Sanusi Garba and Vice Chairman,

Musiliu Oseni, stated that the new Order shall take effect from May 1, 2024.

With the development, the TCN is expected to transfer to the new operator to be called the Nigerian Independent System Operator of Nigeria Limited (NISO), the assets and liabilities held by it relating to systems operations.

In order to achieve the objective of the creation of the ISO, the commission said it held several stakeholder consultations and public hearings on the determination of the matter.

It said the outcome of the consultations and hearings indicated that the Nigerian electricity supply industry requires an ISO to provide confidence to market participants.

"This Order seeks to mandate TCN to comply with the provisions of the EA on the incorporation of the ISO and provide clear directives to TCN to incorporate the ISO.

"Provide TCN with the procedure for the transfer of the assets and liabilities of the market and system operations portion of the business that currently vests in TCN to the ISO.

"The BPE shall incorporate, no later than May 31, 2024, a private company limited by shares under the Companies and Allied Matters Act to carry out the market and system operation functions stipulated in the EA and the terms and conditions of the system operation licence issued to TCN.

"The name of the company shall, subject to availability at Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), be the Nigerian Independent System Operator of Nigeria Limited (NISO)," it stressed.

According to the electricity regulatory agency, the new entity shall hold and manage all assets and liabilities pertaining to market and system operation on behalf of market participants and consumer

groups.

NERC added that it shall also carry out all market and system operation-related contractual rights and obligations novated to it by the TCN as well as negotiate and enter into contract for the procurement of ancillary services with independent power producers, successor generation licensees, among others.

It listed NISO's initial

subscribers as the BPE and the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI), with the final shareholding structure of NISO to be determined after further consultations with government, market participants and industry stakeholders.

"TCN shall conclude the identification and mapping of the assets and liabilities for the system/market operation portion of its business and forward same

to the Commission and the BPE no later than June 30, 2024," NERC added.

NERC emphasised that every person employed by TCN to perform market and system operations immediately before the transfer date shall be transferred to the service of NISO on terms not less favourable than those enjoyed by him/her immediately prior to his/her transfer.

Tinubu Moves to Grow Nation's Economy through Gas

● To inaugurate three critical gas infrastructure projects in Delta, Imo states

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu will soon inaugurate three critical gas infrastructure projects being undertaken by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) and partners in Delta and Imo states in line with his commitment to significantly leverage gas to grow Nigeria's economy.

The projects, two in Imo and one in Delta, according to a statement issued yesterday, by presidential spokesperson, Ajuri Ngelale, support the federal government's effort to grow value from the nation's gas assets while eliminating gas flaring.

The delivery of the projects was accelerated from the inception of the administration in keeping with the overall objective of deepening domestic gas supply as a critical enabler for

economic prosperity.

The statement, which was silent on when the projects located in Kwale (Delta State) and Ohaji South (Imo State) will be inaugurated by the President, however, said upon inauguration, the projects will increase gas supply to the domestic market by approximately 500mmscf/d, creating a better investment climate and promoting balanced economic growth cumulatively.

The release listed the projects to include AHL Gas Processing Plant 2 (GPP - 2) - 200mmscf/d which is an expansion to the Kwale Gas Processing Plant (GPP - 1), which currently supplies about 130Mmscf/d of gas to the domestic market. The processing plant is designed to process 200Mmscf/d of rich gas and deliver lean gas through the OB3 Gas Pipeline. This additional

gas supply will support further rapid industrialization of Nigeria. The plant will also produce about 160,000 MTPA of Propane and 100,000 MTPA of Butane, which will reduce the dependency on LPG Imports. The AHL Gas Plant is being developed by AHL Limited, an incorporated Joint Venture owned by NNPC Limited and SEEPCO.

The 200mmscf/d NNPC- AHL GPP2 has started injecting gas and scheduled to ramp up to 180mmscf/d if not 200mmscf/d by end of May, 2024.

The second project scheduled for presidential inauguration is ANOH Gas Processing Plant (AGPC) - 300Mmscf/d which is an integrated 300Mmscf/d capacity gas processing plant designed to process non-associated gas from the Assa North-Ohaji South field in Imo State. The plant will produce dry gas, condensate, and LPG.

Fubara Empowers 3,066 MSMEs in Rivers, Launches N4bn Loan Scheme

Blessing Ibunge in Port Harcourt

Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, has started the empowerment of 3,066 Micro, Small, and Medium-scale Enterprises (MSMEs) and 100 companies across the 23 local government areas of the state.

This was just as Fubara formally launched the N4 billion matching fund loan scheme that will stimulate business activities in the state while also creating wealth.

The launch which took place in Port Harcourt, yesterday, entails the commencement of the disbursement of Rivers State Government/Bank of Industry (BOI) Limited N4 billion matching fund loan scheme for nano, small and medium-scale businesses in the state.

According to him, lack of access to credit continue to aggravate financial exclusion and choked the prospects for individuals to realise their economic aspirations for a better life.

The governor emphasised that a surest path has been secured to achieve entrepreneurial success while serving as an enabler of economic prosperity in the state.

He said, "Today, we are all here to witness the formal launch and distribution of cheques to 3,066 micro,

small, and medium-scale enterprises and 100 companies in the state from all 23 local government areas, including businesses owned by non-indigenes valued at over N3.6 billion only.

"We are satisfied with today's outing and professionalism, believing even more strongly that the potential outcome will be greater to both BOI and the Government and good people of Rivers State."

Fubara explained that as a campaign blueprint, he promised, during his electioneering campaigns, to support entrepreneurial development and the growth of businesses through access to credit in the form of soft loans.

The governor said upon assumption of office, he noticed more closely how most businesses, especially those of small scale, struggled and either died or gasped in accessing credit that were only offered by banks at neck-breaking interest without success.

He said, "As a state, we cannot talk about economic growth without stimulating business activities to create wealth and jobs through policies and programmes that will engender greater public access to credit and financial inclusion.

"MSMEs are well-known as critical drivers of inclusive economic growth

and development. By empowering our people to cultivate available economic opportunities, access to credit is a powerful tool for achieving financial security.

"We can only keep imagining the economic value that the over 3,000 MSMEs would add to the positive economic dynamics of Rivers State and the local government areas in terms of gross domestic product, increased tax returns, employment creation, income distribution and production of good and services."

The Rivers State governor made it clear that even if the loan appeared very liberal, it is not given as charity, and insisted that beneficiaries must pay back so that others can access it to fund their businesses.

The governor, therefore, instructed the management of the Rivers State Microfinance Agency (RIMA) to monitor the progress of the beneficiaries in their businesses and ensure a 100 per cent recovery of the loans to guarantee the sustainability of the programme.

He noted the gains of the symbiotic economic partnership between the state government and BOI, and the transformed commitment to further strengthen and cultivate it for the benefit of the people of Rivers State.

JOHESU Demands Presidential Waiver for CONHESS Implementation

Health workers under the umbrella of the Joint Health Sector Union (JOHESU) have demanded a Presidential waiver to pave the way for the implementation of the lingering adjustment of Consolidated Health Salary Structure (CONHESS).

JOHESU's demand was contained in a statement signed by the National Chairman, Dr. Kabiru Ado Minjibir and National Secretary, Martins Egbanubi.

Minjibir, lamented challenges in achieving CONHESS for its members since 2014, even after they met with President Bola Tinubu on June 5, 2023, on the

matter, following a health worker strike and received assurances that the issue would be addressed, leading to the strike's suspension.

Minjibir, said during a courtesy/working visit to the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Ali Pate, that the non-actualisation of the promised CONHESS adjustment since 10 years was a major source of concern to the union as it has "instilled restlessness in the value chain of its members and urged the Federal Ministry of Health to intervene to checkmate looming industrial unrest."

The union appreciated the

reassurances of Professor Pate, who promised to activate all the structures connected with the approval process of the adjustment of CONHESS, after jointly reviewing the progress of the new initiatives in the days ahead to enable it to respond appropriately.

In a communique signed at the inaugural meeting, JOHESU demanded that the minister's expedite action on the matter immediately. It further decried "the non-payment of arrears from June 2023 to January 2024 as well as the improper arithmetical calculations which did not factor in the basic salaries of beneficiaries in working out their taxable allowances."



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15.4 x 4 Columns	854,426.00	886,340.00	
10 x 6 Columns	779,433.00	949,663.00	
10 x 5 Columns	668,784.00	865,250.00	1,106,250.00
10 x 4 Columns	697,490.00	801,926.00	
10 x 3 Columns	653,896.00	738,616.00	
9 x 6 Columns	806,473.00	873,097.00	
9 x 5 Columns	717,513.00	723,646.00	
9 x 4 Columns	636,459.00	696,410.00	
9 x 3 Columns	553,633.00	612,009.00	
8 x 5 Columns	514,398.00	709,072.00	
8 x 4 Columns	496,961.00	540,245.00	
8 x 3 Columns	479,523.00	527,583.00	
7 x 4 Columns	267,813.00	271,642.00	
7 x 3 Columns	247,408.00	261,764.00	
Quarter Page	260,000.00	303,745.00	355,500.00
6 x 3 Columns	180,700.00	197,558.00	
6 x 2 Columns	83,200.00	135,821.00	
3 x 2 Columns	30,500.00	47,490.00	
2 x 2 Columns	25,470.00	37,992.00	
1 x 1 Columns	13,734.00	14,246.00	
4 x 2 Columns	48,000.00	57,000.00	
FP Solos (6 x 2 Columns)	2,179,659.00	2,532,403.00	3,332,812.00
BPS 16 x 2 Columns)	2,179,659.00	2,532,403.00	3,332,812.00
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15.5 x 4 cols	1,373,784.00	
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6 x 2 FPS	4,687,500.00	
2 x 6 Strip (Front page)	3,750,000.00	
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4 x 6 Front page	22,500,000.00	
Special Post on (page 2)	3,999,375.00	
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Special Post on (page 7)	3,332,812.00	
Special Post on (page 8)	3,332,812.500	
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UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2024 THREE MONTHS RESULTS

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

For the three months ended 31 March	Group	
	2024	2023
<i>In millions of Nigerian Naira</i>		
Interest income	440,764	191,879
Interest income on amortised cost and FVOCI securities	440,448	191,630
Interest income on FVTPL securities	316	249
Interest expense	(140,088)	(72,249)
Net interest income	300,676	119,630
Fees and commission income	113,653	52,193
Fees and commission expense	(51,481)	(23,216)
Net fee and commission income	62,172	28,977
Net trading and foreign exchange income	11,901	26,108
Other operating income	3,840	997
Total non-interest income	77,913	56,082
Operating income	378,589	175,712
Impairment charge for credit losses on Loans	(1,605)	(6,636)
Net impairment charge on other financial assets	(1,675)	(396)
Net operating income after impairment loss on loans and receivables	375,309	168,680
Employee benefit expenses	(66,308)	(31,264)
Depreciation and amortisation	(10,061)	(6,665)
Other operating expenses	(142,596)	(69,378)
Total operating expenses	(218,965)	(107,307)
Share of profit of equity-accounted investee	-	-
Profit before income tax	156,344	61,373
Taxation charge	(13,760)	(7,784)
Profit for the period	142,584	53,589
Other comprehensive income		
Items that will be reclassified to income statement:		
Exchange differences on translation of foreign operations	361,986	(1,827)
Fair value changes on investments at fair value through other comprehensive income(FVOCI):		
Net fair value (loss)/ gain during the period	(40,432)	(730)
	321,554	(2,557)
Items that will not be reclassified to the income statement:		
Fair value changes on equity investments at FVOCI	117,328	-
Other comprehensive (loss) / income, net of tax	438,882	(2,557)
Total comprehensive income for the period	581,466	51,032
Profit attributable to:		
Owners of Parent	135,565	50,416
Non-controlling interest	7,019	3,173
Profit for the period	142,584	53,589
Total comprehensive income attributable to:		
Owners of Parent	562,061	47,516
Non-controlling interest	19,405	3,516
Total comprehensive income for the period	581,466	51,032
Basic and diluted earnings per share expressed in Naira	3.96	1.47

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As at	Group	
	Mar. 2024	Dec. 2023
<i>In millions of Nigerian Naira</i>		
ASSETS		
Cash and bank balances	7,739,441	6,069,496
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	17,537	33,849
Assets under management	14,026	14,026
Derivative assets	507,225	498,824
Loans and advances to banks	163,614	320,732
Loans and advances to customers	7,293,616	5,228,849
Investment securities:		
- At fair value through other comprehensive income	3,727,135	3,093,037
- At amortised cost	4,768,539	4,314,957
Other assets	800,150	758,683
Investments in subsidiaries	-	-
Property and equipment	272,562	267,148
Intangible assets	54,151	43,855
Deferred tax assets	11,426	9,741
TOTAL ASSETS	25,369,422	20,653,197
LIABILITIES		
Deposits from banks	2,768,024	2,464,444
Deposits from customers	18,381,427	14,891,277
Derivative liabilities	44,057	1,885
Other liabilities	476,383	313,181
Current income tax payable	19,710	42,671
Borrowings	1,009,154	858,739
Deferred tax liabilities	59,008	50,805
TOTAL LIABILITIES	22,757,763	18,623,002
EQUITY		
Share capital	17,100	17,100
Share premium	98,715	98,715
Retained earnings	1,055,437	919,872
Other reserves	1,352,969	926,475
EQUITY ATTRIBUTABLE TO OWNERS OF THE PARENT	2,524,221	1,962,162
Non-controlling interests	87,438	68,033
TOTAL EQUITY	2,611,659	2,030,195
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	25,369,422	20,653,197

The Board of Directors is optimistic that barring unforeseen circumstances, this performance trend will be sustained.

By Order of the Board
DATED THIS 30TH DAY OF APRIL, 2024



BILI A. ODUM
GROUP COMPANY SECRETARY
FRC/2013/NBA/00000001954

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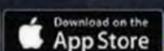
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NEWS



GRADUATE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME....

L-R: Group Treasurer, United Bank for Africa Plc (UBA), Stephen Amangbo; Executive Director, Alex Alozie (3rd from left); Group Deputy Managing Director, Muiwa Akinyemi (5th from left); Group Chairman, Tony Elumelu (middle); Group Managing Director/CEO, Oliver Alawuba (9th from left); Executive Directors, Ugo Nwaghodoh (11th from left); Group Head, Human Capital Management, Modupe Akindele (12 from left); and Company Secretary, Bili Odum, flanked by graduands of UBA's Graduate Management Accelerated Programme held in Lagos...recently

Yahaya Bello: Appeal Court Halts Contempt Proceedings against EFCC Chairman

Alex Enumah in Abuja

The Court of Appeal in Abuja, yesterday, halted the execution of an order summoning the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Ola Olukoyede, to defend allegations of disobedience to court orders.

A three-member panel of the appellate court presided by Justice

Joseph Oyewole, halted the order of Justice Isa Jamil of a Kogi State High Court, while delivering ruling in an ex parte application filed by Olukoyede.

Justice Jamil had in a similar ex parte ruling on April 25, ordered, "That the respondent should be summoned to appear before this court to answer to the contempt charge."

According to the lower court, the

applicant has tendered exhibits "to the effect that the respondent has carried out some acts upon which they have been restrained by this Court on February 9, 2024, pending the determination of the substantive motion on Notice before this Court.

"That the said act was carried out by the respondent in violation of the order which was valid and subsisting when they carried out those acts.

That same acts of the respondent amounts to acts of contempt."

Miffed by the order of the lower court, the EFCC chairman approached the appellate court to challenge the order with the aim of setting it aside.

Pending the hearing of the main suit, the anti-graft agency's boss, in an ex parte application by his lawyers led by Chief Jibrin Okutepe, prayed the court to stay the alleged contempt proceedings against him.

Besides the motion ex parte, Olukoyede also brought another application seeking for an order to serve the order staying the contempt proceedings as well as the substantive appeal against the ruling of the Kogi State High Court on the respondent/applicant through substituted means.

Delivering ruling, the appellate court held that the motion ex parte by the EFCC boss had merit and

subsequently issued an order staying the execution of the order and proceedings at the lower court, pending hearing in the Motion on Notice slated for May 20, 2024.

Meanwhile, the court while granting the motion for substituted service ordered that all the processes be pasted on the gate of the last known address of the Respondent at No. 9, Bengazi Street, Wuse, Abuja.

Justice Jamil had on February 9, restrained the commission from harassing, arresting or detaining the former governor of Kogi State, Yahaya Bello, pending the determination of the substantive suit.

However, the commission had on April 17, following an order of a Federal High Court, Abuja, laid siege at Bello's Abuja residence with the aim of arresting him and presenting in court for prosecution on alleged

money laundering charge.

Besides, Justice Emeka Nwite of the Federal High Court, Abuja, which on April 23, ordered service of the money laundering charge against the former governor, will next week decide whether he should vacate the arrest warrant he issued against Bello.

Consequently, the former governor on April 25, returned to the court accusing the anti-graft agency of violating its order, hence should be jailed.

The ex-parte application with No: HCL/190M/2024, was filed and argued by Bello's lawyer, M.S Yusuf, praying the court to issue and serve the respondent with Form 49 Notice to show cause why Order of committal should not be made on the Executive Chairman of the Respondent — Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

FRC to Train 200 Actuaries in Four Years

Oluchi Chibuzor

With Nigeria having less than 50 professional actuaries in the country, the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria (FRC) has revealed it has embarked on a strategic intervention to train over 200 actuarial professionals in the country in the next four years.

In achieving the above objectives, the regulatory body yesterday, inaugurated the Nigerian Actuarial Development Programme Workshop with the objectives to ensure the downward trajectory of the profession in the nation is urgently arrested.

Speaking at the virtual

inauguration of members of the working group, the Executive Director, FRC, Dr. Rabiu Olowo, said it was sad to see that the country had less than 50 actuary professionals in the country.

He disclosed that having sat down with the head of the directorate of actuarial standards, they came to the understanding that the field could go into extinction if nothing was done about it.

Challenging members of the group, Olowo, urged them to promote actuarial education and increase the number of qualified actuaries and actuarial professionals in Nigeria "from current 50 to 200 in the next

four years."

According to him, the vision for the Nigeria Actuary Development Programme Work Group was to cultivate a pipeline of skilled professionals who are fuelled and driven to meet sustainable growth and those who advocate financial inclusion, to mitigate risk within the economy.

The FRC boss said the task could only be achieved through targeted training, mentorship, capacity building initiatives, adding that the FRC aspires to empower individuals to excel in this dynamic field and contribute meaningfully to the nation's development agenda.

Obaseki Swears-in Five New Judges, Parades Achievements in Judiciary

● Akpata tasks judges to discharge their duties as beacons of justice, equity, rule of law

The Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has sworn-in five judges to the bench of the Edo State High Court, urging them to do right to all cases brought before them.

This was as the governorship candidate of the Labour Party in Edo State, Mr. Olumide Akpata, yesterday, charged the judges to discharge their duties as beacons of justice, equity and rule of law, regretting that other three judges were left out by Governor Obaseki.

Addressing the judges at the swearing-in held in Government House, Benin City, the governor said when complaints or petitions are received, it is important to take a step back and re-examine the petitions critically to make informed decisions.

"It is with delight that today I am swearing-in five additional judges to the bench of the Edo State High Court. When I came into office in 2016, one of the commitments we made was to strengthen the judiciary. This is because of its role in the democratic process. As a government, we are going to

ensure that we support the judiciary.

"Let me start with the latest reforms which is, for me, assenting to the law providing for the autonomy of the judiciary. I believe that we are one of the few states in Nigeria today that have signed the bill of the autonomy of the judiciary into law.

"It is going through a learning curve but because we believe in the independence of the judiciary; we have demonstrated our commitment to wholistic reforms by enacting that law. We would work with the Chief Judge and members of the judiciary to continue fine-tuning the way and manner in which the laws are applied.

"You are all witness to the infrastructural upgrade which we have begun in the judiciary. From providing court rooms especially in Benin City to more accommodation for Judges. In the development plan we are currently designing, we have enshrined and have ensured that within the five years of implementing the new Edo State Master Plan, that the

infrastructural development for the judiciary would be completed.

"In line with the other reforms which we are undertaking in the State, we are encouraging the judicial arm of government to take advantage of the digital infrastructure that the State is currently investing in as we have built over 2,000 km fiber optic connection across the State. We now have digital infrastructure in every area where we have a High Court. Please take advantage of the investment made.

"I thank the Chief Judge for the support he has continued to extend to the executive. I know that the swearing-in of judges that we are experiencing today have raised quite a few issues. As part of our intention to reform the entire arm of government in Edo State, when we get complaints or petitions that some of our choices will not go well to strengthen the judiciary, I believe it is important to take a step back and re-examine the petitions critically. This is what has happened in this case.

ASR Africa Commences Construction of N250m 500-Capacity Lecture Theatre at Adamawa University

The Abdul Samad Rabiu Africa Initiative (ASR Africa) commences the construction of a 500-capacity lecture theatre and wash facilities for the Adamawa State University, Mubi.

This project is coming after the nomination of the institution as a recipient of the ASR Africa Tertiary Education Grant Scheme (TEGS), by the Board of Directors of the Abdul Samad Rabiu Africa Initiative.

Speaking at the event, the Acting Vice Chancellor of the University, Dr. Stephen A. Lagu, expressed his appreciation to the Chairman of BUA group and ASR Africa, Abdul Samad Rabiu, for the rare philanthropy gesture towards the university.

He stated that the intervention of the Chairman would reduce the physical infrastructure deficit at their new campus and promote sanitation and hygiene in the university.

He added that the choice of the 500-seat lecture theatre with the four boreholes at different locations within the campus was identified and agreed to by the relevant organs of the institution with the ASR Africa team.

Dr. Ubon Udoh (MD / CEO, ASR Africa), in his remarks, congratulated the institution for qualifying for the nomination by the Board of Directors of ASR Africa.

He stated that the rigorous selection process which includes stringent criteria such as the quality of service delivered by

the university and the pedigree of graduands from the institution at the national and international levels, proves that the university is keeping up with its vision as a leading institution of learning in the region. He encouraged the management and students to ensure proper use and maintenance of the facilities as a show of appreciation for the grant given to them.

The Tertiary Education Grant Scheme of the Abdul Samad Rabiu Africa Initiative is part of the efforts of the Chairman of BUA Group and ASR Africa, Abdul Samad Rabiu to give back to the African continent and make a lasting impact in education as a means of uplifting and restoring the dignity and lives of Africans.

FG Boosts Power Supply in Lagos, Energises 63MVA Ajah Mobile Substation

Peter Uzoho

Residents and businesses in Ajah area of Lagos State would be witnessing improvement in electricity supply from the national grid with the installation and energisation of the 63MVA, 132/33kV Mobile Substation deployed to the area under the Phase One of the Presidential Power Initiative (PPI).

Speaking while inaugurating the facility at the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN)'s Ajah Station, Minister of Power, Chief Adebayo Adedun, said the project represents a strategic deployment aimed at improving the transmission capacity constraints by

over 1300 megawatts (MW) across the nation.

