

S&P Report Anticipates Dangote Refinery to Shake up International Crude Oil Market when Fully Operational

Peter Uzoho
Nigeria's \$20 billion Dangote refinery is set to shake up international crude flows when it reaches full capacity, having

already made an impact since coming online in January, trading sources and ship tracking data as shown.
Nigeria is sub-Saharan Africa's largest oil producer, pumping 1.5

million b/d in June, according to the Platts OPEC Survey from S&P Global Commodity Insights.
Until this year, all of the country's oil was exported due to lack of

refining capacity, with gasoline, diesel and jet fuel imported for domestic use.
In its first six months, the plant has scaled to 400,000 b/d and delivered

diesel, jet fuel, naphtha and fuel oil to both domestic and export markets, according to company sources and ship tracking data.
Petrol should be produced in

Nigeria from mid-August.
Nevertheless, the refinery has already affected crude flows, with

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Protests: Nigerian Bonds Drop, Stock Market Records Mixed Performance

Kayode Tokede with agency report
Nigeria's sovereign-risk premium surged to an eight-month high, and its dollar bonds were some of the worst-performing emerging-market assets yesterday, amid concerns that cost-of-living protests across the

country could derail the government's economic reform plan.
On the other hand, the stock market recorded mixed performance as the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX) depreciated on Thursday, the first day of the protest and appreciated on the second day.

This week's unrest, comes soon after violent protests had forced another African nation, Kenya, to scrap crucial measures introduced to raise budget revenue.
Some investors may fear a similar outcome in Nigeria, where reforms introduced by President Bola Tinubu

have inflicted pain on the population, according to Bloomberg.
Political noise and "a challenging context for reform," are weighing on Nigerian bond prices, according to Citigroup Inc. strategists Alexander Rozhetskin and Luis Costa.
"The sovereign bonds have been

lagging over the last two months, particularly in the last weeks, as the noise around the cost-of-living protests is increasing," they said in a note sent on August 1.
Yesterday, the extra average yield investors demand to own Nigeria's debt relative to Treasuries, rose 23

basis points to 647 basis points, according to indicative data from JPMorgan Chase & Co. If the spread closes at this level, it would be the highest since November.
Nigerian Eurobonds

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Protests Continue in Lagos, One Killed, 4 Injured in Abuja

●It's time to go home, Sanwo-Olu appeals ●Businesses reopen in Rivers as massive peaceful protest continue with tight security ●Tinubu, governors working to ease burden in Nigeria, says NGF chair ●Normalcy returns to north as police, NSCDC arrest over 600 suspected vandals in Kano, Sokoto, Bauchi ●Return stolen items to owners, Emir Sanusi tells looters ●Stop attacking journalists, IPI Nigeria warns security agencies ●I didn't lead Abuja protests, Senator Kingibe declares *See story on page 5*



DAY 2 OF END BAD GOVERNANCE PROTESTS IN LAGOS...