The minister added that the inauguration was a testament to the present administration's Renewed Hope Agenda's commitment to transforming Nigeria's power landscape.

He said the strategic placement of the facilities under the PPI at key sites such as Okene, Amukpe, Potiskum, Apo, Ajah, Birnin Kebbi and others underscores the current administration's dedication to enhancing transmission efficiency and reliability nationwide.

"Today, as we inaugurate this 63MVA Mobile Substation in

Ajah, Lagos State, we recognize its multifaceted significance. Not only does it serve as a catalyst for capacity enhancement within our transmission network, but it also stands as a beacon of hope for the businesses and households reliant on uninterrupted power supply.

"Furthermore, the versatility of this Mobile Substation cannot be overstated. From addressing major load centres to serving as a stopgap measure during maintenance and emergencies, its flexibility ensures swift responses to fluctuating power demands, thereby contributing to uninterrupted service delivery," Adedun stated.

INSIGHT



When shall we be free?

TO OUR READERS

Letters in response to specific publications in THISDAY should be brief (150-200 words) and straight to the point. Interested readers may send such letters along with their contact details to saturdayeditor@thisdaylive.com. We also welcome comments and opinions on topical local, national and international issues provided they are well-written and should also not be longer than (950-1000 words). They should be sent to saturdayeditor@thisdaylive.com along with the email address and phone numbers of the writer.

Pastor Odumeje's Comic Relief

Nobody can gainsay the fact that Pastor Chukwuemeka Ohanemere's religious displays are comic relief for millions of Nigerians, who are experiencing severe economic hardship. Pastor Ohanaemere (aka Odumeje) is a pastor of a church in Nigeria at a time the commercialization as well as the bastardization of Christianity has led pastors and clergymen into performing religious mumbo-jumbo and hocus-pocus to achieve their diverse egoistical and pecuniary ends. Christianity, which is one of the religions in our world, is said to be a human creation. And religion is defined as the way by which the peoples of the world try to reach their gods or God. Beside Christianity, we have other religions, namely Taoism, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, African Traditional Religion, and others. Each of these religions has a founder and a body of laws and teachings to which the adherents of that religion adhere.

Christianity is one of the best-known and most popular religions in the world. It was founded about two thousand years ago by the followers of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, we all know, was the only begotten son of God and the ransom for our sins. Today, millions of people from diverse races of the world profess the christian faith. And, in Christendom, we have many different sects in christianity. Among them are the Jehovah Witnesses, the Roman Catholics, members of the Anglican Church, members of the Seventh Day Adventist, and others.

Today's christians, especially the christian clerics, are putting the practice of Christianity to a very bad use. They do not set store with the teachings and God's commandments that border on holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, and charity. Neither do their sermons dwell on the reality or otherwise of heaven and hell.

The christian clerics, especially the pentecostal pastors, propagate the prosperity message at the expense of scriptural passages that exhort us to live righteous and holy lives, which will guarantee us entrance into the kingdom of God when we die. The prosperity messages, which they propagate and spread, have continued to erode the moral fabrics of

our society, adverting the minds of impressionable young people to unscrupulous ways of making money.

Consequently, now, there is a high incidence of crimes in Nigeria. On a daily basis, people commit acts of homicide and carry out armed robbery operations. Across the states in Nigeria, kidnapping rich people for ransom has become a thriving business and pastime for some evil-minded Nigerians. And even security personnel are being ambushed and killed by bandits, insurgents, and terrorists. Has Nigeria not become an ungovernable space?

So it is evident to us that our religious leaders have failed in their onerous task of effecting moral regeneration among the people of Nigeria so as to direct them to the right path. Religion as an agent of socialization can be utilized to reform the minds of our maladjusted young people and set them on the path of moral rectitude. Sadly, however, the obverse obtains in Nigeria, today.
*Chiedu Uche Okoye Uruowulu-Obosi,
Anambra State*

Why Govt Must Protect Air Peace

In the aviation sector of the economy, Nigeria and Britain voluntarily signed an agreement which is known as Bilateral Aviation Safety Agreement (BASA). This agreement entails that Nigerian-owned airlines should be permitted to land in British primary airports like Heathrow while also British-owned airlines should be permitted access to Nigerian primary airports like Abuja and Lagos international airports.

Paradoxically, the British government has been observing this voluntary agreement in the breach whereas Nigeria has complied fully with the agreement. The Nigerian government allows British Airways, Virgin Atlantic and other airlines to be doing business in both Abuja and Lagos international airports.

Air Peace airline, owned by a Nigerian compatriot, Allen Onyema, sought international flight to the United Kingdom for over seven good years without success. A lot of bureaucratic bottlenecks and aero politics were strewn on his path to grant his airline access to the lucrative Lagos- London route. He faced a lot of bitter politics and recriminations from both Nigeria and Britain to make his dream come true.

Against the foregoing background, when his dream

finally became real under the present government of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, on March 30, 2024, most Nigerians of good spirits were elated about the event. The British government most perfunctorily granted Air Peace access to the Gatwick airport in southern London against his will for the Heathrow airport in central London. Nonetheless, it was not a mean feat by Air Peace.

Curiously, immediately Air Peace entered into the lucrative Lagos- London route, foreign airlines which have been milking Nigerians and exploiting them, devised a devious scheme to frustrate Air Peace airline out of business. Their latest strategy is to crash their fares below what Air Peace is charging. Before the entrance of Air Peace airline into that busiest international route, these exploitative foreign airlines were charging as high as over five million naira for the economy class for a journey of six hours. Their business class was as high as 16 million naira. Air Peace airline crashed the economy class to as low as one million four hundred thousand (1.4 million) naira.

These exploitative foreign airlines are reportedly reducing their economy class to six hundred thousand naira from their hitherto four million naira. Shouldn't this be an eye opener to the Nigerian government that without the intervention of Air Peace airline, these monopolistic foreign airlines would have continued to exploit Nigeria travelers? When was the last time these foreign airlines reduced their fares prior to Air Peace airline intervention? Doesn't their latest action of fares reduction clearly show that their intention is to drive Air Peace airline out of that route just the same way they supposedly chased Arik, Bellview and other Nigerian-owned airlines out of that route?

If the Nigerian struggling economy must grow, the Nigerian government must protect and support local entrepreneurs against foreign monopoly and strangulation. Nigeria government must protect and save Air Peace airline from strangulation through tax rebate and even subsidy payment to stop the monopoly of the foreign airlines in London-Lagos route. Nigerians stranded in London can never be brought back to the country free of charge by these exploitative foreign airlines but Air Peace airline can do that in the event of an emergency. The airline had done that in the past when Nigerians stranded in South Africa xenophobic attacks, those in the Russia/Ukraine war, Sudan among others were airlifted back to the country free of charge by Air Peace airline.

Ifeanyi Maduako, Owerri

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NEWS

**SOLIDARITY FOREVER....**

L-R: Chairman, Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) Akwa Ibom State, Sunny James; Deputy Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Akon Eyakenyi; and Governor Umo Eno, acknowledging cheers from the crowd at the 2024 May Day celebration held at the Uyo Township Stadium...recently

Oluremi Tinubu: Insecurity Will Not Deter Govt from Giving Sound Education to Younger Generation

● *Says education best way to grow as nation*

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

Despite the constant threat posed to education by security challenges, the wife of the President, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, has given assurance that the federal government will not shy away from giving deserved quality education to the younger generation.

Speaking yesterday, while playing

host to the Minister of Education, Prof. Tahir Mamman, and his management team, at the State House Abuja, the First Lady said: "Education is the way to grow as a nation. We know insecurity is there, discouraging girl-child education, but we will not be intimidated from giving this generation what they deserve, quality education."

The First Lady also lauded the

drive by the Federal Ministry of Education to get more teachers for government schools in the country.

She noted that as a teacher herself, it is important to improve on the profession and the practitioners so as to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

"I will join you to champion the drive for more teachers in the country. They are very important

to the teaching outcomes we get."

The First Lady commended the minister for approving the change of name from Second Chance School to Alternative High School for Girls, saying the new name is more dignifying.

"Governors should be encouraged to adopt the Alternative High School for Girls. Once UBEC builds one in the state, they should build more.

These girls should be given the opportunity to fulfill their dreams. How will they fill in their resume, I went to Second Chance School, people will ask, "What did you do?"

She also called the attention of the minister to the need for Adult Literacy Schools in the country and also the re-introduction of Technical Colleges to cover for the children who could not get into tertiary institutions due to poor academic strength.

Earlier in his remarks, the Minister of Education, Prof. Mamman explained that his ministry is introducing Skills Acquisition from

primary school level.

According to him, "The issue of Out of School Children is getting our due attention. Only about 25 per cent of our youth get into tertiary institutions. We have to see to the others that are just there. We must get them well trained in their chosen skills."

He stated that the ministry is prioritising those who want to study education in tertiary institutions.

Mamman then presented 100 General Scholarships for Female Students and 1,000 Bursary Awards for those studying education to the First Lady.

UBA Champions Youth Empowerment Programme, Employs 398 Across Africa

Kayode Tokede

United Bank for Africa (UBA) held the second edition of its expanded Graduate Management Acceleration Programme (GMAP) class of 2024, where 398 young Africans were inducted into the UBA Tribe after a rigorous six-month hands-on-work and learning experience.

The event, which was held in a grand ceremony in Lagos recently was graced by esteemed guests, the UBA management, faculty members, mentors, and the graduating class.

The graduands are from six African countries, including Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroun, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia.

Addressing the gathering, UBA's Group Chairman, Tony Elumelu, who congratulated all the graduates, expressed profound pride and admiration for their success having completed the intense capacity-building programme, combining learning with on-the-job training experience, gamered while rotating across several departments and units in the bank.

Elumelu took time to highlight the bank's passion for youth empowerment in Africa, while bridging the unemployment gap, which according to him, remains one of the greatest challenges of the continent.

"For me these young UBA graduates are a testament to who we are: a truly pan-African Group that invests in African talent. This milestone is more than just numbers. It signifies UBA's commitment to youth empowerment. Unemployment is the greatest challenge we face – a tragic and cruel betrayal of a generation. We know governments alone cannot create all the jobs we need – so it is up to us,

the African private sector, to partner our government in improving lives and livelihoods. This is Africapitalism, and it is gratifying to see UBA play its part. UBA is dedicated to creating a positive impact, through the GMAP programme UBA is creating employment, boosting economic

growth, and transforming lives across Africa," Elumelu said.

Continuing, he said, "At UBA, identifying these young ones, bringing them to the centre, training them, equipping them for the future and the task ahead, not just for a career in UBA, but

wherever they end up remains our passion, because this is how we play our role as a Pan-African bank, in helping to empower the next generation, which is the African youth. We are helping to create employment and this for us is our driving force."

Nigeria Accedes to Establishment Agreement for Afreximbank's FEDA

Nigeria has acceded to the Establishment Agreement for the Fund for Export Development in Africa (FEDA), the development impact investment platform of the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank).

Nigeria joins the ranks of countries acceding to the Establishment Agreement of FEDA, becoming the 16th nation to do so. This underscores the increasing backing the Fund enjoys among African nations.

This announcement comes three decades following Afreximbank's establishment in Nigeria, a key

milestone that boldly demonstrates Nigeria's continued commitment to supporting Afreximbank and FEDA's missions. FEDA sees new memberships as critical to broadening its scope of interventions and its mission of delivering long-term capital to African economies, with a focus on industrialisation, intra-African trade and value-added exports.

The signing of the FEDA Establishment Agreement is expected to pave the way for the ratification of the Agreement in due course. This will in turn bolster FEDA's interventions

in Nigeria.

President of Afreximbank and Chairman of the Boards of both Afreximbank and FEDA, Prof. Benedict Oramah, commented: "We extend our sincere appreciation to the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the signing of the FEDA Establishment Agreement. This significant achievement further strengthens the already robust partnership between Afreximbank and Nigeria, one of the Bank's foremost supporters. The partnership will enhance investments in sectors critical to the development journey of Nigeria."

AllAfrica to Present Excellence Awards at Summit

Organisers of the AllAfrica Media Leaders' Summit have announced that as part of this year's edition, the 2024 Media Excellence Awards would be presented at the event which holds from May 8th to 10th, 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The summit brings together African media leaders (CEOs, Managing Directors and Editors-in-Chief), policy-makers, activists, academics and leaders of organisations championing Africa's growth and development.

"We believe celebrating excellence

in media and African development is of utmost importance to ensure the continuity of high-quality journalism and impactful contributions to the prosperity of our continent," Co-Founder and Executive Chairman of AllAfrica, Amadou Mahtar Ba said.

He invited African leaders to elevate, "Media's critical role to advance African development across sectors through the dissemination of valuable information that serves to inform the public and hold leaders accountable."

Kogi Plans to Upgrade Airstrip to Cargo Airport

Ibrahim Oyewale in Lokoja

Kogi State government has announced plans to upgrade the Adogo Airstrip to an international cargo airport after nearly 20 years of being inoperative.

The State Governor, Usman Ododo, disclosed this when he met with the management of the China Civil Engineering and Construction Company (CCECC) led by the Managing Director, David Wang, at the Government House in Lokoja.

The proposed Kogi State Cargo Airport which will be executed on a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model by the Kogi State government

and the CCECC is to begin with a feasibility study and consultation with stakeholders in a few weeks from now after which a project implementation committee will be constituted to see to the completion of the project.

Ododo told the CCECC team that the Adogo Cargo Airport project is of critical importance to the economic development of the state, stressing that Kogi State is endowed with huge agricultural potential and large mineral deposits in commercial quantities that require a viable means of air transportation to be connected to markets within and outside Nigeria.

Anti-Graft War: We'll Continue with N70bn Corruption Case against Matawalle, Says EFCC

Kuni Tyessi in Abuja

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has said it would continue with the alleged N70 billion corruption case against the Minister of State for Defence, Bello Matawalle while he was governor of Zamfara State.

EFCC Acting Director of Public Affairs, Wilson Uwajuren, stated this when some protesters under the aegis of APC Akida Forum stormed the commission's headquarters yesterday in Abuja, and demanded the reopening of the pending case.

Uwajuren said: "I want to commend members of the APC Akida Forum for this peaceful protest. It is within your rights to protest. The constitution

guarantees the right of free expression and you have done that today.

"I want to assure you all that EFCC does not close cases. Once we open investigation into a case we will do not close such matter. So I assure you that this petition will be looked into. Thank you very much," he said.

Presenting a copy of their petition to EFCC, Chairman of the group, Musa Mahmud requested the commission to reopen the investigation into the corruption allegations against Matawalle.

Mahmud said this call was amid growing concerns about corruption in Nigeria and the bold steps taken by the APC administration in recent decisions regarding government officials suspected of embezzlement.

NEWS



YOUTH SUMMIT ON DRUG ABUSE...

L-R: Chairman Planning Committee, Rotary Youth Summit, Samuel Ayetutu; Deputy Director, Forensics and Chemical Monitoring, NDLEA, Patricia Afolabi; District Governor, Rotary District 9110, Ifeyinwa Ejezie; Commissioner for Youth and Social Development, Bolaji Ogunlende and the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Social Development, Toyin Oke-Osanyintolu at the Youth Summit on Drug Abuse and Crime organised by Rotary District 9110 in Lagos... recently

No Compromise on Press Freedom, FG Assures Media

● Issues preliminary assessment certification for Lagos-Calabar Coastal Road ● NGE: Press freedom crucial to democracy, good governance ● Atiku, Sanwo-Olu, Yahaya, SERAP hail journalists' commitment to professionalism

Chuks Okocha, Wale Ajimotokan, Michael Olugbode in Abuja, **Segun James** in Lagos and **Segun Awofadeji** in Gombe

The federal government has assured media practitioners on press freedom in Nigeria, saying that no single journalist has been hounded or incarcerated under the Tinubu-led administration for practicing responsible journalism.

Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, gave the assurance yesterday in Abuja, at a press briefing organised by his ministry in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Ecological Management, and the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) to commemorate this year's World Press Freedom Day.

However, the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) yesterday reaffirmed that media freedom, freedom of expression and access to public information are crucial to democracy and must be at the heart of Nigerian government's values and actions.

In a press statement issued yesterday, to mark this year's World Press Freedom Day signed by its President, Mr. Eze Anaba and the General Secretary, Dr. Iyobosa Uwugiarere, the Guild also requested the National Assembly to initiate and adopt a law to protect journalists, who speak out on matters of public interest, especially against

abusive and strategic lawsuits, which are regularly initiated to silence them.

This was just as former Vice President and the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the last general election, Atiku Abubakar; Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu and Gombe State Governor and Chairman of Northern States Governors' Forum, Alhaji Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, saluted Nigerian journalists and other media workers on the occasion of the World Freedom Day.

The NGE, the professional body of editors and media executives in Nigeria also said it recognises the crucial role played by journalists, media workers and free/independent media in protecting the country's democracy and advised them not to give up, in spite of the prevailing economic challenges.

Speaking further, Idris also affirmed that not a single journalist has been hounded or incarcerated under the Tinubu administration for practicing responsible journalism.

"I have not seen somebody in the life of this administration, for example, who has been put in jail or who has gone into exile as a result of press freedom.

"We knew what had happened in this country in the past. Some decades ago, we knew that you had

to leave this country to be able to report. I can tell you that the press in Nigeria is largely free but that freedom will further be consolidated if honesty and transparency are upheld in the manner that we report," he said.

He posited that the President recognises the importance of responsible media coverage in enlightening, informing, and educating Nigerians and the world, adding that through credible

and timely information, everyone can be well-informed, and the media can serve as a valuable tool for fostering transparency and accountability.

The minister added that the administration has provided the most unfettered access to journalists plus an enabling environment that has continued to encourage the Nigerian media to grow in leaps and bounds.

He reminded the media that

spreading falsehood and misinformation is irresponsible journalism and cannot be equated with press freedom.

Also the Minister of State for Environment and Ecological Management, Dr. Izaq Adekunle Salako, disclosed that the federal government has issued a preliminary assessment certification for the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Road.

He said the Ministry of Environment

carried out the assessment after the Ministry of Works applied since December last year for Environmental Impact and social assessment of Lagos-Calabar Coastal Road.

He added the Ministry of Environment had also issued a preliminary impact assessment certification for site clearance and scoping for compensation on the same road project.

Yiaga: Confidence, Public Trust on Nigeria's Electoral Process Gradually Waning

● Political parties call for amendments to stop President from appointing INEC chairman, RECs

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

Elections in Nigeria came under heavy criticisms as reports presented by the Yiaga Africa and Inter Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) yesterday, revealed that public trust on elections in the

country was gradually waning as it dropped from 33 per cent to 23 per cent due to alleged mismanagement of elections by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the judiciary.

This was just as the Inter Party

Advisory Council (IPAC), the umbrella body of all registered political parties in Nigeria called for the amendment of the constitution to stop the President from appointing the Chairman of INEC, National and Resident Commissioners.

Presenting a communique of their

seminar titled, 'Nigeria's Electoral Process One Year After the 2023 General Election', Executive Director of Yiaga Africa, Samson Otodo, said, "The Afrobarometer survey's findings that only 23 per cent of Nigerians trust of INEC signify a crisis of confidence that must be urgently addressed.

"Trust in electoral processes is the bedrock of democratic legitimacy, and as such, Yiaga Africa calls for greater transparency, and accountability for all election stakeholders. We acknowledge the technological strides made by INEC, particularly with the BVAS.

"However, we encourage INEC to continue to strive for greater transparency and regular public engagement, to rebuild and enhance the public trust. Unclear stance of the Tinubu-led administration on electoral reform," he stressed. The report said that "One-year after the general election, the Tinubu administration is yet to declare its stance on electoral reform.

Firm Unveils Partnership to Produce 1,000 Jobs through Agriculture

A social entrepreneurship organisation, TOVA, has struck a new deal with Israel's leading company for agricultural turn-key projects, Green 2000 and a religious institution, Christ LivingSpring Apostolic Ministry, (CLAM) to lift Nigeria's agriculture through youth empowerment.

The partnership is expected to generate €100m to the economy and produce no fewer than 1,000 jobs for unemployed youth.

Tova in a statement reiterated the importance of the partnership to transform Nigeria's agriculture, expressing confidence in the potentials of Nigerian youth to drive needed growth and innovation in the sector that has

significantly impacted the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the sector accounts for 23.78 per cent of Nigeria's GDP and projected to grow by 3.3 per cent in 2024.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Tova Africa, Mr. Tosin Bakare, said that the partnership will see benefiting youths equipped with relevant training, resources, and mentorship that will launch them into the world of entrepreneurship.

He added that contributing partners will be leveraging their comparative strengths to competently engage the youth for profitability and drive economic progress.

He said, "Africa has the land, but Israel has the technology, technical know-how, resources and the blessing. Through this initiative, participants will gain access to vast hectares of agricultural land, gain modern farming techniques, mentorship from experienced Israeli agricultural experts and networking opportunities, amongst others.

COFFHA's FoodDay Offers 400 Indigent Persons Foodpack

Oluchi Chibuzor

A United Nations affiliated non-governmental organisation, the Committee of Friends for Humanity (COFFHA), has distributed over 500 foodpacks to indigent people around the Ilupeju community through its FoodDay Initiative.

According to the organisation, distributing the foodpacks is part

of their effort to reduce hunger in the society.

Speaking at the distribution centre in Lagos, recently, the President of the group, Nkechi Ali-Balogun, noted that the FoodDay Initiative has been their own way of reducing hunger since COVID-19.

Ali-Balogun emphasised that this year's COFFHA FoodDay, the third since inception, was in response to

the harsh realities in the country.

According to her, "I came into the office of the President of COFFHA during COVID-19 and of course you know that was a time palliative was very much in vogue kind of. We looked around us and in response to the hardship, needs and to the hunger all around us, we just tried to find ways of mitigating some of these things.

Building Materials Traders Protest Land Grabbing in Imo Community

Traders at Afor Oru Timber/Building Materials Market, Abiazu, in Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State, have staged a protest against the activities of a land grabber in the area.

At a protest march in the community on Monday, the traders alleged that the land grabber, Akachi Onyeneke, was using his profession as a lawyer to try to intimidate and dispossess genuine individual and community landowners.

The Ogbo Oshishi traders called on the authorities of Mbaise Local Government Area and Imo State Government to intervene to check the shenanigans of the man they described as notorious.

The traders, who came out in

their numbers, carried placards with different inscriptions, like, "We want peace and not violence," "Oh God, deliver us from the evil plans of our enemies," and "Barrister Akachi, Stop Intimidating Your People."

Chairman of the market association, Chief Leo Ibe, said about Akachi, "This man is notorious in this community. He encroaches on people's lands at will, claiming he had bought them.

"This impunity must stop."

One of the market leaders, Chief Jeosopht Okoro, also stated regarding Akachi, "He even claims to have bought community spaces where markets had been held from time immemorial.

Gov Eno Declares First, Third Fridays Farm Days

As part of efforts to actualise the food security and sufficiency aspirations of the ARISE Agenda, Akwa Ibom State Governor, Pastor Umo Eno, has declared every first and third Friday of the month as work free days to enable workers effectively engage in farming activities.

Governor Eno made the declaration at the 2024 May Day celebration held at the Uyo Township Stadium, Uyo, with the theme, 'People First'.

He noted that since the assumption of office, the government has made efforts to prioritise the welfare of workers, adding that his administration will continue to take care of workers' welfare.

Eno who is reputed for his

compassionate disposition, said that N16.1 billion has so far been released for the payment of arrears of gratuity and also ordered immediate release of N2 billion to further defray the backlog of gratuity to retired workers in the state, bringing the total amount paid so far, by his administration to N18.1 billion.

He appreciated the organised labour for the good working relationship saying, "in the course of our successful campaign, I made a pledge to continue to strengthen the cords of our relationship and I make bold to say that almost one year after, I have kept our promise. We've even exceeded your expectations.

CHANGE OF NAME

This is to confirm that ANIETIE DEBORAH EKPO and ANIETIE SOLOMON are my names All former documents remain valid. UNION Bank and the general public should please take note.

NEWS XTRA



STAKEHOLDERS' STANDARDISATION CONFERENCE...

L-R: Chief of Staff to Director General, Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), Mr. Uche Okafor; Director General, SON, Dr. Ifeanyi Okeke; Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Lagos State, Mrs. Toyin Atekoja; President, Federation of Tourism Association of Nigeria (FTAN), Nkereuwem Onung; and Director General, Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation, Chief Folorunsho Coker during the stakeholders' standardisation conference for tourism and Related services industry organised by SON in Lagos... yesterday

SUNDAY ADIGUN

African Union Writes Nigeria, South Africa on AFRIMA Hosting Rights

Ferdinand Ekechukwu

The African Union Commission (AUC) has officially invited the governments of Nigeria and South Africa to take advantage of the benefits in the hosting rights of the next two editions of the prestigious annual All Africa Music Awards, AFRIMA.

In a letter bearing reference number HHS/CUL/16/170.23 and signed by the AUC's Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development, Her Excellency, Ambassador Minata Samate Cessouma, the AU said the call aligns with its policies for the strategic transformation

of Africa through social integration, as outlined in AU Agenda 2063, the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, and the AU Plan for Action on Cultural and Creative Industry.

The AU describes AFRIMA as a global platform for celebrating and developing Africa's diverse musical talents and cultural heritage, highlighting the significant opportunities hosting the prestigious awards presents for the selected host country.

"Since 2014, the African Union has been partnering and working successfully with AFRIMA to develop, celebrate and promote African music globally for the purpose of integration/

inclusivity, economic prosperity and world peace via its seven core pillars: (1) Music Awards, (2) Music Festivals; (3) AFRIMA creative Academy; (4) Talent Discovery and Promotions; (5) Music Business Hub; (6) Advocacy; (7) Advisory and Policy Debates," the letter reads.

"AFRIMA is the biggest and longest running music award and platform in Africa, with a huge global appeal, diaspora audience, and youthful fans. The main events of AFRIMA are usually broadcast live to over 84 countries around the world after a continental and global road show, with thousands of music artists, actors,

celebrities, members of the diplomatic corps, professionals in the creative space, tourists, media and fans from all over the world converging on the host country."

A letter received by the Minister of Art, Culture and Creative Economy, Hannatu Musawa, on behalf of the Nigerian government, a copy of which was seen by our correspondent, reads, "Nigeria, as a beacon in African music with huge young population, should it accept to host AFRIMA, stands a promising chance in elevating the country's positive global presence, bolstering artistic, tourism and economic growth, fostering cultural exchange

and job creation, and reinforcing a positive perception of our continent's rich cultural heritage on a global scale."

The successful last edition of AFRIMA was hosted and partnered by the government of the Republic of Senegal in the city of Dakar. The hosting rights of AFRIMA are usually bestowed on a country that shows capacity and commitment to meet up with the requirements and conditions.

The Acting Director for Social Development, Culture, and Sports Division, African Union Commission, Ms. Angela Martins confirmed the invitation and request to bid for the hosting rights extended to the two countries.

She said that AFRIMA provides a unique opportunity for the host country to showcase its rich cultural heritage, develop her music sector, promote

Rotary Donates Items to Cushion Economic Hardship

Rotary Club of Lagos West has reaffirmed commitment to impacting lives during its empowerment programme for less-privileged Nigerians, including widows and indigent Nigerians.

The club also made case for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the country, tasking the government on the right policies and enabling environment for businesses.

At the programme, items such as grinding machines, sewing machines, drilling machines, barbing kits, wheelchairs and N 50,000 cash support were presented to selected beneficiaries including single parent, youths, widows and indigent Nigerians in Amuwo-Odofin area of Lagos.

The club explained that the exercise was part of its vocational and economic empowerment scheme aimed to create income sources for indigent Nigerians and families.

President of the club, Omolara Akinsanya, reiterated the intention of the exercise as alleviating poverty and hunger in the land, also in line with the club's pledge to humanitarian services.

"We hope that beneficiaries can make the best of this gesture such that they can impact their families and the people around them. We are not giving this just for their own benefits but to let this gesture extend to the people around them", she said.

Also speaking, a Past District Governor (DG) of Rotary International District 9110, Kola Sodipo charged beneficiaries to take advantage of the gesture to impact more lives given harsh economic reality.

Banks Resume Processing Charges on Deposits Above N500,000 for Individual Accounts, N3m for Corporates

Nume Ekeghe

Banks and other financial institutions in Nigeria have reinstated processing fees for cash above N500,000 for individuals and over N3 million for corporates.

This followed an end of the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) temporary suspension of the policy.

During the period of suspension, customers enjoyed a waiver of the usual processing fees.

The suspension, which commenced in December 2023, affected deposits surpassing N500,000 for individuals and N5 million for corporate entities, concluded on April 30, 2024.

The original circular imposing the fee, issued in 2019, had set the thresholds for processing charges on cash deposits; however, this initiative was part of a broader regulatory measure aimed at encouraging bank deposits and managing liquidity within the financial system during the cash crunch nationwide.

Owing to this development, an email from Sterling Bank to its customers announcing the resumption of charges stated: "We wish to remind you of the temporary suspension of the processing fees on cash deposits above N500,000 for individuals and N3,000,000 for corporates by the Central Bank of Nigeria until

Tuesday, April 30th, 2024.

"During this period, you could deposit cash above these thresholds at any Sterling Branch without incurring the usual two per cent and three per cent processing fees respectively for individuals and corporates.

"This is to inform you that effective Wednesday, May 1st, 2024, processing fees have been reintroduced on cash deposits exceeding the thresholds.

"This means when you deposit cash above N500,000 (for individuals) and N3,000,000 (for corporates) at any Sterling Branch, the applicable processing fee of two per cent and three per cent will be incurred respectively."

Nigeria's Malaria Prevalence Indices Unacceptable, Says Pate

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

The Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Pate, has stated that persisting high burden of malaria scourge is no longer acceptable.

In his opening remarks at the roundtable discussion on Rethinking Malaria Elimination in Nigeria, held at the Abuja Continental Hotel, Prof. Pate said the situation can be blamed on lack of political commitment or human capacity to bring an end to the scourge of malaria.

He said: "It is unacceptable that more than 70 years since Nigeria began implementing programmes

to eliminate malaria, it still bears 30 per cent of the global burden, with an estimated annual 68 million cases and 194,000 deaths from the disease as of 2021.

"This is not due to lack of political commitment or human capacity within Africa to bring an end to the scourge of malaria but, I would say, because of insufficient focus and commitment."

The minister recalled that exactly 24 years ago, on April 25, 2000, during the African Summit on Roll Back Malaria in Abuja, over 44 Heads of Government and development partners signed the Abuja Declaration on Roll Back Malaria, outlining several objectives

and a plan of action to combat malaria in Africa.

However, in terms of the progress made so far across the scales, Pate wondered if Nigeria has sufficiently raised awareness about the severity of malaria as a public health issue or has taken the requisite action to control and eventually eliminate malaria.

"In the face of the scourge of malaria, have we mobilised enough financial and technical resources to support malaria control efforts in Nigeria and other African countries, including both domestic and international funding, as well as technical assistance from organisations and governments?"

Omosehin Resumes as NAICOM Boss, Says Insurance Sector Critical for \$1tn Economy

James Emejo in Abuja

The newly-appointed Commissioner for Insurance/Chief Executive, National Insurance Commission (NAICOM), Mr. Olusegun Omosehin, yesterday, resumed office, promising to reposition the insurance sector, which he deemed as critical to achieving President Bola Tinubu's aspiration for \$1 trillion economy by 2026.

Speaking at the handing over ceremony at the commission's headquarters, Abuja, he made a passionate appeal to staff to embrace a new chapter with optimism as the new administration worked to enhance processes, leverage technology and foster a culture of excellence.

He hinted at an internal process overhauling to make it more efficient to the public and engage more constructively with all its external stakeholders.

The new NAICOM boss also promised to exercise utmost probity in ensuring a safe, sound and stable insurance sector while protecting policy holders, public interest as well as improving trust and confidence in the Nigerian insurance sector.

He said the organisation plays a critical role in shaping the Nigerian insurance industry to protect the interest of policy holders.

Omosehin stressed that insurance was not only a business but a social safety net, adding that it was the responsibility of the commission to ensure a strong, reliable and accessible safety net for all Nigerians.

He further stated that the landscape of the Nigerian insurance industry remained at a pivotal juncture where it is faced with significant opportunity for growth and challenges that require innovative and decisive regulatory responses.

Give Climate Change Reporting Priority, Akpabio Charges Media

Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

The President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio, has charged the Nigerian media practitioners to accord special attention to reporting climate change issues.

Akpabio's advice was contained in a statement by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Hon. Esemeyi Eyiob, to commemorate this year's World Press Freedom Day.

Akpabio charged the media to make conscious efforts in setting a climate change agenda and engage in aggressive education of the people about the environment and the negative effects of climate change.

He said, "The theme for this year's World Press Freedom Day is in sync with the global attention accorded to issues of environment and as the

conscience of the society, it behooves the media to be deliberate in their reportage of climate issues.

"Environment and climate are life and we must be part of the conservation of the environment for humanity to thrive before we talk about politics and related issues."

The Senate President noted that the world was faced with the issue of global warming, which Nigeria is also not immune from, adding that the media could do more in public enlightenment and education for the understanding of every citizen.

Akpabio, however, celebrated the Nigerian journalists for their sacrifices despite working under indelible conditions promising that the 10th National Assembly will always stand for a free press in the country.

TECH HUB

AYODEJI AKE

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Adedoyin Odunfa: IT Professional Empowering Women in Tech

Adedoyin Odunfa, a seasoned IT professional with nearly three decades experience is currently Managing Director/CEO of Digital Jewels Ltd. Her remarkable ability to elevate the strategic significance of IT within organisations, coupled with her impactful interventions across the information value chain have distinguished her from her peers. Her career journey and achievements serve as a testament to the immense potential that women possess in the tech industry, writes **Ayodeji Ake**

It is Muriel Strode in his famous quote that advised that, "Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." Adedoyin Odunfa embodies this philosophy in her career. Her name has become synonymous with tech and digitalisation, thanks to initiatives she steered to elevate IT governance, risk management and compliance practices, making a substantial impact on businesses at home and abroad.

Indeed, Odunfa has carved a niche for herself as the Founder and Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of Digital Jewels Ltd, a prominent IT GRC consulting and capacity-building firm spanning nine African countries, and boasts a stellar delivery track record worthy of emulation.

Odunfa's valuable interventions across the information value chain have set her apart from her peers, showcasing her ability to drive innovation and transformation. Her remarkable accomplishments have positioned her as a role model for aspiring female professionals in the tech industry.

The Digital Jewels CEO was recently recognised among Nigeria's Top 100 Most Inspirational Women (2021), the Top 50 Women in Cybersecurity in Africa (2020), and among the top 20 FINTECH Women in Nigeria (2019). Hence, it is no gainsaying then that Odunfa balances her successful career with evidence.

Her rich background spanning 30 years in consulting and business development has lured local and global organisations to tap from her knowledge and experience while also bringing other aspiring tech individuals to transition to the digital space smoothly.

At the International Women's Day webinar powered by the ISACA Abuja Chapter, Odunfa used the platform to inspire and empower other women to embrace the digital space. Her own success story serves as a testament to the immense potential that women possess in the tech industry.

Through her participation at the conference, Odunfa shared her valuable insights, experiences, and strategies, encouraging other women to confidently navigate the digital landscape and unlock their full potential.

Her efforts were aimed at fostering a more inclusive and diverse tech ecosystem, where women can thrive and contribute to the industry's growth.

Speaking on the theme of the webinar, "Inspiring Inclusion, Investing in Women to Accelerate Progress: Empowering Women in the Workplace," as one of the 10 panelists, Odunfa described inclusion as benefiting from diversity and specifically, the focus of IWD is on women.



Odunfa

"There are numerous benefits when you have both male and female professionals around the table," she argued. "You get different perspectives, thoughts, and patterns and you're able to make more meaningful, more value-adding decisions," highlighting the importance of having women included in every endeavour.

She emphasised: "As a female professional, it is also intentional about identifying opportunities for female professionals and seeing how I can lighten the journey for the next female professional and entrepreneur." For the Obafemi Awolowo University alumna, it is paramount to always be prepared to work harder than their male counterparts to prove you can add value; hence, professional women need to come to terms with that reality.

"Also be organised, especially on the home front," she recommended, reminiscing about a term she encountered early in her career. "I called it, domestic infrastructure," she chipped in. "We all need to make sure that our domestic infrastructure is solid and functional."

From the workplace point of view, Odunfa expressed her desire to add value and impact, gear up to collaborate with people, work the extra mile, stretch herself, and make sure she doesn't lose sight of people on the work front.

"In one of my past career roles, my boss told me we would take a client out for dinner. I called to inform my family. My children were still quite young. So,

one of them frowned at it. Regardless, I went but I ensured they were well cared for. Domestic infrastructure is being 100 per cent organised," she added.

According to Odunfa, leaving an eight-to-five job to start her business 16 years ago was a significant career decision.

"The intention was to be an entrepreneur; and set up a subsidiary that would focus on IT-related consulting. But that didn't work out and I felt led to just step out and start up digital jobs," she added.

First, she felt convinced she was on the right track. She also felt it was an opportunity to impact Nigeria and Africa - male and female professionals. "When I stepped out, I took up a crop of young people. We worked assiduously through God's grace to make it happen," she conceded.

However, the tech expert warned that, the road won't be a walk in the park.

"Entrepreneurship and technopreneurship is a road less travelled so you do have to be prepared. Whatever decision you take, whether it is even staying within your current career, it will not necessarily be easy but you must be determined to walk through whatever challenges that you may find yourself in.

"For me, I believe that decision paid off, I believe that 16 years later, we have impacted our space. I've had the privilege to take in and groom wonderful professionals and they are all across the world now. We will continue to collaborate. I've had the privilege and opportunity to impact organisations and strengthen their policies," she added.

The first panel of discussion included Odunfa and four others - Beamline Scientist and Columnist, UK's National Science Facility, Dr. Chidinma Okolo; Pioneer Director of Digital Literacy and Capacity Development NITDA, Amina Sambo; and the Technical Lead and Security Architect, Nigeria Digital for Identification Development (ID4D) Project, Chinenye Chizea moderated by Naomi Emma.

Principal Manager, IT Security and Resilient Programmes at CBN, Uchenna Emeka-Obi; Manager of IT Applications and Information Management Specialist at NBPC Ltd, Ejio Ibuaka; Manager, Enterprise Systems Management at NNPC Ltd, Maryam Kontagora; Associate Professor of Cybersecurity, National Open University of Nigeria, Vivian Nwaocha moderated by Mariam Chukwuemeka.

Certainly, everyone possesses the right to reshape history, and Odunfa is actively inspiring inclusion, and investing

Uleval Launches Firazi App for Seamless Logistics Services

Firazi Saas software an indigenous application set to transform operational challenges in the logistics and haulage industry in Nigeria.

It is to aid operational delivery in the freight industry. The solution provider firm tends to provide a smooth customer experience in tracking the movement of their order in real-time, from one point to another, receiving their order promptly with little to no interactions with the sender.

Speaking at the product launch in Lagos, Managing Partner, Uleval Technology, Adebisi Gbenga remarked that the software platform is a solution developed with a deep understanding of the needs of both customers and businesses in the logistic services. He noted that Firazi is an application built to solve the logistic complexity issues as well connecting businesses to individuals and also connecting business to business beyond the logistics space. He stated, "Over the past five years, we as a startup have been on a journey of discovery birthing innovation, and developing apps aimed at boosting the economy.

"In our quest, we noticed a vacuum and the need for accountability, transparency, and flexibility in order fulfillment. And this vacuum birthed Firazi." Hence, the firm collaborates with businesses using the solution provider application on their platform for a smooth operational experience. Gbenga, stressed that Firazi is taking the weight load off the business owner which is the cost of having to hire an IT team, the cost of building an app from scratch, and about how much it is going to cost to run a company. "You can jump on Firazi and right from there you can begin your business, he said.

On his part, Firazi's Business Consultant, Adedeji Emmanuel, remarked that the software would give hands-on information regarding the assets, staff and "how to manage existing assets you have, especially if you have a warehouse or run a logistics business."

Encomiums as FinTech Sales Guru, Dare Bows Out after 25 Years of Service

The banking industry literally stood still recently as one of the doyens of ATM banking and financial technology, the Executive Director, e-Business and Infrastructure, Inlaks Computers Limited, Tope Dare, exited the company after years of meritorious service in the industry.

Widely regarded as one of the pioneers of the ATM industry in Nigeria, Dare's remarkable journey in 25 years, with 11 at Inlaks, drew accolades from colleagues, associates, and contemporaries alike.

The send-forth event held recently, in Lagos witnessed an outpouring of tributes on the fintech icon. The Chairman of the send-forth organising committee, Kayode Olubiyi, described Dare as a man of many talents who touched lives through his philanthropist efforts. His wife, Adedoyin, described her husband as a very hardworking, kind and humble man.

"Tope's dedication to his job is highly commendable, a true leader and a man of the people. I'm so proud of what you have become," she said. The fintech sales icon reflected on his career in the last 25 years, the unwavering support of his parents and family and the invaluable contributions of numerous individuals and entities along the way. Dare said: "As I reminisce on the past 25 years, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude for the opportunities I have been afforded, the lessons I have learned, and the relationships I have forged along the way.

"I am truly blessed to have had the privilege of working alongside some of the brightest minds and most dedicated professionals in the industry.

"As I look ahead, I am excited about the future and the opportunities that lie ahead. I am committed to continuing this journey of impact and excellence, guided by the values of integrity, innovation, and collaboration."

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SHOWBIZFLAIR

As Wizkid, Davido Renew Decade-long Feud

Ferdinand Ekechukwu

Why would Wizkid choose the moment he did in the early hours of April 29, 2024, to engage his teeming fans on X platform, formerly known as Twitter, to heat up social media space? It was about the same time Davido was setting out to celebrating the birthday of his wife and "special one", Chioma, who recently turned 29, on April 30.

What ordinarily could have been fun and interaction between Wizkid and his fans was not without some shots at a couple of afrobeats stars, including Ladipoe, and Mavin owner, Don Jazzy. Wizkid's time with his fans swiftly turned into a row as he further dropped shady comments that particularly triggered a face-off online between him and Davido.

This latest spat comes as a shock after the duo appeared to have squashed their beef just months ago, when they both partied in December 2023, with Davido also announcing Wizkid's last project 'S2'. A couple of weeks ago, a video of Davido trended on social media, showing him on his knee, allegedly begging a lady for sex.

Their renewed beef followed the viral video Wizkid shared during the said session with his fans. Alongside the video, Wizkid asked his fans



Wizkid



Davido

to beg him like Davido was captured before he releases new song, "Beg me like this. Send video. Y'all need it. I wish everybody luck. Every day I get things to say but my mouth no good."

Wizkid and Davido have strong presence online. However, Wizkid is known more for his silence. So it's newsworthy whenever he puts out a lot of posts like he did on this recent incident. So, that

mischievous comment from Wizkid was not to be taken lightly by Davido, his 30 BG retinue and fans across other social media platforms.

The feud has seen the two talented acts drag each other so hard they even got dissing their family lives, career, individual personalities, lifestyle and superiority claim in the music industry.

By the way, the genre Afrobeats has suffered

some form of disrespect lately from its frontline artistes – Wizkid and Burna Boy – who could be said to have actually benefitted from it more than the other afrobeats artistes.

Rema also didn't hold anything back as he poured out his mind about everything concerning Afrobeats in a long Twitter rant that got fans talking a day before Wizkid and Davido social media exchange began.

In a follow-up tweet, like someone actually noted "the superstar artiste said, "Afrobeats AfroAnything," a clear reference to the controversy over Wizkid, Burna Boy, and Fireboy's recent claims that their music isn't Afrobeats." Like Wizkid saying he's not an afrobeats artiste, and Burna Boy's "afrobeats has no substance" account in an interview a few months ago.

There's this view, in no particular order, of Burna Boy, Wizkid, and Davido as the big three. The Mavins artiste, Rema went on to rank himself in the same category as Burna Boy, Wizkid, and Davido, saying "no more big three, there's now a Big 4," and bared his mind on several topics around Afrobeats.

It is believed that Rema's rant inspired Wizkid to taunt Davido, Ladipoe, and his record label's boss, Don Jazzy, and Peruzzi on social media.

Expectedly, some of Wizkid's and Davido's colleagues and associates notably Odumodu Black and Samkleff have taken sides to support their favourites. Even their minions are not left out in the ongoing drama between the two superstars.

Hannatu Musawa, Juliet Ehimuan Seek to Boost Africa's Creative Economy

Ferdinand Ekechukwu



Actress Kie Kie, Hannatu Musawa, and Dr. Juliet Ehimuan at the 2nd edition of DICE

Following the successful hosting of Nigeria's first-ever tech ecosystem mixer, DICE, the stage is set for an array of creative industry practitioners (filmmakers, actors, performing artistes, content creators, etc.), tech founders, digital agencies, influencers among others to engage in robust conversations with key players and enablers in the creative ecosystem.

DICE, an acronym for Digital Innovation and Creative Excellence, an initiative of Beyond Limits' platform for fostering, networking and collaboration among Africa's dreamers within the creative industry and beyond, pulled participants across sectors, providing a platform for knowledge sharing, collaboration and innovation at the second edition of DICE.

The event held recently exceeded expectations, building upon the success of its inaugural edition in November 2023. DICE 2.0 served as a platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration, uniting diverse stakeholders committed to accelerating Africa's tech and creative revolution.

The spotlight was on Africa's creative economy as Dr. Juliet Ehimuan, Founder & CEO of Beyond Limits, engaged in a keynote fireside chat featuring Hannatu Musa Musawa, Nigeria's Minister of Art, Culture and Creative Economy.