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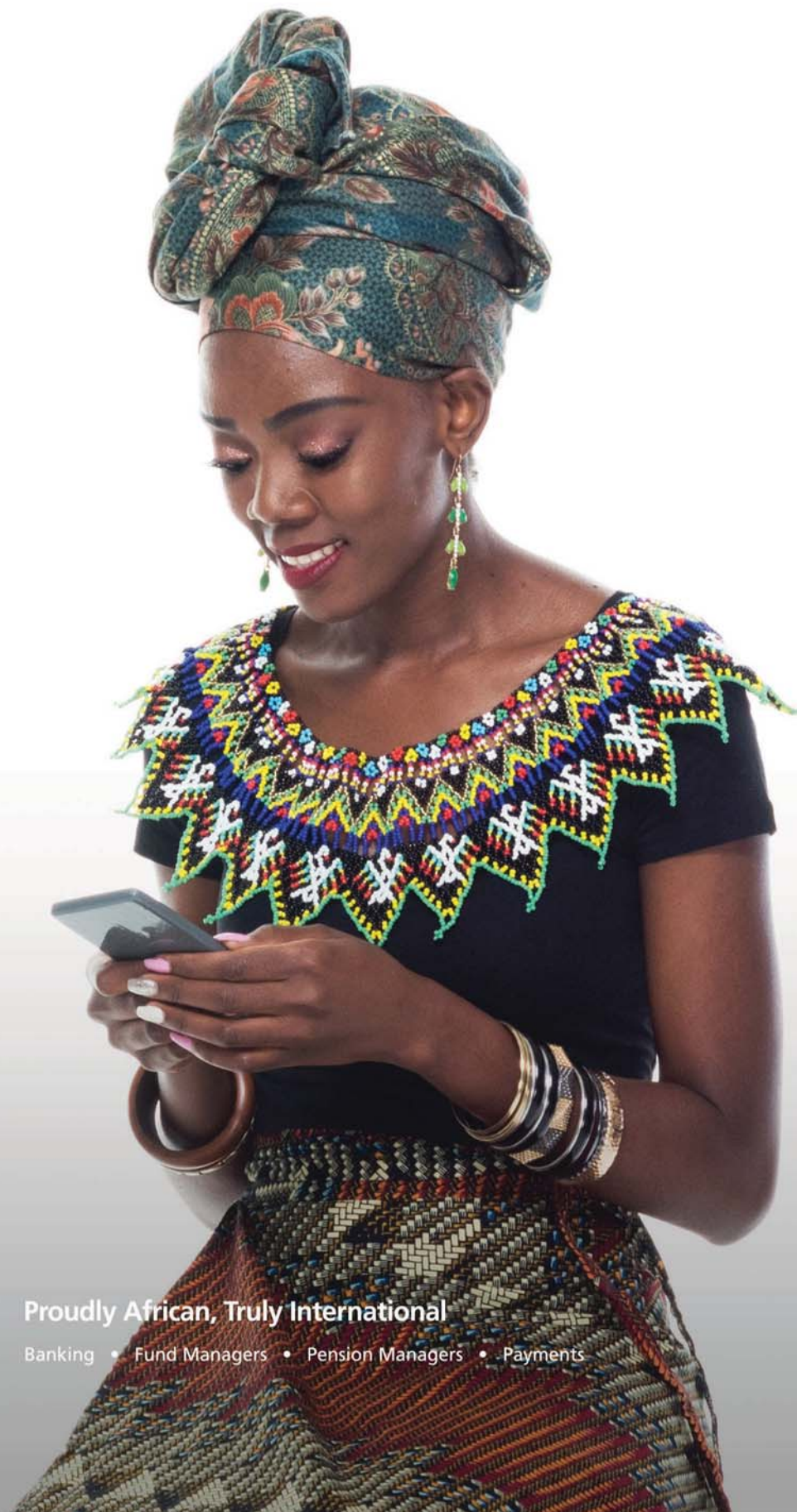
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PROTESTS CONTINUE IN LAGOS, ONE KILLED, 4 INJURED IN ABUJA

Our Reporters

It was a mixed bag for the #Endbadgovernance# protests yesterday, as the action seemed to be losing the steam with which it started in some States the previous day. While it continued peacefully on the second day in Lagos and some other States, there was a dash between protesters and security officials at the MKO Abiola Stadium, Abuja, while other parts of the Federal Capital Territory were relatively peaceful.

While some cities witnessed arrests of suspected vandals, others saw the gradual return to normalcy with businesses reopening though protesters still thronged the streets.

However, the northern part of the country which had appeared as the epicenter of the hunger protests where curfew was imposed in some States on the first day, seemed to have come under better control than the previous day as arrests were made while report of casualties reduced across cities in the region.

Also, there were more appeals from government, pressure groups like the leadership of Pan Niger Delta Forum, (PANDEF) and highly placed individuals for protesters to return home having made their points and impact which saw government scrambling for control.

In Lagos, Governor Babajide Sanwo Olu appealed to protesters who defied thugs that tried in vain through use of threats and attacks to dissuade their action, while in Abuja, the nation's capital, clashes occurred between the police and protesters who were teargassed with a reported casualty and some injuries on the part of the protesters.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian National Committee of International Press Institute (IPI Nigeria) yesterday, stated that it had observed with concern a series of indiscriminate attacks on journalists covering the protests in the country.

"We hasten to remind law enforcement agencies that it is the constitutional duty of journalists to cover the protests. They should, therefore, not be attacked while carrying out their duties. While we recognise the responsibility of law enforcement agencies to maintain law and order, it is also the responsibility of journalists to inform the public of happenings in the country.

"Law enforcement agencies are also duty bound to protect journalists. In this regard, we call on the police to investigate attacks on journalists covering the protests. We also demand that journalists be protected from attacks," a statement jointly signed by Musikilu Mojeed, President, IPI Nigeria and Tobi Soniyi, Legal Adviser, IPI Nigeria respectively, stated.

It listed some of the reported attacks on journalists to include the attack on Benard Akede of News Central Television, who was allegedly interrupted and harassed by Police officers who barred him and other journalists from interviewing anyone

during a live broadcast in Lagos and in Kano, a vehicle belonging to Channels Television and conveying about eleven journalists was vandalised.