The conversation provided valuable insights into the pivotal role of creativity in Africa's economic landscape.

With Africa's creative industry experiencing exponential growth, Musawa emphasised creating an environment conducive for innovation and entrepreneurship. She discussed the government's commitment to supporting the creative sector through policies that promote investment, protect intellectual property rights, and facilitate access to funding and resources.

"As a Nigerian, one thing that we know and that is part of our identity is our creativity," said Musawa. Stressing how important it is for talent in the creative industry to be part of the economy's decision-making process.

"To me, it's a temporary position that will conclude in four years", she said, referring

to her ministerial role. However, for those in the creative industry, it's their means of livelihood.

"They've invested their time and effort to advocate for policies that will foster the industry's growth. Therefore, I'm going to tap into the network and resources of people within the industry to develop policies to ensure their voices are heard, and they have a seat at the decision-making table," she added.

Ehimuan, a leading figure in Africa's tech ecosystem, having served as the Director of Google West Africa for over a decade, echoed the sentiment, stressing the need for collaboration between government, industry stakeholders, and the private sector to harness the full potential of Africa's creative talents. She spotlighted the role of technology in driving innovation and expanding the reach of African creativity on a global scale.

As Africa continues to position itself as a hub of creativity and innovation, events like DICE 2.0 serve as catalysts for dialogue, collaboration, mentorship, and action. By harnessing its people's collective talents and resources, Africa is poised to emerge as a global leader in the creative economy, driving sustainable growth, prosperity, and social development across the continent and beyond.

'Alakada' Returns with New Sequel 'Bad and Boujee'

Ferdinand Ekechukwu

Four years after the last part of the 'Alakada' series titled 'Fate of Alakada: The Party Planner', Nigerian actress/producer Toyin Abraham, in a post last Wednesday, announced to the delight of her numerous fans the return of her blockbuster comedy film "Alakada" with a sequel titled "Alakada! Bad and Boujee", set for release December, 2024.

'Alakada! Bad and Boujee' would be the fifth part of the popular 'Alakada' comedy series. It follows the hilarious storyline centered on the character Yetunde, portrayed by Abraham. Yetunde, a young woman grappling with feelings of inadequacy, navigates her world by making up stories about her social status to mask her insecurities.

But her lies always come back to haunt her. The first part of 'Alakada' was released in 2009, the second 'Alakada 2' in 2013, the third, 'Alakada Reloaded' in 2017, and the fourth, 'Fate of Alakada: The Party Planner' in 2020.

Being star-studded has been the recipe for the success of 'Alakada' series, having all past featuring popular entertainers.

K-POP Fiesta Contest Launched in Nigeria

Kunle Adewale

Organisers of the K-POP Fiesta Contest have announced the launch of the phenomenal K-POP Fiesta contest in Nigeria. This exciting event offers fans a unique platform to showcase their passion for Korean pop music and dance, while providing an opportunity to engage with fellow enthusiasts from all corners of the country.

It was disclosed at a press conference that the Contest, which is sponsored by LG Electronics, would be to four major cities in Nigeria, including Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and Ibadan.

"The K-POP fiesta contest aims to bring the electric energy and vibrant culture of K-POP to Nigeria, a country known for its love of music and dance," it added.

The K-POP contest invites talented individuals and groups to contest in various categories, including singing, dancing, and performance. As part of its commitment to fostering cultural exchange and embracing diversity "We are excited to bring the K-POP Contest to Nigeria and provide a platform for talented individuals to shine.

"By taking the contest to multiple cities, we aim to reach a diverse range of participants and celebrate the rich cultural exchange between Korea and Nigeria. Contestants will have the

opportunity to win exciting prizes and recognition for their talent," Managing Director at LG Electronics West Africa, Mr. Hyounsub Ji said.

The K-POP Contest tour kicked off in Ibadan on the May 2, giving fans opportunity to experience the electrifying energy of K-POP through dance and singing competitions, and also interactive sessions. The tour will travel to Lagos, Port Harcourt, and Abuja, with aspiring performers in each location the chance to showcase their

talent on a grand stage at the finale which will take place in Lagos sometime in June.

Three winners in music and dance would emerge at the regional contest in these four cities with N500,000 up for grabs while the winner at the grand finale gets N2 million naira plus other exciting prizes. In addition to the contest, attendees will also have the opportunity to experience LG's latest innovations in entertainment technology.



Officials and guests at the launch of K-POP Fiesta

INTERVIEW

Lara Kudayisi Don-Momoh: Nigerians Stigmatise Divorcees, Make Them Feel They Are Good for Nothing

Lara Kudayisi Don-Momoh is a Certified Cognitive Behavioral Therapist and Family Life Coach, specialising in Healing, Family Life and Mind Reprogramming. As a practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Eriksonian Hypnosis and Neurological Repatterning, she offers a comprehensive range of services, including Performance Consulting, Emotional Intelligence coaching, and Anger Management guidance. Narrating her story to **Tosin Clegg**, she delves into how she started her journey of healing others, helping others manage divorce, handling childhood trauma, emotional issues management and much more



■ Don-Momoh

How did your personal experiences shape your decision to become a Certified Cognitive Behavioural Therapist and Family Life Coach?

My personal experiences of pain and trauma was what prompted me to go a journey of healing and freedom for myself. While on that quest, I realised that I could help a lot more people become free and whole like I have become.

What inspired you to create The Healing School program and how has it impacted the lives of those you work with?

The Healing School program came about after I released my third book: 'How the Matchmaker's Marriage Failed', in December 2018. The book was about my life story of how I was broken as a child, had broken relationships, had my daughter at 19 and how my first marriage ended in divorce. When I shared this book with the world, I was exposed to a lot of people who have been through so much pain and trauma in their lives either as a result of trauma or childhood dysfunction. I felt the compassion and empathy which caused me to create The Healing School which is an eight-week online therapy program so that I could help all these people heal from their own emotional pain and suffering. It was created in January 2019 and it has since then been the most powerful program I have ever created because it has transformed the lives of over 2,000 people and counting.

What motivated you to start your own show and what have been some of the most powerful healing journeys you've witnessed on the show?

'How They Healed' was a program that I executed, produced and presented because I wanted people to see celebrities share their own stories and their healing journey. I wanted the average human being to see that their role models and icons are also flesh and blood who go through the same issues like them and they are healing too. We got a lot of messages from so many people that are grateful for the program because they could relate with their celebrity crushes. In terms of the Healing Journey I witnessed, I think the one that really interests me a lot was the healing journey of Omotunde Lolo popularly known as Adaku from Jennifer's Diary. Her testimony of her healing journey from a divorce and low self-confidence was pretty inspiring and touching.

How do you approach the topic of finding love after trauma in your coaching sessions and what are some of the advice you offer to individuals navigating this journey?

It is a program for people who have been divorced, heartbroken, betrayed, lost their loved ones to death and more. It helps these sort of people heal from their pain, makes them unstuck from their past and be open to finding and attracting new and healthy love. This program is run by me and my husband Teddy Esosa Don-Momoh. We share our healing journey of how I have healed from divorce and so many heartbreaks from my end and how he recovered and healed from the death of his wife, the late singer, Kefee, to how he found love again with me. So, it's a practical program sharing our healing journeys and also helping other people achieve the same feat like us. The advice I'll give to people who have been through pain and want to

find love again is to heal first by going to therapy before they can attempt finding new love, if not, they will bleed on the new people they meet.

How do you integrate principles into your coaching sessions to support clients in developing healthier coping mechanisms?

Having diversified certifications in Emotional Intelligence, Anger Management and Fear Mastery amongst others helps me to have a holistic approach in helping my clients unlearn unhealthy habits, emotions, learn healthy and functioning habits that can help them master their emotions, improve their interpersonal relationships, increase their self-esteem, confidence and worth in order to become the best version of themselves. The people who go through therapy and are unhealed probably aren't ready to do the work or doesn't just believe in the process and without belief it can never work for you. These people are probably the one per cent of the numerous number of people that go to therapy.

Can you speak to the importance of addressing Childhood Dysfunctions and Emotional Traumas in the healing process?

Going back to your childhood is one of the easiest and fastest ways to heal and move forward in life because we are all products of our childhood experiences. If you don't go back, you will end up treating surface wounds which is why at The Healing School, we have three sources of pain; The Primary, Secondary and Tertiary sources. The Primary Source of Pain is the beginning of the issues from childhood. Most people who have confidence issues, recurring broken relationships or marriages can be traced to their childhood. When they heal, the inner child, their lives change for good. Almost every client I meet have a first contact session where they share their issues and I get to trace the source of the problem, diagnose the problem and recommend the program that would help their personal issues.

How do you prioritise self-care and maintain a healthy work-life balance while juggling multiple roles as a therapist, coach, author, TV presenter, and CEO despite being a mum?

I know when to unplug and switch to relaxation mood. I watch a lot of movies, sleep and connect with my husband, kids, friends and siblings. I also travel for vacation as often as I can so that I can go and rejuvenate so that I can come back refreshed to bring new solutions to help my clients.

What drives your commitment to raising awareness about topics like Life After Divorce?

The stigmatisation of divorcees drove me into seeking solutions for them especially when I have been through that journey myself. Africans and particularly Nigerians stigmatised divorcees and make them feel like nothing good can ever come out of them since they couldn't keep their marriage. I have been divorced and I have been helping people before, during and post-divorce. Divorce doesn't mean you are dead or useless in the society. Also divorcees or widow(er)s deserve to find love again and be happy like everyone else. Today I am remarried and living happily with my husband and family. I am a living testimony of what I preach. Also, there's no shame in seeking help. Everyone who's going great today had a help in one way or another. You asking for help actually shows you're a strong person who is

willing to change their story and stop being a victim of circumstance.

What lessons have you learned from your own healing journey that have shaped your approach to supporting others on their path to recovery and growth?

Number one lesson is that your pain or trauma may not be your fault but it is your responsibility to heal from it. You can't keep blaming people for what they have done to you if you have refused to heal from it and move on to a better life. Whatever life throws at you can be resized and recreated to a better life just like the same way I am doing currently. I always tell people that "It is never too late to start over". I want to see a

healed and functional society. The more people have a better mental and emotional health, the more productive they get and more stable they become in their emotions which affects everyone we all meet on the long run. I am looking forward to a day where our company can do therapy and coaching programs for government officials, private and public organisations, tertiary institutions and so on so that there can be a saner society who is happy, functional and empathetic to one another. The more empathy we have, the more government would make friendly and supportive policies to help the citizens of the county. The happier, empathetic and fulfilled the management of an organisation is the more they provide better working conditions for their employees.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



CARE NIGERIA REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL CONSULTANT ON MICRO ENTERPRISE FUNDAMENTALS AND GROUP DYNAMICS AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS (GDLS) TRAINING

Founded in 1945 with the creation of the CARE Package®, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE places special focus on working alongside women and girls. Equipped with the proper resources women and girls have the power to lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty. This year, CARE and partners worked in 111 countries implementing 1,600 poverty-fighting development and humanitarian aid projects and initiatives, that reached 174,000,000 people. CARE Nigeria is registered with CAC and has signed an MOU with the Government of Nigeria to implement development and humanitarian relief assistance to affected populations in Nigeria. CARE Nigeria's thematic areas includes Food Nutrition Security and Livelihood, Women Economic Empowerment, Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, and Gender-based Violence (GBV) and Protection activities.

The 4.5-year Catalyzing Strengthened policy action for heAlthy Diets and resilience (CASCADE) project is being implemented by CARE and The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN). By prioritizing the essential nutrition services pathway, CASCADE will work with national and local governments to implement the Nutrition policy and develop a multi-stakeholder strategic implementation plan through which government actors can coordinate to better contextualize national food and nutrition policies. The programme will work with government and its technical committees to improve quality of nutrition programmes and strategies, supporting the organization of forums and policy dialogues to advocate for increased investment in nutrition policy implementation. The programme will strengthen capacity of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to supply nutrition services, including fortified products.

CARE Nigeria is issuing a "Request for Proposals" for: **Consultant On Micro Enterprise Fundamentals And Group Dynamics And Leadership Skills (Gdls) Training**

Interested bidders should click on the link.

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/9pvv68jabl61kp1180jeg/Terms-of-Reference-GDLS-CASCADE.pdf?rlkey=j692raghxq88r0dcrzvrnrj3h&st=08xp8zon&dl=0>

For complete TOR documentation containing all details. Bidders should take account of the expected submission time required and are responsible for ensuring that bids are received via the address indicated in the solicitation by the due date and time.

PEOPLE

DANIEL OMOTILEWA:

Nigeria Requires Reorientation, Strong Institutions, Committed Leadership

Call him his mother's love child and you wouldn't be wrong. Like his mother, Daniel Omotilewa is tenacious, hard-working, and uncompromisingly honest. Growing up in his native town of Osi-Ekiti, the first twelve years of this cool child were defining, as they taught him character, contentment, honesty, and a life of principle and community; all of which have formed the bedrock on which his life and world view are hinged. He moved to Lagos years after the trio of late Dele Giwa, Ray Ekpu and Yakubu Mohammed of the defunct Newswatch spurred him into thinking of a career in Journalism. Upon Dele Giwa's death, the need to be in a profession he could practice without gory memories, influenced his incursion into the legal profession. He speaks with **Adedayo Adejobi** on Nigeria, how the legal profession closed a door on him, how he met his wife and why he loves Tai Solarin and Barak Obama. Excerpts

Growing up

Growing up was fun. I am an Ekiti man to the core. I was born in Osi Ekiti, in Ido-Osi Local Government Area of Ekiti State. For the first 12 years of my life, I never stepped out of my local government. We enjoyed the rural life the community offered us. Electricity, television, and money did not matter to us. You don't envy anybody. The people we looked up to then were in the teaching profession, priests and very few public servants.

What key values have shaped you?

The ethos while I was growing up was to always remember the son of who you are. The Ekiti people are principled, honest, and brutally frank. So, striving to be an Omoluabi was a task for every one of us while growing up in Ekiti, and it subsequently shaped our worldview.

What kind of child were you?

I have been cool since childhood. Not a child to rock the boat. The last child of a polygamous home. I was pampered a bit, but it never got to my head. I was a good boy in the neighbourhood which possibly influenced my having some old papas as friends.

What fond childhood memories do you hold strongly?

There were many, but one that I will not forget easily happened on a particular Christmas Eve when I was around the age of 8 to 10 years. My mum was a petty trader, which included selling kerosene in bottles to end users. Earlier that day, I had helped her sell some bottles of kerosene and I kept the proceed in the inner pocket of my shorts/nicker. Around 8:00 pm, as I was ready to join other children in celebrating Christmas eve which we enjoyed in those days by buying fried fish, meat etc, I went to the front of our church, where a gas lamp had been placed. There was no electricity in those days in my town. I prayed silently calling on God to give me money for the enjoyment of my Christmas Eve. About 30 minutes later, I checked my pocket only to discover one kobo in the inner pocket of my shorts/nicker. I was happy that God had dropped money in my pocket, so the enjoyment started. For a repeat performance of the miracle, I ran back to the frontage of the church which was a door to door opposite our house, and prayed again. A few minutes later I dipped my hand to the same inner pocket only to discover another coin, this time of bigger denomination but smaller in size than the one kobo. Upon a deep introspection, I discovered it was not miracle money but the proceeds of kerosene I sold for my mum earlier in the day. I then went home to confess my sin to my loving mother who laughed at me and forgave me.

What were your best and worst subjects in secondary school?

My best subject was Government, and I ended up winning the award for overall best student for it in my final year at Eyemote Comprehensive High School, Iyin Ekiti. Mathematics was my lead tormentor. Till today when I come across people who enjoy mathematics, they earn instant respect from me.

At what point in life did you decide on a career path, and what influenced same?

The trio of the late Dele Giwa, Ray Ekpu, and Yakubu Mohammed of the defunct Newswatch motivated me to think of a career in journalism. I was so involved with them, that people were commiserating with me when Dele Giwa was wickedly killed by that parcel bomb. The fierce battle by Chief Fani Fawehinmi to bring to justice, the alleged killer of the late Dele Giwa and the need to be in a profession I can practice without much ado, influenced my detour into the legal profession. The truth is, I established my law practice even as an NYSC member, doing the mandatory one-year National Service scheme. Ever since then, my life and the profession of Law have become like co-jointed twins, and there has never been any regret about the choice.

Can you relieve memories as a student in the university?

I attended the first and the best university in Nigeria, the University of Ibadan. Indeed, it was then and I still believe it is a citadel of learning, a purely academic environment. Hardly, was there a public lecture that was delivered then in the University of Ibadan, especially in the area of art, politics, religion, etc that I was not attending. My other side of socialisation was, however, weak. If I will have the opportunity again, I will not allow my non-academic social life to suffer, which is my only regret.

Can you share the experience on your first job?

Let me put it this way. My first job as a Lawyer was to work for myself, if that answers your question. I was in Enugu State, for my National Youth Service where I was posted to a chamber, Ukpabi Ukpabi & Co.



Omotilewa

Earlier, I had applied for redeployment of service from Enugu State to Lagos State, which was only granted after I had spent about five months in Enugu State. By the time I resumed work in Lagos State for the completion of the one-year compulsory service, I was posted to an engineering company where my services were almost not needed. This allowed me to start running around on my own. That was the beginning, though very rough. I later picked chamber employment on a salary of N4,000 a month. The employment lasted only six months and I pulled out again to continue my hustling. The beauty of it was that, we allowed integrity to mark all our interactions with people in the course of our duties, which started paying off with time.

What else would you be doing if not Law?

As said earlier, my love for the pen-pushing profession was legendary. This informed my going back to the Nigerian Institute of Journalism (NIJ) for a Diploma in print media about 10 years ago. I am yet to collect the certificate up till today.

Beyond journalism, I love academics. I would probably have become a professor by now. The only regret I have about my career journey so far is not taking into full advocacy or pursuing a PhD in Law, and becoming a Law teacher.

If you look down memory lane, would you say you are fulfilled as a Lawyer?

The answer is a categorical yes. The Good Book says no one lights a lamp and puts it under the table. It will be put on top of the table to illuminate the environment. So is a Lawyer, who realises his or her true calling to his or her environment. Therefore, to be a Lawyer is to be privileged and I will not be ready to trade it for anything. Economically, the profession is putting food on my table and also paying my bills. It has opened doors for me and at the same time given me time-tested privileges. Notwithstanding, let me tell a story of how being a lawyer closed a door on me. Sometimes, about 20 years ago, I went to LUTH, Idi Araba, for a medical consultation. Normally, a patient was supposed to be referred from a primary-level hospital to such a hospital. This requirement can, however, be waived if a doctor, after listening to you, gives his or her nod. So, I was referred to this particular doctor, who agreed that I should be attended to without reference from another hospital. As he was writing my approval card, he asked what I do for a

living, and I told him, I was a lawyer. Instantly, he dropped his pen and vowed to cancel my approval. I thought he was joking, but he stood his ground and resolved to continue the process of my approval only if I paid a mandatory fee to the hospital. I then went to the accounting department, paid a particular amount, and was issued a receipt which I then took back to him. The doctor said he adopted that strict position against lawyers because of their attitude towards money. Paraphrasing his statement, lawyers, even when you greet them, expect you to pay for it.

The bane of leadership in Nigeria is corruption. What would be the ideal role of lawyers in solving this problem?

Corruption simply means dishonesty. This has permeated the fabric of our society. Can we say of any sector of our society that is corruption-free? Is our religious sector faring better with what we see and hear daily? It will amount to a fallacy to believe that lawyers have a magic wand to change things suddenly in our country. It is equally not the absence of law to regulate our life. What we have now is a steady and consistent decline of morals in society. A society that worships money will naturally become what Nigeria has become today. What we need is a total reorientation, strong institutions, and committed leadership. It will be a marathon and not a dash, but it is possible. Can lawyers play some roles in this regard? Yes, just like every member of the society.

How did you meet your wife?

She was a young lawyer then. I think she was tired of practicing law in her father's chamber in Akure, therefore relocating to Lagos. My nephew's wife visited Lagos and brought her to my office, and that was how the journey started. I was a super mature bachelor then with some ideas in my head of who could be my wife. Before you can say jack Robinson, we became husband and wife.

How would you describe her in five words?

A virtuous woman and a pillar of support. That is more than 5 words anyway.

What kind of a man are you at home?

A restless man, a fun creator who can equally be mischievous. Simply put, our home is a bastion of hope, fun, and comradesries put together, and I am at the centre of it all.

How often do you find or take time out to treat your wife?

Trust me, I do it but not in the English way. I am not a flower person neither do I compose poems, but behind this facade is a loving tender heart. I however think my wife will answer this question better.

Away from attending to legal briefs, what things do you do to unwind?

Reading, especially biographies. Surfing the internet, and more importantly, YouTube and watching animal channels on the TV.

What famous international figure do you admire and why?

I have read a bit about Jawaral Nehru. My heart naturally palpitates towards his humanism tendencies. Barack Obama is another figure I admire. He is smart, disciplined, and gifted with a gift of gab. If American Constitution allowed it, he would have been overwhelmingly retained for a 3rd term in office. He was open and transparent about his life. His book "Dreams from My Father" laid it bare. There was no scandal of any kind about him throughout his tenure as the President of America.

Who would you consider your strongest influence?

My mother. She is tenacious, hardworking, and uncompromisingly honest. She was a giver. If you refer to her as a reckless giver, you will not be mistaken. The first and last article of her faith was "do unto others what you will expect them to do unto you". Also, in terms of personal hygiene, she was incomparable. Secondly, Dr. Tai Solarin was a big influence in my life. His autobiography "To Mother with love, - An Experiment in Autobiography" is a book I have read about 10 times. In fact, I have read virtually everything he wrote in life. He was such a selfless man. He paid part of my fee when I was in law school.

You recently clocked 60, what and how does it feel being 60?

Honestly, I don't feel any changes in my body. I think my wife will answer this question better. I have been terrorising her more in the house with this 60-year-old thing. I am always quick to remind her of the need to treat a 60-year-old man specially.

FEATURES

JANE KIMEMIA

Championing Investment Immigration Opportunities for Africans

Dr. Jane Kimemia is the Chief Executive Officer of Optiva Capital Partners Limited, easily the largest provider of second citizenship and residency services in Africa. **Sunday Ehigiator** writes on her leading role in championing investment immigration opportunities for Africans



Kimemia

An authentic business leader and entrepreneur who has devoted a lot of time and energy into getting where she is today, she is leading the remarkable transformative growth of Optiva Capital Partners, a leading investment immigration wealth management company.

This Amazon who is re-writing the investment immigration landscape in Africa has extensive experience in general management, with a track record of setting up and building sustainable businesses. Her specialization is in wealth management and working with high-net-worth clients.

An inspirational leader who understands alignment of work with values across the entire system, encouraging staff to set ambitious goals and accomplish them consistently, Kimemia promotes a clear sense of purpose that propels Optiva Capital Partners team members to find more value in their work.

Her cleverness is not in doubt because she is focused and determined through her thoughtful comments, her observational skills, her wit, and her perceptive capabilities such that she hardly can miss a single detail.

As the Chief Executive Officer of Optiva Capital Partners, Jane Kimemia, a product of the Executive Education Programme of INSEAD Business School, France, has overseen the sustained and impressive growth trajectory of this leading investment immigration firm.

Prior to her current CEO role, Kimemia had a successful career in the banking sector of the financial service industry, having worked with two international banks, Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) and Barclays Bank for a combined period of 20 years. She was the Executive Director and Head of Wealth Management at SCB, with responsibility for investments services, banc assurance and foreign exchange for an entire region. She was also Managing Director of Standard Chartered Investments Services (SCIS), one of the bank's subsidiaries and was Managing Director at the Standard Chartered Insurance Agencies Limited (SCIAL).

Jane Kimemia also served as the General Manager of Priority and International banking at Standard Chartered Bank, where she spearheaded the setting-up, establishment and management of the Priority Banking proposition for high-net-worth clients across regions. Prior to joining Standard Chartered Bank, she

had worked for Barclays Bank holding senior positions including Head of Premier Banking; and Head of Scheme Loans.

Optiva Capital Partners, Africa's leading investment immigration wealth management company has steadily, over the past fourteen years built a growing reputation amongst investment savvy Africans who seek quality service in investment immigration, investment advisory, and wealth management. In all of these bespoke services the company's unwavering commitment is to provide clients with the opportunity to protect, grow, enhance and optimize their wealth, and ensure they get the benefits of secured Capital through Multi-asset funds, Global equities, Corporate funds; and also achieve Optimal Diversified Portfolio.

In fact, Optiva Capital Partners is reputed to be one of the fastest-growing brands in the wealth management sector, easily recognized as the largest in investment immigration.

Beloved for its customer-centric focus, deep commitment to structured process, and its extensive network through its elite global partners, this fast-growing brand has come along ways since it began operations in 2010.

Through firm determination and clear definition of the company's raison d'être, Optiva Capital Partners, according to Jane Kimemia, has grown its staff strength from just about 15 in 2017 to over 1000 currently, with over 21 branches across Nigeria and significant presence across Africa.

Optiva Capital Partners' long-standing purpose encapsulated in its core values of service, professionalism, collaboration, and excellence; premium product innovations; and reputable global partnerships, have all added up to a winning formula.

As the leading investment immigration service provider, the company assists its clientele to save

long-term through investment immigration with a commitment to help Africans to save on what they would have been spending on through its bespoke investment immigration services.

According to Kimemia, through the Citizenship By Immigration (CBI) programme, clients receive tremendous value and savings on the scarce foreign exchange that comes back in developing Africa. "We are looking at value, costs, and value across generations as well. So you get second citizenship it doesn't stop you from continuing your business, but it gives you global access. So it is not a spend but an investment and its savings."

Shedding more light on the savings and value inherent in the investment immigration services, Kimemia stated that with "children's education for example, investment immigration becomes a vehicle for our clients to protect, to grow, to enhance, to diversify their wealth. For somebody looking for permanent residency or to invest in a programme in Canada, their children's education say in University of Toronto, international students for a Bachelors programme will be paying about \$60,000 annually, but as permanent residents they will be paying just \$6,000 per annum."

Recognising that employees at every level of its business are crucial to its success, Optiva Capital Partners CEO stated that "we are a lifelong training institution. By default, we attract a lot of women to do front-line roles, in terms of speaking to the clients and the fact that we are a growth institution for when people come in, they know they are going to grow in profile and knowledge, and by understanding, because the space we are in is to talk about high-level clients and we are intentional with the level of training we give our staff, just for them to be able to engage."

But there is more to the transformative leadership capabilities of Jane Kimemia. She recognises

that true wealth lies not in the pocket, but in the heart, and that a company can do well by doing good, that business can perform better financially by attending not only to its core business operations, but also to its responsibilities toward creating a better society.

Consequently, Optiva Capital Partners takes her corporate social responsibility engagement seriously through its passionate commitment to maternal health care and empowerment of women, especially those at the lower rung of society's ladder.

Women, according to her, are the bedrock of the society, the basic unit of society—the home, is run by women, and that is where it all starts. Women are seeking ways to educate, to empower, to contribute, and these start from the home. They want to be able to educate, train their children and themselves. Women also seek to be empowered by the knowledge and experiences gathered, and to contribute to the growth and development of the society.

Also, Optiva Capital Partners works with families, because when they work with families on how their children are going to school, on how they can go to Canada and they will be paying a tenth of what the international students will be paying, it is a service to women, a service to the family. According to her, we are enabling them, we are showing them opportunities on how they can actually access better services.

Jane Kimemia, the transformative CEO revealed that "in terms of mentorship, Optiva Capital Partners actually mentors more women to be successful. At Optiva Capital Partners, over seventy percent of our workforce is women. So for us it is not just a one-off thing because we are daily committed to empowering our workforce, seventy percent of whom are women, creating opportunities for them to serve, to get better, and to grow a career. You know when you raise one woman you raise a generation, because one woman impacts at least five people. So you can then imagine the multiplier effect of that in a workforce of over 1000 people and seventy percent are women."

With Dr. Jane Kimemia in the driver's seat, Optiva Capital Partners' growth trajectory is propelled by its resolute commitment to the established principles that drive sustainability and superior returns on investment, such as its customer-centric focus which ensures it understands its current and prospective clients, in order to better meet their requirements and expectations, which is visible in its improved customer loyalty.

Optiva Capital Partners, Africa's leading investment immigration wealth management company has steadily, over the past fourteen years built a growing reputation amongst investment savvy Africans who seek quality service in investment immigration, investment advisory, and wealth management

PERSPECTIVE

Revisiting Ekweremadu's Roadmap to State Police

Uche Anichukwu

Expectedly, the positive dispositions of the President Bola Tinubu Administration to the creation of state police has opened a floodgate of conversations around the subject, the most recent and notable one being the national dialogue on state police organised by the House of Representatives in Abuja. It is also good that this green light is coming from the president himself.

Serving as a media aide to former Deputy President of the Senate and Chairman, Senate Committee on Constitution Review, Senator Ike Ekweremadu, afforded one the rare privilege of following closely the constitution amendment process and the underpinning politics over several Assemblies. One can authoritatively say that previous quests for state police failed because successive presidents always believed it was in their best interest to have everything security and legitimate instruments of coercion in their firm control. Some Nigerians have also argued that state police could metamorphose into regional armies. There is equally this endemic fear that state governors would abuse it. But essentially the opposition stemmed from the failure by many to foresee the level of insecurity that has happened to Nigeria today. Otherwise, the conversation could have been about how to use the law to address these fears rather – not to block state police entirely.

I recall a conversation between Ekweremadu and a Senator from the North West, who dismissed Ekweremadu's warning that the then budding banditry in that region, could ultimately get to as far as Kaduna, Niger State, the FCT and indeed envelope the entire country unless state police was allowed to strengthen the states against insecurity. That Senator almost laughed his head off, saying that the Sokoto River, Rima River, etc. were sufficient buffers against such expansion.

When many years later innocent Nigerians were massacred in Barkin Ladi, Plateau State, in 2018, Ekweremadu lamented that the sad news was not just that many people were killed in cold blood, but also that more people could die because "there is no way you will have a big federation like Nigeria with all the diversities, and continue to operate a centralised policing."

Today, the jury is out. Banditry, kidnapping, terrorism, and other forms of violent criminality have traversed the entire country, including the 'almighty' FCT and the Nigerian Defence Academy, NDA, Kaduna State.

However, it is heartwarming that consensus appears imminent, as even former arch-opponents of state police have become its strong advocates. For instance, it was interesting watching Senator Ita Enang, on Channels TV's "Politics Today" recently. He confessed: "Senator Ike Ekweremadu was very vehement that we should have state police. He sponsored and brought a bill. I was one of those who vehemently opposed him and campaigned against it. I went out of my way to say that the way the governors exercise power over the electoral process, if you give them the control over security, they would kill everybody. But now, it is no more the question of the governors. We now should not care so much about what a governor does with it so long as he does one thing with it - use it to manage internal security of the state. State police is an idea which time has come."

Even more interesting and quite significant are the support for state police coming from former President Goodluck Jonathan and former Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar (Retd.) at the aforementioned House of Representatives dialogue.

But the greatest fillip comes from the president. And it is on the strength of this and the various call one received from media practitioners as well as serving and former lawmakers, requesting for more insights into the Ekweremadu bill that one found it imperative to revisit that roadmap.

But before proceeding, it is apposite to say that one has also seen the bills on state police before the current National Assembly and they benefitted quite maximally from the Ekweremadu bill. I have no doubt that the sponsors will accord him the due credit.

The special thing about the Ekweremadu bill lies in the way it consciously and meticulously ad-



Police IG, Kayode Egbetokun

resses, among others, the critical issues of structure, standardisation, control, armament, disciplining, co-existence with federal police, and, importantly, the fears of abuse by state governors, benefiting from best practices around the world, especially federal climes like the US, Canada, and Brazil.

Ekweremadu's state police bill proposes the establishment of the Federal Police, State Police, National Police Service Commission, National Police Council, and State Police Service Commissions. The Federal Police shall be responsible for the maintenance of public security, preservation of public order and security of persons and property throughout the federation to the extent provided for under the constitution or by an Act of the National Assembly, while the State Police, shall be organised and administered in accordance with such provisions as may be prescribed by a Law of the House of Assembly of a State subject to the framework and guidelines established by an Act of the National Assembly.

Under this law, a Commissioner of State Police shall be appointed by the governor of the state on the advice of the National Police Service Commission, subject to confirmation of such appointment by the House of Assembly of the State. The Commissioner shall be in office for a period of five years only or until he/she attains a retirement age prescribed by law, whichever is earlier. So, the governor is not the sole appointer.

Again, the governor may give lawful directives to the CP with respect to the maintenance and securing of public safety and public order as he may consider necessary, but the commissioner of police shall only comply to the extent that those directives or order are neither unlawful nor contrary to general policing standards or practice. If he finds them so, he may request that the matter be referred to the State Police Service Commission for review and the decision of the state Commission shall be final and shall not be inquired into by any court.

The bill equally provides enough autonomy for Commissioners of State Police. For instance, a commissioner shall only be removed by the governor upon the recommendation of the National Police Service Commission on the grounds of misconduct in the performance of his official duties; serious breach of policing standards; conviction of any offence by a court of law or tribunal (including administrative tribunals set up by the police authorities for internal disciplining of police officers); indictment by a judicial body or tribunal for corruption, fraud, embezzlement or other unacceptable conducts in office;

bankruptcy; mental incapacity; and participation in political activities of any kind either within or outside the state and including sponsoring or giving aid to any political group of movement. But importantly, such removal shall be subject to approval by two-thirds majority of the State Assembly.

Furthermore, an Act of the National Assembly may prescribe a periodic review of the activities of each State Police Service by the National Police Service Commission after which it may be recertified so long as its operations adhere to set standards and regulations and do not undermine national integrity, promote ethnic, tribal or sectional agenda or marginalise any segment of the society.

Another interesting aspect is the composition of each State Police Service Commission, as membership is drawn from a wide spectrum of critical stakeholders such that it will be difficult for anyone to pocket the Commission. Chairman is to be appointed by the governor subject to the confirmation of the State House of Assembly; a representative of the Federal Government to be appointed by the National Police Service Commission, two members, who must be indigenes of the respective state and to be appointed by the National Human Rights Commission; a representative of the Public Complaints Commission; a representative of the Labour to be appointed by the Chairman of the state branch; three retired police officers from three senatorial districts to be appointed by the governor subject to confirmation of the State House of Assembly; a lawyer-representative of the Nigerian Bar Association and a representative of the Nigerian Union of Journalists to be appointed by their respective branch chairmen.

The mandates of the Commission include recommending the appointment of a Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioner of Police and Assistant Commissioner of Police to the National Police Service Commission; appointment, disciplining and removal of members of the state police below the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police; and other functions and powers of the commission as may be specified either in the Constitution or a Law of the House of Assembly of a State. It is noteworthy that in recommending the appointment of a Commissioner of State Police, the Commission shall propose three qualified candidates to the National Police Service Commission.

The National Police Service Commission, on the other hand, shall comprise a Chairman to be appointed by the President subject to the confirmation of the Senate; two members representing the National Human Rights Commission; one representative of the Labour; six retired police officers not below the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police representing each of the Geo-Political zones of the country to be appointed by the President subject to confirmation of the Senate; a representative of the NBA to be appointed by the NBA President; a representative of the NUJ to be appointed by the NUJ President; and the Attorney-General of each state.

The National Police Service Commission shall be responsible for the appointment of persons to offices (other than office of the Inspector-General of Police) in the Federal Police; exercising disciplinary control over members of the Federal Police; recommending to the Governor of a State the appointment of the Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioners of Police and Assistant Commissioners of Police of the State Police based on a list submitted to it by the State Police Service Commission of the relevant state and subject to confirmation by the House of Assembly of the State; recommending to the Governor, the discipline and removal of the Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioners of Police and Assistant Commissioners of Police of the State Police; supervising the activities of the Federal Police and State Police to the extent provided for in this constitution or by an Act of the National Assembly; and prescribing standards for all police forces in the country in training, criminal intelligence databases, forensic laboratories and render assistance to State Police in areas as may be requested by such State Police.

Lastly, on the issue of funding, Ekweremadu once explained that since state police will not be compulsory, those who cannot afford it immediately will continue to rely on federal police until such a time that they are able to afford it – just as the state universities.

The ball is now in the President's and National and State Assemblies' court. And Nigerians expect them to act with every sense of urgency.

Anichukwu, a public analyst writes from Enugu

PERSPECTIVE

MultiChoice: Who Did This to Us?

Oluyombo Sokoya

“Who did this to us?” is a frequently asked question in the Nigerian social media space. It is asked when Nigerians are unable to make a sense of the situation at a given time. The question, I think, has its roots in the belief that some evil force is behind every unfortunate occurrence, something that we have condensed into “no be ordinary eye”.

I am bewildered and I am asking: who did this to us? I am asking because I have reached a conclusion that Nigerians’ default reaction to MultiChoice, the subscription television company, is beyond “ordinary eye”. MultiChoice, of which I quietly stopped being a subscriber to its DStv last year, recently announced tariff increases with effect from 1 May. The company cited the rise in the cost of business operations as the reason for the adjustment, the same cited by all businesses that have increased prices. It was MultiChoice’s third increase in eight months or thereabouts.

What followed, as we say in street lingo, was the “tearing of pant”, the type you did not see when fuel subsidy removal and naira floatation instantly ripped through the finances of everyone, pushing the vulnerable straight to the cliff edge. But over MultiChoice, Nigerians went berserk, tearing their hair out

over services they are not compelled to use and, in fact, used by about two per cent of the population. It was apoplexy at its most apoplectic. It is a miracle that there is yet no report of someone suffering a stroke.

Social media platforms have heaved with a witches’ brew of adversarial comments, de-marketing campaigns and xenophobic threats. In the regulatory sphere, a Competition and Consumer Protection Tribunal (CCPT), a purely administrative court, issued an interim order restraining MultiChoice from increasing its tariffs. This followed an ex-parte motion moved by one Ejoro Awaritoma, counsel for the applicant, Festus Onifade, who had a similar case dismissed by the CCPT in 2022. I suspect that many Nigerians took what the tribunal did as a judgment and went into self-congratulatory mode. It must also have delighted Dr. Adamu Abdullahi, acting Vice Chairman of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC), who should-justifiably- think that he and the commission are entitled to lavish kudos for deflecting public attention from the failings of the government. Rather than hold the government accountable, Nigerians have sunk their teeth into MultiChoice and are unwilling to let go. It is not a new thing, as you would find out.

Before the tribunal ruling, Abdullahi said on television that the commission got a document from MultiChoice in which the pay television firm gave reasons for the tariff review. “At a glance, we saw things like the cost of electricity, running generators, the cost of dollars for spare parts and so on. We’ll go through these

items individually and find out how they have affected their operations,” Abdullahi promised.

Bizarrely, he also pledged to involve the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) in the proposed price review. The NBC and NCC have no business with price regulation in the broadcasting space. The NCC is actually telecommunications industry-focused. But anything would do when you are desperate to divert attention from your employers’ failings and you have an unquestioning audience.

But that is a small matter. The big matter is why is it only when MultiChoice increases prices that the FCCPC gets its knickers in a twist and goes about stomping in rage? The commission should just be renamed Federal Commission for MultiChoice subscribers. Inflation is approaching 34 per cent, with prices of essential items shooting through the roof. Yet, the FCCPC is in snooze mode. As Dr. Yemisi Bangbose, Executive Secretary of the Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria (BON) asked: “Where was the FCCPC when the Bakers Association increased the price of a bread loaf by over 200 per cent in the last one year?”

This year, Nigerian Breweries Plc has increased product prices three times. Soft drink bottlers have raised prices. Air fares are way beyond reach, with cement prices leaving most people scratching their heads. The cost of education, including in federal government-owned institutions, is spinning out of control.

Money Master PSB: New Face of Payment

Oluchi Chibuzor

To accelerate financial inclusion, aimed at achieving 95 percent of bankable adults accessing one financial services or another by 2025, the Central Bank of Nigeria initiated a framework for the establishment of a Payment Service Bank in Nigeria.

The initiative, which builds on several prior programmes of the apex lender such as the introduction of microfinance banking, Agent banking, tiered know-your-Customer requirements, and Mobile Money Operation (MMO), aims to take banking services to rural areas by leveraging “mobile and digital channels to enhance financial inclusion and stimulate economic activities at the grassroots through the provision of financial services.”

On August 28, 2020, the Central Bank of Nigeria granted full licence to Moneymaster Payment Service Bank, one of the early movers into this space. Upon this approval of the CBN, MMPSB formally began operations on Wednesday February 8, 2023. At the launch event were a broad audience of its target market, which included representatives of several markets and trading centres in Lagos including Ladipo, Mile 12, Computer Village main markets, and student union representatives from University of Lagos (UNILAG), Lagos State University (LASU), and Yaba College of Technology.

An official of the payment service bank had remarked at

the event that “Moneymaster PSB will bring convenience and inclusion across all our target segments of the population. Your phone is your bank. Aside from the benefits to our customers, we are onboarding a very large number of agents for cash in and cash out, through which we are creating new jobs in our various communities, which is also a boost to the nation’s economy. This is the beginning of our journey to revolutionize the financial services landscape in the country.”

This statement has become the defining visionary guide post for the trajectory of Moneymaster PSB (MMPSB) since it began commercial operations.

The Growing Interest

Since starting commercial operations in 2022, MMPSB’s client base had been growing with millions of customers leveraging its digital channels such as USSD, mobile banking app and internet banking to open accounts, buy airtime and data, pay utility bills and do so much more. This positive growth trajectory has been fuelled by the several innovations and services introduced by the Moneymaster to delight its customers across the country.

In addition to its digital banking credentials, MMPSB is driving financial inclusion aggressively with its agent network. The bank currently has agents in all states of the federation and intends to grow this significantly in few years.

This positive impact has also attracted the public sector players. Recently, Moneymaster was appointed one of the payment partners for the Lagos State’s ‘Ourje Eko’, a discount market aimed at providing essential food

items at reduced prices to residents of the state amid rising food costs in the country. ‘Ourje Eko’ Food Markets programme spanned the 57 LCDAs of the five divisions of Lagos State and commenced on Sunday, March 17, 2024.

It is a bold testament of endorsement that Moneymaster Payment Service Bank was not just appointed a payment partner, it had more important food items allocated to it for payment collections, seeing the swift processing of transactions on its terminals.

Catching Them Young

According to reliable sources, Moneymaster is committed to leaving no one behind its financial inclusion drive. Hence, the incorporation of a “catch them young” approach into the operationalization of its financial inclusion strategy. Its recent celebration of the Global Money Week underpins this insightful thought leadership. In a statement attributed to the company, Moneymaster activated various initiatives that included visits to schools to provide financial literacy education, publication of thought leadership videos on safety of funds, amongst other game changing initiatives. Also recently, Moneymaster was at the 2024 Interhouse sports of Strong Tower Academy, where it engage parents and students on the imperative of savings and moneymaster’s offering for a financially secured future.

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Oluwarantimi Olaniyan: PR Professional Not Defined by Gender

Olusegun Adeleke

If there is any major dynamic that has changed in the business of integrated marketing communications in Nigeria, it was the “unbundling” of the business which has produced professionals in different segments of the business unlike in the past when everything was under one roof. And with the coming up these professionals, women have formed a sizeable number among them. One of this women is a certain Oluwarantimi Olaniyan who is currently the Chief Operation Officer (COO) and Head of Business at Quadrant MSL, of the nation’s leading strategic communications and public relations firm.

Ranti, as friends call her, is not the regular public relations practitioner who engages the media just to get stories published or dealing with clients to ensure the account balance of the company of the group keeps increasing. She brings a personal touch to her job and with an incredible ability to work under pressure. And another thing that stands her out is her honesty when dealing with both clients and partners. Even her subordinates attest to her ability to bring the best out of them even while, albeit in a friendly manner, driving them almost to the edge in order to get results and meet clients’ expectations.

“Ranti is one boss who will not shout at you but will ensure you get results even if you have to bend double to achieve that,” one of her team members told THISDAY. “She is one boss I like working with. And there is no way you work with Ranti and you would not

like her. She is a goal-getter who us making waves in an industry dominated by men.”

With over 12 years of experience as an Africa-focused strategic communications and advocacy advisor, Ms. Olaniyan’s work spans development, public affairs and corporate communications, including recent impact and sustainability work designing and establishing foundation programmes for key business leaders and organisations.

As COO and Head of Business, she oversees business operations and directs communications delivery, social impact framework design, influencer management and client service for clients across a variety of sectors, including energy, aviation, financial services, fintech, edtech, fast moving consumer goods and public affairs. She is also responsible for driving compliance efforts in line with the operations standards set by the global MSL group (a part of Publicis Groupe) and the regional Insight Redefini group (Publicis Nigeria).

Since her appointment, innovation has been the major strand of the company’s DNA typified in the creation of three innovation assets: Q-Intel, a public affairs intelligence advisory asset shared weekly with business leaders; Q-Impact, a social impact and sustainability aligned service for development-focused players; as well as Q-Talks, an industry-meets-issues thought-leadership platform featuring business leaders in the market.

Under her leadership, Quadrant MSL also expanded its clientele portfolio by over 35% with new projects in reputation management, strategic communications and sustainability, while witnessing record revenue growth on the back of new innovation projects

in fintech, edtech and FMCG.

Oluwarantimi was recently acknowledged as Changemaker in Public Relations by The Industry Awards in 2023; Young PR Talent of the Year by Nigerian Media Merit Awards in 2022; and one of the Top 35 Marketing Communications Professionals Under 35 by Brandoom Awards. She is passionate about conversations around sustainability and other ESG practices and regularly contributes on several panels along similar themes.