"Also, in Kano, another vehicle belonging to Premier Radio was attacked. A car belonging to Cool/Wazobia/Arewa FM Kano was also not spared.

"In Abuja, the nation's capital, Yakubu Mohammed of Premium Times was attacked and injured by Police officers who hit him with the butt of their guns and their batons and caused injuries to his head while covering the protest.

Cameras belonging to journalists were also destroyed by Police officers. Jide Oyekunle, a photojournalist with Daily Independent and Chairman of FCT Correspondent Chapel of the NUJ, was arrested and his mobile telephone seized by Police officers," it added.

Return Stolen Items to Their Owners, Emir Sanusi Tells Looters

Barely 24 hours after some hoodlums looted public and private properties during Thursday protest, the Emir of Kano Muhammadu Sanusi II, has urged looters to voluntarily return all stolen goods to rightful owners.

Sanusi who made the call at a press conference in his palace yesterday, urged parents, guardians, religious and community leaders to compel those who took part in the looting of the properties to return them.

"When people steal goods they always find a buyer, let us try and refuse to buy stolen goods and instead encourage those young men and women to return those goods to their owners."

"Today is a sad day for the people of Kano as we reflect over the events of yesterday (Thursday). The violence of yesterday was what scholars and leaders kept warning against the possibility that miscreants and agents of destruction would hijack peaceful demonstrations and use that opportunity to cause mayhem which led to loss of lives and destruction of properties and injuries to countless people."

"As we said during the stakeholders meeting, any violence in Kano only hurts Kano, it hurts innocent people. The young people who died are our children, the properties that was burnt and stolen belongs to the people of Kano.

"We have set ourselves back. The printing press that was burnt will have to be rebuilt, the machines will have to be bought and these are funds that could have gone into youth empowerment, into poverty alleviation, into education, healthcare and nutrition and addressing the very problems that we are protesting against. Emir Sanusi lamented.

Lagos

Undeterred by threats from

hoodlums, protesters persisted in their demonstration for the second day, demanding an end to bad governance and improved living conditions.

Despite warnings from thugs who were roaming around, not to stage a protest at the Gani Fawehinmi's, Freedom Park, Ojota, the protesters gathered at the park, where Lagos State Commissioner of Police (CP) assured them of maximum security.

The CP's assurance came as a relief to the protesters, who had earlier received threats from hoodlums attempting to disrupt the peaceful demonstration.

Addressing the protesters amidst concerns about their safety, the Lagos State Assistant Commissioner of Police, Paul Okafor, who was with the protesters for the major parts of the protest yesterday, assured them of maximum protection from the police if they confine their protest inside the park.

Earlier, there were agitations by the protesters as thugs converged at the venue, threatened the protesters, and asked them to return to their various homes to protest and make their demands.

Addressing the protesters upon his arrival, the Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Fayoadé Adegoke, said: "I am going to be with you and I'm giving you one hundred per cent that nobody will infiltrate the park. I will not leave here until the end of the protest and will be in charge of the security of this place."

Abuja

A protester was killed while three others were injured at MKO Abiola Stadium, Abuja after officials of Department of State Services (DSS) fired gun shots into the air.

The protesters had reconvened at the stadium under heavy security provided by personnel from the Nigerian Army, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) Police and DSS, after they were denied access to Eagle Square in compliance with a court order.

Some minutes earlier, the protesters were tear gassed at the Berger roundabout in Wuse Zone 6 from where they marched to the stadium singing solidarity songs. Despite the not too pleasant experience, the protesters vowed they would not back out from their action nor be intimidated by security agencies.

Similarly, relative calm pervaded the communities along the strategic Abuja-Keffi Road yesterday as many of the conveners eased off from the road.

This situation was in sharp contrast to the total lockdown witnessed on the road when protesters looted shops, robbed pedestrians and barricaded many segments of it on the first day of the protest.

Apart from protest by a small crowd that was dispersed by soldiers when it gathered at Nyanya, the atmosphere was generally subdued at Nyanya, Mararaba, New Karu,

One Man Village and Ado as well as other communities along Abuja-Keffi Road that connected FCT with Nasarawa State.

Markets, shops and fuel stations opened for business while private and commercial vehicles with commuters plied the road.

A police helicopter hovered above the area in the morning while patrol vehicles were strategically packed at different points of the road to maintain law and order.

Rivers

Youths, women, civil society organisations, children, including physically challenged persons yesterday, hit major streets in Port Harcourt, Rivers State capital, protesting hardship and hunger in the country.

The peaceful protesters in their thousands started their protest in the morning from Pleasure Park on Aba Road, through Garrison to Eastern Bypass axis. They also marched through Aggrey Road in Port Harcourt Township to Government House, then proceeded to Azikiwe Road and terminated at the popular Isaac Boro Park at about 4pm.