Some of her previous and current clients include, amongst many others, an international development actor driving health and financial inclusion discourse; a global dairy company investing in regenerative agricultural practices in West Africa; as well global non-alcoholic beverage company driving women empowerment, water management and a world without waste globally.

As an ardent advocate for sustainability practices, partnerships and communications for development, she believes that Africa’s development will be driven by partnerships, local insights and mutual understanding. She serves as Director of Partnerships at Orisun Collective Inc, a US-based non-profit encouraging creativity and design-thinking among Nigerian youth between the ages of 14 and 19 years.

Oluwarantimi, who started her career in banking, is a graduate of Babcock University, with a Master degree in Corporate Communications and Reputation Management from Alliance Manchester Business school.

During recent International Women’s Week, Olaniyan told THISDAY that it was great being a woman but greater being one



Olaniyan

of those making impacts in her chosen career. She added that she was happy that women are not just breaking the glassing ceiling, they have succeeded in breaking it and are now making waves in their chosen career.

“What we have proved as women is that the opportunities we have been asking for were not just to make the right noises, but to prove that the womenfolk can perform if given the chance,” she stated.

She added that in her career so far, she has been able to prove that she did not have to beg for any opportunity because she was a woman but because she believed she was capable as a professional irrespective of her gender. According to her, this has been her guiding principle; first as a banker and now as a public relations practitioner.

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TRIBUTE

Adenuga: 71 Years of Unrivalled Philanthropy, Endless Empowerments

Gabriel Oguntola

One of Africa's richest men and Chairman of Nigeria's telecommunications Company, Globacom Dr. Michael Adenuga Jr is 71 years old. Happy Birthday to the great philanthropist and entrepreneur par excellence.

The quiet billionaire learnt early from the famous saying of Walt Disney who posited that "The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing."

Adenuga from onset has always been reticent. He does his things quietly and runs his businesses without seeking attention. He transitioned from running family business, after schooling in the United States to starting his businesses and moving into the top league in Nigeria without noise.

He became a billionaire in his thirties to the consternation and surprise of Nigerians. Such is the style of the man that has come to be known for his smartness and ingenuity. He is always one step ahead, hence his success across all sectors of the economy.

Today, he plays in all the vital sectors of the nation's economy. From Banking to Telecoms, Oil and Gas as well others that are not known to the public. He employed thousands of Nigerians, and he empowers many others through endless philanthropy.

We cannot count the number of Nigerians that has benefitted from Adenuga's generosity. They are always done quietly, and most times beneficiaries are warned not talk about it.

Few years ago, he donated N500 million to Baylesa State after the state was ravaged by flood, he donated N1.5 billion during Covid-19 pandemic to federal government, \$1 million was also donated to Super Eagles after winning nations Cup in south Africa to mention a few.

By the age of 50, he founded Globacom while his other companies were founded between early thirties and 40. He became a billionaire at 35 and by his 51st birthday Dr. Adenuga was already sitting atop what is generally regarded as one of the continent's largest business empires.

In each of these sectors, Dr. Adenuga has moulded his companies into major players. In the oil and gas sector, for instance, Conoil Producing, the upstream arm of the conglomerate, made history by becoming the first Nigerian company to strike oil and produce it



Adenuga

in commercial quantity. Same was the case when he had two banks, Equatorial Trust Bank and Devcom Merchant Bank that were among top ones in the country.

In telecoms, Globacom remains the most innovative network in Nigeria, with many firsts since it rolled out services in 2003. His investment in real estate is said to be worth over billions of dollars. These companies provide direct employment to thousands of Nigerians and other nationalities.

His contribution to the business across the world and endless philanthropy has been recognized in different countries including Nigeria, where he holds the highest civilian honour of Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON) and in Ghana, he was awarded the

highest civilian honour of Companion of the Star of Ghana (CSG).

French President, Emmanuel Macron, also honoured him with the highest National honour of France, 'Chavalier de la Legion d Honnuer'. Macron commended Adenuga for his promotion of the French culture in Nigeria where he single-handedly rebuilt the Allance Francaise, Lagos located at the Mike Adenuga Centre Ikoyi. City People magazine, Nigeria's King of soft-sell in 2022 captured Dr Adenuga lifestyle thus:

He works round the clock. He is always thinking of the next possible business deal. He is always looking for the next deal to close. He was one of the businessmen who saw the role Data was going to play in our lives and went for a Telecoms license earlier. Today, the rest is history. He is now the Grandmaster of Data.

Mike Adenuga is one of the Bigger Boys in the world of business. He knows the Game. He plays the game. He is adept at it. He knows the principle of winning. He has set his own rules. He has his own winning formula, which has worked for him over the last 40 years. Though he is from Ijebu Igbo, he was born and bred in Ibadan. He will always tell all who cares to listen that he is an Ibadan Boy. He is a product of Ibadan Grammar School. He has a breathtaking house in Ibadan. That is where he often stays when he needs to relax or unwind. Many often wonder whether he relaxes or not. Yes. He does.

City People can authoritatively reveal that though Mike Adenuga is a great Philanthropist and one of the biggest spenders when it comes to helping other people, he does not like the recipients of his largesse to tell the world whatever kind of help he has rendered. Once he touches your life, you are made forever. But the Golden rule for you to keep getting more support from him is for you to keep mum".

Former President Buhari, few years ago while speaking about Dr. Adenuga on his Birthday said, "Apart from creating jobs through entrepreneurship, Adenuga's contribution to the development of sports and the entertainment industry had remained remarkable. These sectors of the economy had continued to provide lifelines for many, and inspiring ingenuity and creativity. His exploration and encouragement of youth entrepreneurship in the country would always be remembered, while his penchant for helping the less privileged through scholarships and healthcare financing deserves more commendations".

Happy 71st Birthday to Dr. Adenuga!

Oguntola is an online journalist.



L-R: Business Development Associate; Wecyclers, Folakemi Adekunle; Credit Associate, UPS, Blessing Obot; HR Senior Admin Officer, UPS, Isemua Oniha; Country Manager, UPS Nigeria, Michael Umoh; Head of Project, SustvVibes, Sonia Ugwunna; Finance Senior Admin Officer, UPS, Jane Imo; and Sales/Account Specialist, UPS, Eberchukwu Okagu during the recycling collection drive at UPS office; Lagos.... recently



L-R; Transition Train Project Co-ordinator, Schola Andem; Principal Partner, Patrick Ogunjobi and Co., ESV Patrick Ogunjobi; and Founder The Transition Train, Princess Adesuwa Obaseki; during the Transition Train Empowerment Lotto Press conference held in Lagos.... recently



L-R: Nigerian Award-Winning Actor, singer and dancer, Adaeze Onyegbula Sharon; General Manager, Audio, LG Electronics West Africa, Mr. Daesun Hwang; Head Corporate Marketing, LG Electronics West Africa, Mr. Hari Elluru; Winner of the Nigerian 2006 Idol, Akunna Okechukwu; and The Finalist of the 2015 K-POP Fiesta 2015, Pebble Joseph at the official announcement of the 2024 LG K-POP Fiesta contest in Nigeria in Lagos... recently



R-L: Fatima Nadada (Head PR n Comm AICL), Abiodun Akanbi (Chief Investment Officer AICL), Dr Maureen Tamuno (GMD AICL), Engineer Abbas Faruk (Acting MD AMML), Bode Akinrinde (Chief Financial Officer AICL), Engineer Sadiq Shehu (Head Natural Resources AICL)

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Investing in Treasury Bills

Omolabake Fasogbon

In the last few months there have been an unprecedented subscription of Nigerian Treasury Bills (NTBs). Treasury bills' transactions rose to N23.75 trillion in the first four months of 2024, compared to N6.06 trillion in the first four months of 2023.

According to experts, the unusual spike is not farfetched being one of the most paying investment outlets in the country presently.

Naturally, treasury bills (T-bills) offer lower returns compared to other long-term investments like bond.

T-bills are described as discountable instruments used by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to manage liquidity in the system, usually on a short-term basis. They are considered to have zero default risk as they are issued by the federal government through the CBN.

They are more of a preferred platform for short-term investors, given also the security, upfront interest, not taxable and tenable as collateral to secure short term loan from banks.

However, the CBN's rate hike recently, suddenly shifted more attention to T-bills, kind of shadowing all other investment portals. Though it was the apex bank's last resort to stabilise economy and also calm inflation, it was also a win for most investors who are able to protect their investments and reduce the effects of inflation on their purchasing power.

Although T-bills looks good and promising now or later, it would usually not make a good investment choice in some cases. Cashing out of it is strategic and based on the overall intention of the investor.

For instance, Co-founder and COO of Bamboo, a fintech platform facilitating investment in local and foreign equity, Yanmo Omorogbe, said for the average individuals hoping to make extra income, it is better that they examine their financial situation and the extra income desired before dabbling in T-bills.

"Generally the key thing to remember is that one would need a significant amount of capital to earn meaningful income and would need to be comfortable with locking up this capital for up to a year to maximise your passive income," she said.

On whether to opt for saving or invest in T-bills whose return comes juicy than the former, Omorogbe who led Bamboo recently to upgrade its operations to facilitate trade in T-bills said it was not advisable to be carried away by the juicy perks on investment at the detriment of life.

However, she pointed out that a 'regular saver' stands a good chance in both options but would have to weigh choice on prevailing situation.

"Savings products will typically have easier liquidity and more flexibility than T-Bills, while T-Bills will have higher returns than savings. So it is a good idea to keep near-term expenses and emergency funds in savings and then use T-Bills for longer-term investments.

"Usually, the longer the maturity of the T-Bills, the higher the rate of return. Thus, to make the best of T-Bills, it is best advised

that investors purchase the longest tenor they can", she enlightened further.

The investment analyst strongly recommended T-Bills to investors looking to preserve capital, even with the present inflation rate of 33 percent.

"NTBs returns currently beat all other fixed return investment options, and so provide the best opportunity to mitigate against the effects of inflation while preserving capital.

"Investment options that are able to beat inflation right now come with significantly more risk than T-Bills which are backed by the Federal Government", she clarified.

She explained further that the drive to help Africans grow their wealth from any part of the world inspired Bamboo's coverage to T-bills which is presently at a beta testing stage for a select group.

"We intend to roll this out gradually for everyone as we perfect the products to taste based on users' feedback", she informed.

Omorogbe further advised that any investor seeking to minimise risk would be wise to jump at T-bill offering.

"Those with higher risk portfolios who want to diversify their risk exposures or any investors still unsure of where to invest long-term should consider investing in shorter duration T-Bills which allow them earn decent returns in the short term while they decide on their long-term strategy.

"Finally, shorter duration TBills will also be beneficial for investors who have cash they don't need in the near-term, this way they're able to maximise their returns rather than leaving the cash idle.

"An SME could buy T-Bills of various maturities that match his or her projections for when they will need the capital. This is an extremely low risk way to earn predictable, decent returns. On Bamboo, businesses can join our beta program from the comfort of their phone to invest seamlessly", she enlightened.

For seasoned investors or beginners whose dealings do not align with T-bills, Omorogbe listed other products they could explore for wealth rather than living their cash idle.

According to her, offerings like fixed deposit, Nigerian equities and U.S stock market are quite remunerative as available on Bamboo app.

For instance, "We have a US dollar-denominated fixed income product called Bamboo Fixed Returns which gives investors up to eight per cent annual USD returns.

"For higher risk investors, our app also gives access to invest in the U.S. stock market where shares can be bought and become a part-owner of global companies such as Apple, Microsoft and many more.

"Nigerian equities are also another good investment option and will be soon be available on the app".

Service Export Viable Alternative for Diversification, Says Expert

The federal government has been urged to consider service export as a key diversification focus to boost national revenue.

In achieving this, formalising the sector by drafting a policy framework and instituting regulatory measures to direct activities were said to be crucial and fundamental in establishing the sector for buoyant returns.

Chairman of Multimix Academy, Dr. Obiora Madu, while briefing the media about his new book, 'Service Export in Practice' stated that lack of comprehensive service export strategy had left sector and players operated in the vacuum and denied the country of its diversification opportunities and competitiveness in global service export industry.

Madu, stressed the need for a locally designed policy that would suit reality, adding that one drafted 10 years ago by the Commonwealth was now outdated.

"This policy must focus on identifying key services sector with export potentials. It must outline clear objectives, target and action plans for promoting services export," he advised.

Projecting positive outlook for the sector already valued at \$4.41 billion, the

expert submitted that deliberate efforts be put on infrastructure development and marketing of the country as services providing country to be able to propel anticipated growth.

"This will spur development in all sectors related to services including Information Technology, logistics, transport network and tourism, amongst others, while enhancing Nigeria's competitiveness globally.

"Attention must also be paid to improving trade facilitation process such that would reduce paper work, expediting custom clearance and also implementing electronic trade platform," he said.

Of importance too according to Madu, was also the need to promote investment in skills development and capacity building necessary to deliver high quality services to export.

"There is need to enhance market intelligence and change strategy for export promotion. We must also be able to monitor and evaluate progress as we seem not to be measuring a lot of things.

"We must develop KPIs to track progress, conduct regular evaluation and adjust strategy as need be. By so doing, Nigeria will be able to unlock multiple opportunities for economic growth and attract opportunities that would enrich the country's investment inflows", he said.

Firms Partner to Deepen Capacity for Aviation Sector

Training outfit, Zino Aviation has forged alliance with South-African based outfit, SafeFly Express to enhance knowledge in aviation as part of efforts to bridge knowledge gap in piloting profession.

The partnership would further drive aviation education by tackling pivotal hurdles faced by aspiring pilots, thus creating a more streamlined, affordable and accessible route to achieving their flying ambitions.

Speaking on this development, the COO of Zino Aviation, Temisan Mario stated that partnering with Safe fly reaffirmed the company's dedication to eliminating obstacles and bridging knowledge gap in aviation industry.

He said, "Our meticulous selection process for partnering with flight schools is designed to safeguard students against known pitfalls. This collaboration between is fundamental in addressing challenges faced by student pilots, offering them a reliable, affordable, and efficient route to achieving their aviation aspirations."

Also, the CEO of Zino Aviation, Captain Zino Mario-Ghae, said the collaboration would be leveraging the expertise and profile of counterpart Company to equip

Nigerians with thorough knowledge in the overall interest of the country.

"At the core of our partnership strategy lies a commitment to aligning only with the finest, safest, and most reputable flight schools in the industry. "SafeFly Express epitomises these values, having surpassed our stringent auditing criteria, highlighting their dedication to maintaining the pinnacle of quality and safety in aviation training.

"By merging SafeFly's robust training infrastructure with our innovative educational methodologies, we are creating a streamlined and enriched learning journey for our students. This collaboration not only simplifies the path to becoming a pilot but also amplifies job prospects through our combined industry connections", he said.

Commenting, Training General Manager of SafeFly Express, Sief Ahmed said, "This collaboration brings together the best of both worlds - our hands-on flight training expertise and Zino's cutting-edge educational methods.

"It's a fantastic opportunity to enhance what we offer our students, ensuring they're not just ready for the skies, but ahead of the curve. This is a great move for the future of aviation education, and I'm thrilled to see where this journey takes us."

Entrepreneurs Tasked on Self Development

Entrepreneurs across the globe have been urged to embrace continuous learning and resilience amid difficulties to reach their goals.

This was the take home at a programme, 'Find Your Voice Europe,' championed by leadership expert, Godman Akinlabi in Brussels, recently.

The programme which was the second edition in a series gathered no fewer than 200 business minded individuals with the intention to help them find their voice, maximise their potential, and make impact globally.

Speaking on the initiative, Akinlabi said, "Our mission with the initiative was to empower entrepreneurs and professionals with practical strategies and insights to propel them towards their goals.

"We believe everyone possesses a unique

voice and the potential to make a positive impact. This event is a platform to amplify these voices and ignite positive change."

Participants at the event were engaged in dynamic presentations and stimulating discussion designed to empower them with the skills and strategies to help them overcome challenges such as navigating complex business landscapes, adapting to new technologies, and managing resource limitations, amongst others.

Also present at the event, communication professional, Eniola Harrison said, "Finding your voice isn't just about speaking up, it is about taking strategic action. It starts with understanding the system, building strong connections through purposeful networking, and then confidently taking your place at the table. This conference is timely and its impact would remain for a long time."

AUTO WORLD

Bennett Oghifo

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AMG GT Coupe portfolio

World Premiere of New Flagship Mercedes-AMG GT

On the sidelines of the Formula 1™ weekend in Shanghai, Mercedes-AMG unveils the new flagship of the AMG GT Coupe portfolio – the 2025 AMG GT 63 S E PERFORMANCE – expected to arrive at U.S. dealerships in late 2024. The extremely powerful E PERFORMANCE hybrid drive featuring a Handcrafted AMG 4.0L V8 biturbo engine at the front and an electric motor on the rear axle delivers lightning-fast response and consistent power delivery. Innovative motorsport technologies inspired by those proven in the Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS F1 Team's hybrid race cars forms the basis of the unique driving experience with exhilarating performance and outstanding driving dynamics.

"From zero to 60 in 2.7 seconds – no AMG series model has ever sprinted that fast before. Given these values, it was clear that the world premiere of the new AMG GT 63 S E PERFORMANCE had to take place on the sidelines of a Formula 1™ race. Our four-liter V8, combined with the performance hybrid system, makes the vehicle the top model in our GT family. The GT 63 S E PERFORMANCE combines enormous performance with a very dynamic driving experience and thus creates pure

goosebumps. At the same time, the vehicle offers extensive equipment options and high-quality materials, making it one of the most exclusive performance coupes on the market," said Michael Schiebe, CEO of Mercedes-AMG GmbH and Head of Business Units Mercedes-Benz G-Class & Mercedes Maybach.

In the new AMG GT 63 S E PERFORMANCE, the Handcrafted AMG 4.0L V8 biturbo engine and AMG Electric Drive Unit together produce a combined system output of 805 hp and combined system torque of up to 1,047 lb-ft. The rapid acceleration from 0 to 60 mph in 2.7 seconds and the top speed of 199 mph underscore the powerful performance. Standard AMG ACTIVE RIDE CONTROL suspension with active roll stabilization and active rear axle steering ensure a wide spread of driving characteristics – from highly dynamic to comfortable.

E PERFORMANCE: Combustion engine at the front, electric motor at the rear

The electric drive unit (EDU) integrates a 201 hp permanently excited synchronous electric motor with an electrically shifted two-speed transmission and a limited-slip rear differential. The lightweight AMG High Performance Battery is also located at the rear above the rear axle. This compact design results in numerous

advantages.

The electric motor acts directly on the rear axle and can therefore convert its power more directly into propulsion for an extra boost when starting off from a standstill, accelerating or overtaking. If wheel slip occurs at the rear axle, the drive power of the electric motor is also transferred to the front wheels as needed for more traction. The mechanical connection of the AMG Performance 4MATIC+ fully variable all-wheel drive makes this possible via the driveshaft and drive axles of the front wheels. The positioning on the rear axle improves the weight and axle load distribution and forms the basis for dynamic handling.

Inspired by Formula 1™, developed in Affalterbach: the AMG High Performance Battery Batteries require a defined temperature for optimal power delivery. If the energy storage unit gets too cold or too hot, it temporarily reduces power to protect high performance components. The consistent temperature of the battery therefore has a decisive influence on its performance, service life and stability. Conventional cooling systems that only use air or indirectly cool the entire battery pack with water quickly reach their limits, especially as cooling requirements continue to increase due to more energy-dense cells.

TIPS OF THE WEEK

How Drivers Can Cut Fuel Use by Up to 25%

Motorists could be wasting up to 25 percent of their petrol and diesel usage by failing to remove a simple item from their vehicle, according to experts.

Petrol and diesel owners could slash their fuel consumption by up to 25 percent by removing one tool from their vehicle this weekend.

Motoring experts at CarShop have pointed towards car roof racks which can be fitted to vehicles to transport cycles.

They warned that any additional pieces added to a vehicle can "decrease aero-efficiency" and therefore increase drag.

Experts suggested that the simple tool could drain fuel by as much as 25 percent while being used in a major blow to cash-strapped road users.

Meanwhile, removing the cycles and carrying around an empty roof rack could use up to 15 percent more fuel.

They explained: "Cars are designed to be as aerodynamic as possible, meaning they are designed to reduce drag but external additions can decrease this aero-efficiency and increase drag.

"Roof racks and boxes are common additions to cars but can add to fuel consumption as research suggests driving with a roof box uses up to 25 percent more fuel. Many may think this is due to the roof box itself but even an empty roof rack uses up to 15 percent more fuel.

"Helpful tip - having open sunroofs and windows can also cause unnecessary, by only having these open when necessary you can improve fuel efficiency."

As well as having a major impact on the aerodynamics of a vehicle, heavy roof racks will also increase weight.

They commented: "If you have lots of heavy items sat in your car at all times, then you might be using more fuel than necessary.

"The less clutter weighing down your car, the less fuel you will need to power it. Be sure to remove any bike racks or roof boxes that are not in use - roof boxes increase fuel consumption and create significant wind resistance."

Data from RAC Fuel Watch shows petrol and diesel costs continue to steadily rise since the turn of the year.

Petrol fees now stand at an average of 145.45p per litre, up from just 140.5p back in January.

Diesel fees have also risen by around 7p per litre since the start of 2024 with rates currently standing at 154.13p.

However, the experts at the RAC claim there is "no change forecast" over the coming weeks in a small glimmer of hope for road users.

(Source: Express)

Nigeria Auto Components Manufacturers Task FG on Policy

It was a gathering of stakeholders in the automotive component manufacturing industry in Nigeria. The meeting organized by the federal ministry of industry, trade and investment in Abuja, recently was to feel the pulse of the strategic manufacturers on how to better the nation's economy.

The automotive component manufacturers did not hesitate in pointing out the numerous challenges bedeviling their operations in the country.

In his address during the dialogue with minister of industry, trade and investment on automotive component manufacturing in Nigeria held at the Bank of Industry (BoI) building, Abuja, Chief Anselm Ilekuaba, coordinator/liason, Auto Component Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (ALCMAN) described the meeting as timely for all to join hands in reviving the automotive components manufacturing in Nigeria.

Ilekuaba stated that there is a need for government support for the automotive industry. According to him, Without money, nothing moves, but when money is given and it is not



Stakeholders at the automotive component manufacturers' meeting

effectively managed, it amounts to sheer waste of time. But money cannot just do everything, passion is also part of it.

He reminded the audience that back in the 80's, the Nigeria auto industry sourced about

40 percent of its components locally. Glasses, tyres, batteries, brake pads, foam and seats, exhausts, electric cables etc were all produced locally and supplied to local assembly plants. Currently, Nigeria supplies less than 10 percent

of its local component parts to local vehicle manufacturing. For Nigeria to achieve the 40 percent local contents requirement of the AfCFTA, much attention Chief Ilekuaba insisted has to be geared towards support for the local components manufacturing.

At this end, there is need for collaboration in the following areas such as transforming out ways to resuscitate vehicle components manufacturing in Nigeria, provide a link between suppliers and vehicle manufacturing in the country, identify sources of raw materials and suppliers of raw materials to component manufacturers, create method of funding and collaborate with government on provision of industrial infrastructures for component makers.

The ALCMAN ended his address by calling on the federal government and other stakeholders in the automotive industry value chain to share in the plight of automotive component manufacturers, so as to explore new avenues of collaboration, new sources of funding as well as finding other strategic ways that will drive the automotive components manufacturing sector to success.

GLOBAL SOCCER



**WHO BLINKS
FIRST?**

A **THIS DAY** WEEKLY PULL-OUT

4.5.2024

PAGE. 27



Ademola Lookman

A Season Like No Other

GLOBAL SOCCER



Ademola Lookman celebrating one of his goals

Ademola Lookman

A Season Like No Other

After sojourning with several European clubs, mostly on loan, Super Eagles forward, Ademola Lookman finally joined Serie A side, Atalanta on a permanent move in the 2022-23 season for €9.35 million from German side, RB Leipzig, and since then, he had not looked back. Though his 11 goals and seven assists in 37 games for La Dea may not have matched his first season's 15 goals and eight assists in 33 appearances across all competitions, his overall play have been unprecedented culminating in former Super Eagles Captain and Coach, Sunday Oliseh, describing him as 'unstoppable'

To say that Super Eagle forward, Ademola Lookman is having a season of his life would be stating the obvious. The 26-year-old had settled down very fast since joining Atalanta in 2022 and has not wound down since then.

As a testimony to his blistering form, the U21 World Cup winner with England was recently included in the Serie A Team of the Month for April, compiled by football facts and statistics website, whoscored.com.

Indeed, qualifying Atalanta for next season's UEFA Champions League is now his immediate target and Lookman put his money where his mouth is in his club last league game against Roma, scoring one and assisting the other in the 2-0 defeat of the Capital club.

Ahead of the Serie A fixture with Roma, Lookman in an interview with DAZN, admitted to Roma's strengths but did not shy away from expressing confidence in his own teammates.

"This game will be crucial for the Champions League race," said the Nigerian forward.

"Roma are a strong team, but so are we. We know that every match is difficult but we are ready to try to win them all from here on out until the end of the season."

Lookman insisted that Atalanta will keep pushing hard to qualify for the UEFA Champions League.

La Dea currently occupy sixth position on the Serie A table following Sunday night's 2-0 home win against Empoli.

Five teams will represent Italy in Europe next season. AS Roma sit in fifth position on the table and have played one game more than Gian Piero Gasperini's side.

Lookman stated that Atalanta's are desperate to play in the Champions League next year.

"This victory is very important because we have to reach the Champions League. We also have commitments in the Italian Cup and the Europa League, winning today was important," he said as per Napoli Magazine.

The Nigeria forward again earned the plaudits of his Italian club, Atalanta, after delivering a goal and an assist in extra time during their 4-1 win over Fiorentina in the second leg of their Coppa Italia semi-finals game last Wednesday.

Lookman came on with 20 minutes to the end of regular time, when the scoreline was tied 2-2 on aggregate and scored four minutes into extra time to make the score 3-1 and 3-2 on aggregate, before setting up Mario Pasalic for the icing on the cake in the 98th minute to seal a 4-2 aggregate victory.

Having lost the first leg 1-0, Atalanta scored early through Teun Koopmeiners but Lucas Martinez Quarta struck for Fiorentina after half-time while Gianluca Scamacca scored a scissors kick to level the tie, before Lookman's heroics settled it.

In the wake of reaching the cup final, where they will face Juventus May 15, Atalanta singled out Lookman for praise on Thursday by sharing a video of his goal during the game. "Look how this man

carried us to the final," the club captioned the video on their X handle.

He also currently ranks among the five players who have scored more than 20 goals and also provided more than 10 assists in the Serie A since the start of last season.

Little wonder former Super Eagles coach, Sunday Oliseh said, "He is unstoppable".

Oliseh has praised the Nigerian forward following his impressive performances for Atalanta so far this season.

Lookman has been superb for Atalanta since he joined from RB Leipzig in 2022 for €9.35 million. The Nigerian attacker had previous stints at Everton, Leipzig, Fulham, and Leicester City, but he has adjusted quite quickly to life in Italy in his first seasons.

Last season, the 26-year-old forward registered 15 goals and eight assists in 33 appearances across all competitions. But this season, Lookman has provided 11 goals and seven assists in 37 games for La Dea.

He has been on a good run recently, registering two goals and three assists in his last three games. And his performances have turned heads.

Former Nigeria coach, Oliseh has also been impressed, as he shared his opinion on a video of Lookman's solo goal against Empoli on Sunday.

"Ademola Lookman is simply unstoppable on a good day. Love watching this man play," Oliseh wrote on X.

Lookman was in action for Atalanta as they were held to a 1-1 draw by Marseille in the first leg of their Europa League semifi-

nal at the Orange Vélodrome Stadium on Thursday night.

The Nigeria international hopped off the bench in the 59th minute for his ninth appearance in this season's Europa League and had an opportunity to score the winner shortly after his introduction but blazed his effort wide from a tight angle.

Speaking post-match, Lookman told UEFA's official website: "We started off with a good goal, a good start, we went 1-0 up. They obviously got their goal 1-1. So it was a pretty even game.

"They had chances, we had chances. Ultimately 1-1 away from home is a positive result so next game we'll look to hopefully be in the final."

Atalanta are in the semifinal of a European competition for the first time in 36 years and have a real chance of getting to the final for the first time in their history.

Lookman believes the return leg next week at Gewiss Stadium in Bergamo will be a big game. "It's massive. It's massive for the club. For us players and staff to experience this and to hopefully be in the final is massive. So you know, full concentration and full focus on that game."

Atalanta are currently sixth in the Serie A, but if they win their remaining games this season, they will finish fifth and qualify for the UEFA Champions League. La Dea are also in the finals of the Italian Cup. Coach Gian Piero Gasperini will be hoping that Lookman can continue his impressive form and help Atalanta end the campaign on a high.

GLOBAL SOCCER

Can Wolves, Bournemouth, Halt City, Arsenal Title Charge?

With third placed Liverpool more or less out of contention, defending champions, Manchester City and leaders, Arsenal will today take another step in their Premier League title charge as the hosts take on Wolves and Bournemouth respectively. On paper, the Citizens and the Gunners should take the three points with relative ease, but any of the visitors could be a banana peel



Wolves defeated Manchester City 2-1 in the reverse fixture at the Molineux Stadium

Seeking to remain within touching distance of Premier League leaders, Arsenal, reigning champions, Manchester City welcome Wolverhampton Wanderers to the Etihad Stadium this evening.

The Citizens will be out for revenge against the Old Gold after they suffered a 2-1 defeat in the reverse fixture at Molineux almost eight months ago.

Three days after cruising to a statement 4-0 victory at Brighton & Hove Albion, Man City picked up maximum points in Pep Guardiola's 300th Premier League game when they secured a 2-0 win over Nottingham Forest at the City Ground last weekend.

Man City could find themselves four points adrift of title rivals Arsenal at the summit if the Gunners beat Bournemouth in an earlier kickoff today, but the Citizens will then have two games in hand and can reduce the gap at the top to just one point

with success over Wolves.

After three consecutive away matches, Man City will welcome a return to the Etihad where they have put together an impressive 42-game unbeaten run across all competitions, matching a club record set between 1919 and 1921 - avoiding defeat today would see the Citizens break this record outright.

Guardiola and co, who have also not lost home or away in their last 31 matches in all tournaments will be confident of success against a Wolves side whom they have beaten in seven of their last eight home league meetings, scoring 19 goals in the process.

After seven games without a win in all competitions, Wolves edged past relegation-threatened Luton Town by a 2-1 scoreline at Molineux last weekend to boost their chances of securing a top-half finish in the Premier League.

Gary O'Neil, who will not be in the dugout after being handed a one-match touchline ban by the Football Association for his conduct after last month's defeat by West Ham United, now sees his side sitting 11th in the Premier League table.

After beginning 2024 with a five-game unbeaten run away from home, Wolves have since failed to come out on top in any of their last four matches on the road and they will end the campaign with arguably the two toughest Premier League trips to Man City and Liverpool.

The Old Gold have lost 18 of their last 20 Premier League away matches against teams in the top two, but one of those victories during this run was at Man City (0-2) in October 2019. They are also one of only three top-flight teams to condemn the champions to defeat this season, so there is reason for O'Neil's men to be confident of pulling off an upset today.

Meanwhile, bidding to temporarily go four points clear at the top of the Premier League standings, Arsenal kick off today's action with the visit of Bournemouth to the

Emirates Stadium for the lunchtime kickoff.

The Gunners staved off a second-half Tottenham Hotspur fightback in an enthralling 3-2 North London derby win last weekend, while the Cherries hit Brighton & Hove Albion for three without reply.

Painful flashbacks to the capitulations of 12 months ago crossed the minds of Gooners last Sunday, where after Bukayo Saka, Kai Havertz and a Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg own goal gave them a seemingly unassailable 3-0 lead over Tottenham, their bitter foes came roaring back.

David Raya and Declan Rice's blunders allowed Cristian Romero and Son Heung-min to threaten an almighty turnaround, but the latter's penalty ultimately came too late for the Lilywhites to salvage anything from the heated derby, as Arsenal just about emerged unscathed from that five-goal classic.

Thanks to their latest victory in a game that Saka admitted his side may not have won last year, Arsenal have retained their vulnerable one-point advantage over Manchester City, but owing to the champions' game in hand, perfection may still not be enough to end their 20-year title drought.

With Liverpool more or less out of the race, though, it is a nerve-jangling straight shootout for glory between Mikel Arteta and his erstwhile employers, who do not play again until evening and will therefore fall further behind the Gunners if the Emirates giants make it four top-flight wins on the bounce this weekend.

Six of Arsenal's seven Premier League home matches in 2024 so far have ended in triumph, the outlier being April's alarming 2-0 loss to Aston Villa, and on the back of being on the right end of a 3-2 scoreline versus Tottenham, it is only appropriate that Arsenal reunite with Bournemouth after last year's Emirates extravaganza.

Safely marooned in mid-table as the campaign enters its dying embers, Bournemouth followed up their 1-0 beating of Wolves with an emphatic South Coast

PREMIER LEAGUE

TODAY

Arsenal v Bournemouth 12:30
Brentford v Fulham 15:00
Burnley v Newcastle 15:00
Sheffield Utd v Nott'm Forest 15:00
Man City v Wolves 17:30

SUNDAY

Brighton v Aston Villa 14:00
Chelsea v West Ham 14:00
Liverpool v Tottenham 16:30

La Liga

TODAY

Sociedad v Las Palmas 13:00
Real Madrid v Cadiz 15:15
Girona 17:30 Barcelona 17:30
Mallorca v Atletico 20:00
Sunday
Osasuna v Real Betis 13:00
Celta Vigo v Villarreal 15:15
Valencia v Alaves 17:30
Vallecano v Almeria 20:00
Sevilla v Granada 20:00

Hot Shot

PLAYERS	CLUB	GOAL
Erling Haaland	Man City	21
Cole Palmer	Chelsea	20
Ollie Watkins	Aston Villa	19
Alexander Isak	Newcastle	19
Dominic Solanke	Bournemouth	18
Mohamed Salah	Liverpool	17
Phil Foden	Man City	16
Son Heung-min	Tottenham	16
Jarrod Bowen	West Ham	16

Premier League Table

TEAM	P	GD	PTS
1 Arsenal	35	57	80
2 Man City	34	50	79
3 Liverpool	35	41	75
4 Aston Villa	35	21	67
5 Tottenham	34	13	60
6 Man Utd	34	1	54
7 Newcastle	34	19	53
8 Chelsea	34	6	51
9 West Ham	35	-9	49
10 Bournemouth	35	-8	48
11 Wolves	35	-7	46
12 Brighton	34	-5	44
13 Fulham	35	-4	43
14 Crystal Palace	35	-12	40
15 Everton *	36	-11	37
16 Brentford	35	-8	35
17 Nott'm Forest **	35	-20	26
18 Luton Town	36	-29	25
19 Burnley	35	-32	24
20 Sheffield Utd	35	-63	16

success against Brighton, where one of Andoni Iraola's attacking marksmen stole the show.

Leaving the relegation dogfight well and truly behind, Iraola's men are smack-bang in the middle of the standings in 10th spot on account of gleaning 48 points - their highest-ever Premier League total and European qualification remains a mathematical possibility with just three games left to go.

The work of Iraola and his coaching staff will not go unnoticed either way, but Bournemouth were demolished 4-0 by Arsenal on home soil back in September and blew a 2-0 lead in this fixture last March, where Reiss Nelson's 97th-minute winner sparked perhaps the wildest celebrations the Emirates has ever seen.

GLOBAL SOCCER

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GLOBAL SOCCER



Iheanacho

Iheanacho Rejects New Leicester City Deal, Sparks Villa's Interest

Super Eagles and Leicester City striker, Kelechi Iheanacho, has rejected a new deal from the club amidst interest from Unai Emery's Aston Villa.

The 27-year-old striker has been subjected to just 10 league starts in the EFL Championships this season, with Enzo Maresca preferring Zambian Patson Daka to lead the line for the Foxes.

Iheanacho, alongside Wilfred Ndidi, are at the tail end of their Leicester City career as their contract runs out in June 2024. While the defensive midfielder has set sights on a move to a Premier League top-six side, Iheanacho isn't keen on extending his stay

at the King Power Stadium.

As per Football Insider, the highest-scoring African in the history of the FA Cup was offered an improved deal with a weekly wage of £65,000, but the Nigerian striker rejected the offer.

Several reasons might have sparked Iheanacho's reaction, with the absence of playing time at the forefront. According to Football Fancast, Aston Villa are interested in bringing the 2021 FA Cup winner to Villa Park as a backup for Ollie Watkins.

The Villains have enjoyed a great season under Unai

Emery and have their eyes locked on a place in the UEFA Champions League next season. Should Iheanacho join Villa, he would have the luxury of playing alongside skilled players like Douglas Luiz, Leon Bailey, Ollie Watkins and Moussa Diaby.

Aston Villa view Iheanacho as an experienced Premier League forward, representing a summer bargain that could make all the difference next season at Villa Park.

In 10 starts for Leicester, Iheanacho found the back of the net five times and created one goal, averaging a goal involvement every two games.

Iwuanyanwu Gets Africa Sports Tourism Recognition

The President General of Ohaneze Ndigbo Worldwide and renowned pillar of football in Nigeria, High Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, has been recognised as the 'life patron' of the Africa Sports and Tourism Awards (ASTA).

The octogenarian, known for his remarkable contributions to Nigerian football and sports development, who spoke in Abuja, said he was elated by the recognition, highlighting it as one of the highest honours of his life.

Iwuanyanwu reflected on his journey, recounting his earliest

recognition in 1963 during his elementary school days when he clinched a gold medal in a sprinting event, setting the stage for his lifelong passion for sports.

He highlighted his involvement in establishing the Wyoming National Football Club, a testament to his dedication to football development.

Despite facing challenges, including the loss of his players during a trip to Australia, Iwuanyanwu said he persevered, buoyed by his commitment to the sport.

"I had the Wyoming National Football Club. It cost me quite

a lot to form. That time, it was a special club, a football club. That time, it was myself, my brother, and the club. But even when I was in school, I used to go to the club and support the club. And my club won several times.

"It won several competitions and then I also had a team that competed in basketball. But, I also had problems. Because, my club went to play. I gave them my personal aircraft. On their way from Venetia, they had a plane crash. And I lost my football club. I lost some of my goalkeepers. I lost some of my footballers," he added.

Tosin' Adarabioyo at Crossroads between Newcastle, Tottenham

Fulham defender Tosin Adarabioyo finds himself at a critical juncture in his career, with two of the Premier League's top clubs, Tottenham Hotspur and Newcastle United, vying for his signature.

The Manchester City academy product will end his four-year association with Fulham upon the expiry of his contract in June.

As he weighs his options, the question on everyone's mind is - which club offers the best platform for his growth and success?

Tosin's impressive performances for Fulham have not

gone unnoticed, with both Tottenham and Newcastle recognizing his potential to become a top-class defender.

The 26-year-old's pace, power, and reading of the game make him an attractive prospect for clubs looking to strengthen their backline.

Tottenham Hotspur, under the guidance of Ange Postecoglou, have absolutely lit up the league with their recent league strides.

The club's emphasis on defensive solidity and tactical discipline aligns with Tosin's strengths, and the opportunity to work with experienced

players like Micky van de Ven and Cristian Romero could help him refine his skills.

Moreover, Tottenham's consistent top-four finishes and regular Champions League participation offer Tosin the chance to test himself against the best teams in Europe.

On the other hand, Newcastle United, backed by their ambitious Saudi Arabian owners, has undergone a significant transformation in recent years.

The club's new management has invested heavily in the team, attracting top talent and building a strong squad.

Arsenal Keeper, Raya Guaranteed Premier League Golden Glove

Arsenal goalkeeper, David Raya has won the Premier League's Golden Glove after Luton scored against Everton's Jordan Pickford yesterday.

Raya has kept 14 clean sheets in 29 league matches this season having joined the Gunners on loan from Brentford in the summer. Before Everton's match yesterday, Pickford was the only keeper that could have overtaken Raya in the Golden Glove standings.

But Pickford's hopes of winning the individual accolade outright were ended when Elijah

Adebayo equalised for Luton after 31 minutes on Friday.

The Everton and England stopper still trails Raya by two clean sheets with two fixtures remaining, and can, at best, only match the Spaniard.

Eyebrows were raised when Raya joined on a season-long loan from Brentford in August with the option to make the move permanent.

The Gunners already had a settled keeper in Aaron Ramsdale who had played all 38 of Arsenal's matches the previous season,

keeping 14 clean sheets.

A day after the signing a poll of BBC Sport readers resulted in 63% saying Ramsdale should keep his place over Raya.

Raya had an underwhelming start to the season, with his lowest point coming after making two errors in Arsenal's last-gasp 4-3 win over Luton in December.

But he was the hero for his side in March when he saved two penalties as Arsenal beat Porto in a shootout to reach the quarter-finals of the Champions League.



Action during the National Amateur Boxing championship at Continental Hotel, Abuja

GOtv Boxing Night 31: Controversies Trail Officiating

Boxing fans have expressed disappointment over some officiating calls at GOtv Boxing Night 31, which took place on Wednesday night at the Molade Okoya Indoor Sports Hall of Teslim Balogun Stadium.

The seven-bout event, which ended at about 9:40 pm, had fans going on social media platforms to complain that the judges in the national flyweight challenge bout between the national champion, Sifon "Best" Iwatt and Sikiru "Isho" Ogunyanju declared it a draw.

The fight being a draw angered fans at the venue and those watching from home, who believe that Iwatt was robbed of victory. They subsequently took to social media to express their anger. One Instagram user, imakingleymide, wrote: "I don't understand how the judges

can declare this a draw. Iwatt won the fight. Who chose these judges?". Another user, imbolaji, expressed a similar view, accusing the show promoters of ruining what would have been a great night for boxing. "Maybe the judges watched a different fight. If they watched the same fight, Sifon won. No be by draw. Na the promoters cause this rubbish," he wrote.

Just as there were fans angry that Iwatt was not declared winner, there were others who believed that Isho won the fight and should have been declared the winner instead of the official announcement being proclaimed a draw.

There were also a few disaffected fans, who complained about the outcome of the West African Boxing Union title fight between Segun "War" Adeyemi and Adeyemi "Spirit"

Adekanla, which was won by the former. The latter, however, started jumping up before the announcement of the winner in a manner that suggested he knew he won. Complaints about that were limited to the venue.

Reacting to questions on fan discontent at the officiating decisions, Chief Operating Officer of Flykite Promotions, Bamidele Johnson, said promoters have nothing to do with the choice of officials, but the sanctioning body.

"We do not select officials and have no role in their selection. It is the job of the Nigerian Boxing Board of Control (NBB of C) to select officials. We trust the judgment of the NBB of C. We have worked with the board for a long time and as such, we have confidence in whatever choices they make," said Johnson.

Boxers Dazzle at Abuja Continental Hotel National Amateur Boxing Bouts

Top boxers from Abuja and other states dazzled at the one-day tournament organised by the Boxing & MMA Hall of Fame at the Abuja Continental Hotel with the top pugilists jostling for places in the end-of-year grand finale scheduled for December 2024.

Initiated by sports enthusiast, philanthropist, and Minister of Finance, Mr. Wale Edun 14 years ago, Boxing and MMA Hall of Fame has been instrumental in the training and nurturing of top-level boxers in Nigeria.

The tournament is aimed at having National Champions by the end of this year through organising a series of championships in different parts of Nigeria and then supporting the boxers to represent Nigeria in various international

championships.

As part of this development program, two African Games Gold medalists: Ifeanyi Onyekwere and Blessing Oraekwe were sponsored by Boxing and MMA Hall of Fame to attend the second and final Paris Olympic Games Qualifying Tournament in Bangkok, Thailand with the aim to have more boxers representing Nigeria at the Paris Olympics this year. The two boxers will also be camped at the Boxing and MMA Hall of Fame gym in Lagos ahead of the qualifiers this month.

The Abuja event was attended by former Minister of Information, Mr. Lai Mohammed and some ranking lawmakers with the ex-minister

commending the organisers for showing interest in the development of lots of the youth and by putting such a well-organised tournament together. He said, such an event would afford the youth to channel their energy meaningfully as well as earn a living in life.

Lawrence Ochenje, a representative of Abuja Continental Hotel said to participants and guests: "It is a pleasure to have you here for this exciting event. Youth development has been greatly influenced by sports globally, and we are honored to play a part in hosting this Championship. The Abuja Continental has a rich history of hosting various international, local, and monumental events with exceptional hospitality standards since the 1990s".

19th BOA Lawyers League Kicks off Tomorrow

Keeping with the tradition of remembering the memory of the late lawyer, Bankole Olumide Aluko (SAN), a founding partner in the law firm of Aluko & Oyebo, who died over two decades ago, the BOA Lawyers League Football Tournament returns with a bang this year.

The football tournament will kick off tomorrow at the Lagos Preparatory School Ikoyi Lagos.

The BOA Lawyers League, a football tournament features prominent law firms in the city

of Lagos to bring the lawyers together in a friendly and competitive environment. The league reaches its 19th edition this year after it was suspended in Week 3 of the 2020 edition in the wake of the outbreak of COVID-19 lockdown in Nigeria.

Though, Falana & Falana, champions of the 17th edition are not featuring in the league this year, 15 teams across law firms in Lagos are gearing up for the kickoff date with enthusiasm and high hopes of winning the coveted trophy after

the draw ceremony was held over the weekend.

Speaking at the draw ceremony, Chukwuka Ikwaazon (SAN), a partner at ALN Nigeria/Aluko & Oyebo and former Chairman of the NBA, Lagos Branch said the 19th edition of BOA Lawyers League promises to be exciting and glamorous as the organisers would leave nothing to chance to ensure a memorable tournament in honour of the late partner, Bankole Olumide Aluko (SAN) who they all held in high esteem.

Rangers Exit President Federation Cup 2024

Six-time Nigeria Cup champions and last season's losing finalist, Rangers International FC will take no further part in this year's edition as the 'Flying Antelopes' lost the Round of 64 President Federation Cup 2024 encounter to rivals, Kano Pillars 6-5 on penalties after score at the end of 90 minutes stood at 1-1 in a match played at Bwari Township Stadium, F.C.T, Thursday.

The 'Sai Masu Gida' side was the quicker out of the blocks, in the encounter that had two of the

most followed teams in the country flexing muscles at the early stage of the competition, as they scored an early goal when Mustapha Umar was allowed much space inside the box to drill home the game's opening goal and send their bench and fans into wild celebrations.

Stunned as they were, the coach Fidelis Ilechukwu tutored side took the game to coach Abdu Maikaba side probing for openings with Kazeem Ogunleye, Chukwudi Nwaodu, and Isaac Saviour showing dominance

in the middle of the pack while Chiedozie Okorie and Godwin Obaje were at the best but the backline of their opponent was clinical in their defensive network.

With the first half remaining only seven minutes to run its cause, Chiedozie Okorie restored parity for the Coal City side on 38 minutes when he latched onto a pass from Obaje to poke home from close range past Ibrahim Galadima who had been doing a yeoman's job between the sticks for the Kano side.

EXPRESSION

'Potential' Uncountable

DAILY Independent Online of April 14, with two juvenile blunders, welcomes us this week: "The challenge that this poses is for the states to strive to become stronger, develop their economic potentials (potential or potentialities) and generate sufficient internal revenue to meet their obligations."

"These states and the ones to be created will, therefore, need to get their acts (act) together and build their economies to justify and sustain their existence."

"...on his 70th birthday anniversary (70th Birthday)." For the umpteenth time, 'birthday' and 'anniversary' cannot co-function!

"We Note (unnecessary capitalization) with appreciation the various reforms you initiated upon coming to the throne, some of which include, (needless comma) the creation of more districts and higher classes of traditional rulers and the institution of chieftaincy titles among others." In the spirit of felicitation, delete 'some of' and 'among others', which are implied.

"Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Inter Party (Inter-Party) Affairs..."

"Office of the Governor: Appeal to my colleagues (colleagues of mine)"

Wrong: "On the employ"; right: In the employ.

The dailies sometime ago bore headlines stating that Ex-Gov. Murtala Nyako of Adamawa State had been 'impeached' instead of 'removed'. Former President Bill Clinton of the U.S. was impeached (guilty) in 1998 but not removed over the Monica Lewinsky sex affair. 'Removal' is the proper word or action resulting from impeachment.

Wrong: "Good in a subject"; right: Good at a subject

THE NATION ON SUNDAY of April 28 comes next with a few misapprehensions: "APC alerts supporters in Osun over (to) 'Omo Ilu' form"

Yet another full-page advertorial by Oyo State Government endorsed by... "You have also not wavered in ensuring good governance and a society that is free for everybody to attain their potentials (sic)..." Correction already harvested!

"Imo, Bethel Amadi and Pan African (Pan-Africa) Parliament"

"He said people have (had) forgotten..."

Still on full-page advertorials: "With Joy (otiose capital letter) in our hearts, I am (we are) grateful to God for sparing the lives of Amiable Royal Father (what is this obsession with capitalization?)" (This was signed by Hon. John...and family) Get it right: the life of our (take note of this missing word) amiable royal father

Last but not least on full-page advertorials. This one is from Ogun State: "Every facet of our national life has an unmistakable Kongi imprints (imprint)"

"These two incidents which occurred within a week, (sic) mirrors the society." Needless delaying the trip, you can readily see the discord. I have not finished with my friends from Uyo.

"With these turn of events, some people are tempted to go for wealth at all means." This way: With this turn of events... Furthermore, I would prefer 'at all costs' or 'by all means'.

"The activities of these robbers is also taking its toll on traders." For goodness' sake, how can 'activities' take 'is' and 'its'? The basic rules of any language are emphatic on subject-verb agreement and concord between antecedents and subsequent pronouns.

"Above all, the military and other law

enforcement (sic) agencies should de-emphasize their role in the economy and politics and concentrate on their traditional duties—the protection of the citizens of this country against internal and external crimes." This is lexical deception! I know that law-enforcement agencies in this country do not protect us against criminals; not against crimes. It is the perpetration of a crime that gives a headache—not the crime itself. 'Internal and external crimes' sounds odd.

"In our yester-years' (yesteryear) republics, indecent incidents in our National Assembly wherein legislators broke the mace, the symbol of democracy, and challenged themselves to duels in the fashion of professional pugilists are still fresh in our memories." People can't 'challenge themselves to duels', but can challenge one another....

"UNIBEN Alumni meets (meet)" This kind of error borders on carelessness.

"The PDP has expressed serious concern at the fire outbreak, describing it as suspicious." Just delete 'outbreak' on grounds of redundancy.

"Nigeria in search for (of) an enduring political structure..."

"NGO sensitises (sensitizes, preferably) girls on (to) engineering, STEM-related activities"

"...or through these number..." EFCC please take note: this number

"We urge that that it will (should) be sustained."

"For instance, NLC would (should) have opposed land border closure by the immediate past government when it was clear that in Nigeria..."

"Zamfara, C'River, Adamawa, Ogun top cholera cases (case) list"

"Imo agog as APC Flags (sic) off mother



MEDIAGAFFES
BY
EBERE WABARA

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of all campaign" Get it right: mother of all campaigns

"Chief Whip stages walk out (walkout) to protest Senate president's out-of-order ruling" "The management of the radio station, in a statement (how else?), said his body has (had) been deposited at the Federal Medical Centre..."

"The trustees of Royal Sports Club International, Abuja (another comma) felicitate with (felicitate) you as you mark the Golden (sic) age of 50." Write right: 'of 50' is an overkill! "13 teams battle for glory as activities build-up (build up)"

FEEDBACK

PLEASE note that in both American and British English, "debut", like "author, critique, host, impact, hemorrhage, loan, party, pressure and gum (down)", has been promoted/made a verb - verbalized!

The most amusing oddity of the English language is the word, Money, it is classified as uncountable! But in Constitution, Accountancy, Banking and Finance, "money" has the plural "moneys" (not "monies", which is the plural of "money").

"Date back to" and "date from" are now inflected in the past and in the past participle.

"Common sense" should always be written two separate words when used as a noun (NOT one Word), e.g. use your common sense; and as a hyphenated compound rather than as one word when used adjectivally, e.g. common-sense precautions; common-sense English.

Note also that, as a grammatical rule, "whole" is used with a singular noun while "all" is used with plural nouns, e.g. the whole country; all the people.

Where Are The Angels of Hope?

Around 2007, alongside my wife, we organized an event dubbed "Angel of Hope Christmas Children Concert"...where the privileged from all strata of life could attend with their children (or young siblings). We encouraged each child to bring a gift of his or her own choice... to give willingly and happily to someone less fortunate. We basically invited hundreds of children from orphanages, charity homes and special schools to perform and participate at the concert.

The overarching thrust was to teach our children, at their tender ages, that God loves and blesses a cheerful giver - and that His commandment cuts across all faiths: Love your neighbours, irrespective of their circumstances.

Usually, proceeds from fund-raising efforts, and other gifts, were given directly (100%) to the beneficiaries (and homes). We simply acted as facilitators; the conveyors 'driving' willing and able traffic to the doorsteps of the needy.

Yet there are innumerable more of such needy people around us (the World Bank in conjunction with United Nations Children's Fund released a report in September 2023, called 'Global Trends in Child Monetary Poverty According to International Poverty Lines'). It stated that "40 million children in Nigeria (37.9 per cent) (were) living in extremely poor households". Our children are still suffering in silence, and threatened by our indifference.

Consequently, we have tried to help a number of Nigerian children get medical treatment by urging kindhearted Nigerians to form a safety net in cushioning the choke of pediatric ailments amid suffocating impoverishment.

Fast forward to 2017, the peculiar case of a barely five year old boy, David Adewale Oni was brought to our attention. Over seven years ago (March 2017), we shared with fellow Nigerians the eye-watering story

and plight of the Abiodun Oni's family. The story of little David Adewale Oni is simple, almost common. But the anguish, fears and helplessness of his parents are far from simple, and certainly uncommon.

David was five years old on 8 June, 2017. But since he was 37 days old, the joy of the first-time parents (Oluwatosin and Abiodun) turned to sawdust when he was diagnosed with a "hole in the heart" condition. Unfortunately, David's dad, Abiodun, is a tricycle operator (Keke NAPEP). And the mother, Tosin, was a petty trader!

And for over four years, it was a massive struggle keeping the boy alive with expensive drugs and tests, seeking funds for a corrective surgery in India (for millions of naira) in our harsh economic climate! One could hardly imagine how hapless the parents were.

We were informed that a Nigerian specialist hospital, Tristate Cardiovascular Associates (affiliated to Babcock University, Eruwon) had offered to conduct the surgery and other logistics with at least ₦3m (instead of ₦5-₦7m needed for the Indian option).

Well, miracles still happen on this side of the world. It was with great cheer we announced on 12 April, 2017 that we had raised ₦1.165 million in a dedicated UBA account. Of course, the parents were ecstatic and thankful - they could only raise about ₦90,000 in the four years they had been carrying their cross with the support of organisations and people they could access.

Five months later (mid August of 2017), their only child, accompanied by his mother, was on his way to Bangalore, India for the corrective surgery. Interestingly, we were able to raise only ₦1,379,000. It was by the inscrutable will of God that brought us in contact with the Down Syndrome Federation Nigeria, DSNF, founded by Mrs. Roseline Mordi. Our partnership with DSNF was a tremendous masterstroke as it enabled us to take advantage of their network of support mainframe to cover the huge cash balance needed; the several

pre-surgery tests and other logistics, including travel expenses - before the trip to Bangalore was possible. We gave kudos to the DSNF's founder, Mrs. Mordi; the then Administrator, Mr. Muiyiwa Majekodunmi; Mrs. Feyikemi Niyi-Olayinka of Owuro Lawa (a popular Yoruba programme on LTV); and Femi 'Kwame' Aderibigbe of Sound City. We didn't forget the pioneering efforts of the men and women of the 'Voice of Change' and 'Project Help A Child' who started the drive for the bedraggled family (raising ₦88,000).

Then, we had a small stumble when David's condition relapsed somewhat shortly after he returned cheerfully from India late on Thursday, August 17, with his mother. And all looked well. A few days later, he was taken to Ikeja General Hospital, Lagos (now Lagos State University Teaching Hospital) when the parents observed he had a slight but sustained temperature.

He was however admitted with doctors apparently worried about post-surgery infections! He spent a few days at the hospital, with attendant costs of medicare and expensive drugs. Along with DSNF, we once again rallied for more funds to meet with the new challenge. By 13 September, 2017, David had fully recovered, and was able to go back to school healthier than ever.

All of that is to say this: Today, David Oni is a strapping 12 year old (next month), and now needs a follow-up constructive surgery. Simply put, what was done seven years ago has now suffered the natural abrasion otherwise known as wear and tear: the hole in his heart has reopened! However, like his biblical namesake, David appears as one with a great future whose pathways are dotted by formidable challenges. His doting



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mother, Oluwatosin passed away almost two years ago of an indeterminate ailment! And the fortune of his father has not changed positively.

In the intervening years, the management of DSNF has been bearing the costs of regular ultra-sensitive tests and medications. But the funds and other expenses to correct the heart defect are now astronomical, and virtually impossible for the incredibly motivated private organisation to deal with alone. We are however excited to note that the surgery can now be effectively done in Nigeria, but the cost for both surgery and post surgery care is about ₦15m!

With the unrelenting support and proactive activation of Mrs. Mordi, the DSNF, through its "Save-A-Life Initiative", has secured, after considerable medical assessment, a comprehensive "Cost Estimate Sheet" from the Lekki, Lagos based Evercare Hospital Lekki Limited. The challenge is to raise ₦15m in under two months so as to save David (12) from a perforated heart threatening to stop working at any moment.

Just as we did seven years ago; our cry returns: We appeal on behalf of David Oni and his father... Please, join us to form a strong cord of palpable support that will bring succour, hope and love in saving this boy's life. Be an Angel of Hope NOW!

You can send your donation to the following account: Bank: First Bank of Nigeria (FBN) - Account No.: 3102783147

Account Name: Down Syndrome Foundation Nigeria.

As usual, details of the funding and surgery processes will be updated regularly on our social media platforms. God bless you exponentially as you do your part gracefully. It shall be well.

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THIS DAY

Saturday, May 4, 2024

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MISSILE

Umahi on Landmark

"There is none of his infrastructure that is affected. I agree that there are some people he sub-leased the place to, but the shoreline was never given to him by the Oniru family. These people he sublet to, he erected some caravans, makeshifts, so on and so forth within the shoreline. So, we are dealing with these people who sublet the shoreline illegally" – Minister of Works, Dave Umahi speaking with persons whose property were affected by the Lagos-Calabar coastal highway project

THIS DAY
29
 years
 OF ROBUST JOURNALISM
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Japa: Encounter With a Young Cynic

He said he was fed up with life. He also said that the adult population was a fraternity of fraudsters living in denial. Religion and the spiritual did not mean anything to him anymore. "I have seen it all, Sir", he said with an air of finality. Then he added: "It has to be greener pasture for me outside the country, or death".

Chuckling, I assured him that suicide wasn't such a difficult thing to carry out, if he was serious about it. Then I added: "Should you need assistance, I can use my knowledge of the martial arts to dispatch you to your ancestors with not more than two good blows; administered to where they would do maximum damage and make your demise a sure banker". He burst out laughing, but quickly pulled himself together.

"I am dead serious, sir", he said. "I know. It's just that there are a few things you may wish to take into consideration before you take a final decision", I replied.

As the discussion progressed, I said that since he was sure of his conclusions about life, and was also sure about the fact that he had nothing new to learn, discover, or live for, he could do what he liked and not bother talking to anyone about it. He stared at me for a while, and was about to say something, but I continued.

"I was once in the same situation as you are at the moment. That was in my time as a youth. At that time, I was sure of how much I understood the world. I was also sure that I had seen it all and did not need to listen to anyone. The only problem was that I had this nagging suspicion that I just might have something more to learn if I looked around me hard enough.

My conclusions about life at any moment may change in the face of new experiences. So, I advised myself to seek more knowledge first. But then it had to be such comprehensive knowledge as would enable me answer most of the very important questions of life".

He was silent for a while. Then he asked: "What are these important questions of life?"

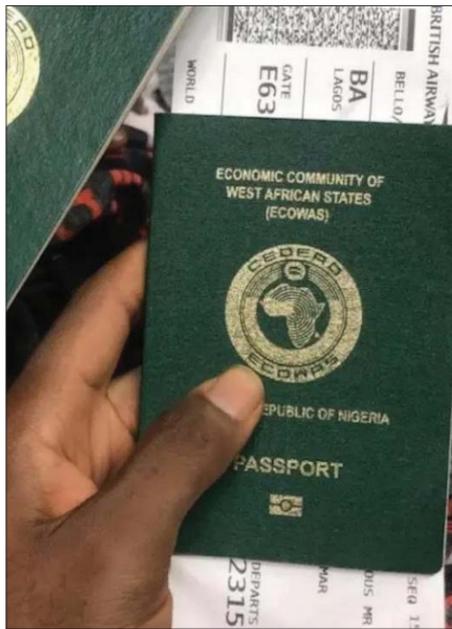
I told him that it all depended on who was asking the questions and what answers he was looking for. For me back then, I was concerned about the meaning of life and similar things. Someone else may have been concerned about how to make as much money as possible, or even how to become the most popular person in his neighbourhood, or his social circles.

It was different for me and I was forced to move from my initial cynicism when it dawned on me that I was still too ignorant, too inexperienced and too insufficiently exposed to conclude with certainty that the world, religion and everything else could go to hell. It was a truly confusing and confounding time: that stage and situation in life that is described by the ancients as the Dark Night of the Soul.

I told the young man that my resolve changed from going about and saying that life was meaningless to quietly seeking insight and personal spiritual deepening. I told him of how I initially loved this statement of Waldo Emerson: "To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment", and how I also found it confusing.

Then he asked me what I found confusing about the statement. I explained that my resolve and desire to become my own person did not, at the same time, show me what was right or wrong to do in life. In other words, I still needed to resolve the question of truth and falsehood, based on true knowledge.

There is a difference between wanting to have one's own values and convictions and being sure



that those values and beliefs are correct, or true. That was my dilemma at the time. I can say "This is my authentic self", but without interrogating that "self". One is not necessarily right because one has said: "Look I want to be myself and do only what I believe in". What if one's beliefs are wrong and only driven by inherited opinions, peer exposure, and one's cultural background?

The young man was pensive for a while, after the above observations. Then he asked: "What does it mean to be authentic and real?"

In response, I referred him to a section of an article which appeared on this page two years ago, under the title, "The Call for Authenticity"; wherein it was said: "The simple issue here is about reality and illusion, truth and falsehood, criminality and good behaviour. To be authentic is to be real. An authentic wooden chair is different from a fake plastic chair that is given a coat of paint in order to pass it off as a wooden chair. A person is said to be authentic when he is what he claims to be at any particular time, and completely so. To be inauthentic, on the other hand, is to have your identity, values, statements and avowed beliefs contrived to present "what is not" as "what is". It boils down to the absence of any true identity. A chimerical being. The "Not this" that claims to be a "this".

He paused for a while and then asked: "So, what are the essential attributes of an inauthentic person?"

Again, I read from another section of the aforementioned article, thus: "The inauthentic person will rather strive to create an illusion and present

same as truth, than take steps to remedy a perceived lack. It is all a question of doing everything possible to ensure that popular opinion and made-up reality create a shroud for the non-being to hide inside and masquerade an identity".

"But my worries, as well as my decision to do something about my life, must be seen and taken as clear signs of Authenticity. Don't you agree? He asked me.

"In a manner of speaking, yes" I replied. Then I drew his attention to yet another section of the two-year old article under reference here. "When an inauthentic person makes statements, or claims, about right, wrong, etc., it is all likely to be grounded on assumptions, expectations, views and ideas whose prevalence is mistaken for indubitability. Personal conviction is rarely ever part of the equation. Such a person will say 'I know', but will not bother to ask what it means 'to know'. While one person will say 'I know' and mean 'Mr X told me...', another will say he knows while he means 'It is generally said and believed that...', or even 'I have the impression that...'. See?"

"Tell me, sir, is it possible for one to know if one is the victim of an inauthentic life? He queried. "Listen to this", I said; as I read out once again: "The victim of an inauthentic life may not be aware of his predicament at all. He will be absorbed in his everyday concerns, feeling quite important and indispensable amidst it all. Yet he is dispensable in every sense of the word, without the world being the worse for it".

I continued: "What the inauthentic person takes himself to be is very often the agglomeration of claims, conjectures, flatteries and opinions put out by himself and his 'factory workers'; as he sits in the conventional boat of his environment, his financial status and what is generally called public opinion". And that is why what is said by a misguided person or public can never harbour the truth?"

"So, an inauthentic person cannot really speak of truth or know, as such?" He asked, almost inaudibly. I replied, quoting a paragraph in the article I mentioned earlier, where it was pointed out that the inauthentic person will rather be saying "What will my people think of such a thing". His nakedness is there beneath the perfectly imaginary clothing of artifice. But it is precisely this artifice that is being marketed as reality, in the firm belief that all will be well in the end".

"But this your inauthentic person is not under any visible compulsion, so where is the fear coming from? He queried, looking quite perplexed.

The response came thus: "Yet he seems to be the victim of some kind of ethereal tyranny, as he falters and stabilizes involuntarily. He is always afraid of what people would say if he did this, or failed to do that. He is worried that they may consider him foolish, unserious, etc.

"Yes! But who is this "they"? The young man asked.

I replied that this amorphous "they" cannot be

individualized, since it does not really refer to this person, or to that person. "It does not even refer to all the people put together; or to everyone except me. It is not something like a universal subject from which the individual can be abstracted, no! But there it is! "They" want this and not that!

"And I ask again, sir, how does this differ remarkably from the reflexes of your authentic person?" Was the next question.

This was the reponse, as drawn from three paragraphs in the article: "Unlike the authentic self which has taken hold of itself, and which consciously determines its own possibilities, a "they" self is not localized. That is why it is true to say that to have your day-to-day life defined by the 'they' is to have all your genuine possibilities annulled; because your life is dispersed into undefined channels, as you wallow in the anonymity of collectivism. When an inauthentic person says "I", he actually means "the others, whose ways prescribe mine". Pitiful, is it not? That the amorphous group, the self-enclosed homogenous group, with its unthinking rhetoric, buries personal volition.

If you doubt that the inauthentic person unconsciously, and often totally, depends on the "they", watch out for the constant care he takes to see how he differs from others; and whether that difference is one that should be maintained or evened out; whether he is lagging and needs to catch up, and whether he has some advantages he must strive to maintain. It is a desperate struggle for a life defined by average everydayness. A life lived with very little self-possession.

This is how the tyranny of the "they" unobtrusively robs people of their individuality. The choices about pleasure and displeasure are dictated by the prevailing preferences. It just happens to be "the done thing". Thus, does true knowledge get undermined and undervalued. Nobody then needs to justify anything he says or believes, other than by saying that everyone is in the same boat. Thus, you find people strutting about as leaders, statesmen, chieftains, influencers, on air personalities, etc., either after they have held public office, or because they have read a few books and talked a lot".

"But it will all ruin any form of genuineness", he said in dismay.

I answered in the affirmative, and continued thus: "It is sometimes in this way that the impetus to free thinking and independent enquiry is either dampened, or extinguished completely for many people. That is because 'they' articulate the referential context of the significance of everything. Thus, it gets spread around that there is no need to be different. Evasion of self and ignorant presumption become the norm. "Just drift along". Do not make a nuisance of yourself, by raking up issues that will make people think, reflect, or ask questions. As Martin Buber said: "Having become uneager and inept for such living intercourse that opens up a world, they have imprisoned the person in history and his speech in a library".

"Hmmm", he heaved; his shoulders sinking a little lower. Then he seemed to straighten up a bit from within. I said nothing. He heaved again and then said he had a lot to think about. I nodded in agreement.

I ended my exchange with the young man thus: "Anyone who thinks, or says, that many Nigerians are not either confused, suffering or simply not sure whether they are sane or not is living with his eyes closed. Anyone who is not aware that every step, and decision, he makes in life could aid or abort his purpose in a particular earth life should wake up to that fact. Look at the life of many great men and women, and also look at history, before you decide your next steps in life".