During the protest, THISDAY observed that yesterday's movement had more number of protesters than that of Thursday, although businesses have partially returned in some areas in Port Harcourt and its environs, government facilities including the Courts, Secretariat and other institutions are still shutdown in fear of vandalism.

It was also noted that the security operatives monitoring the protest in the state, particularly the Commissioner of Police in Rivers, Mr. Olatunji Disu, and his men were fully on ground ensuring that there was no breakdown of law by the protesters. There was friendly relationship between the protesters and security agencies during the protest that lasted for about 7hours.

Kwara

The State continued the boycott of the protest as happened on the first day which drew the commendation of the Governor and Chairman Nigeria's Governors Forum (NGF) Alhaji Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq, who said President Bola Tinubu and leaders across the country had listened to the complaints of citizens on the state of the economy and are making frantic efforts to steadily address those concerns.

The Governor stated this in Ilorin yesterday shortly after observing the Jum'ah prayer at the Alihamdullillah Mosque GRA, Ilorin, the state capital. According to him, "We have heard you, and a lot more will be done to strengthen the economy and ensure the welfare of the people. I urge all of you to please be patient with the President".

Abdulrazaq said the President is working on more interventions to

ease the burden across the federation.

He again appreciated the people of the state for remaining peaceful as they go about their businesses, saying his administration will continue to prioritise their welfare.

Kaduna

Hundreds of youths in Zaria, Kaduna State trooped out yesterday in continuation with the protest against hunger and bad governance.

The protest in Zaria had been without any violent incident since its commencement on Thursday.

The protesters were said to have barricaded some major roads, restricting vehicular movement within some parts of the city.

It was gathered that the main road from Zaria city to Kofar Doka to Agoro junction was blocked.

The protesters carried placards and sang anti-government songs, demanding an end to hunger, high cost of living and insecurity.

They were accompanied by security operatives as they marched round some streets.

However, in Kaduna, the state capital, no protest took place following the outbreak of violence when the protesters attempted to forcefully enter the Government House. More security personnel were deployed at strategic places to checkmate the activities of hoodlums.

The road leading to the Government House was barricaded by heavily armed police personnel.

However the streets, particularly in the Northern part of the city deserted while shops, banks and markets were closed as residents stayed indoors.

However, the Southern part of the city was, however, bustling with activities as residents came out for their normal businesses.

PANDEF Urges Calm

The leadership of Pan Niger Delta Forum, (PANDEF), has commended the people of the Niger Delta region, for maintaining peace in the face of the nationwide protests.

PANDEF specifically said leaders of ethnic youth organisations, community-based and civil society groups, as well as activists, ex-agitators, and youths in general, had been exhibiting maturity in handling the situation.

The group, in a statement by its National Publicity Secretary, Dr. Ken Robinson, yesterday, lamented reports of looting, destruction, and loss of lives in some parts of the country.

PANDEF therefore urged the protesters in some states of the region to end their protests to prevent criminal elements from hijacking the process and causing disruptions to the relative

peace in the region.

Northern Agenda Group Withdraws

Northern Agenda for Good Governance & Allied Groups, one of the leading CSOs in the forefront of the ongoing nationwide protest against bad governance has called out its members to withdraw from the protest with immediate effect.

Announcing the decision to withdraw its members from the protest, Comrade Hashim Bala Pali, Deputy National Coordinator stated that hoodlums, irate youths and disgruntled elements have hijacked the peaceful protest turning it into violence and looting spree.

Briefing Journalists yesterday at the NUJ Press Center, he stressed that the decision to cancel the peaceful protest in Bauchi State became necessary in order to save lives and properties of citizens.

He then declared that, "At this juncture, we deeply appreciate the support from our members and fellow citizens across all divide for the initially planned civil protest. We decided to call it off in the greater interest of peace and stability of Bauchi State and Nigeria as a whole as we realized that it is better we send the message through this medium than to allow some unknown and perhaps irresponsible elements hijack the whole thing with the good intentions into something we all will not like."

Plateau

The day-two of the ongoing protest against hunger and bad governance in Nigeria witnessed a larger turn out than the first day as Christians and Muslims in Jos, Plateau State put aside their age-long differences to ensure that the exercise was a success.

Like the first day, the protest was largely peaceful as the protesters were orderly and listened to the directives of their leaders; former Minister of Youth and Sport, Mr. Solomon Dalung and General Overseer of EBOMI International Ministries, Prophet Isa El-Buba.

The duo cautioned the protesters not to destroy any property as they marched from Old Airport Roundabouts to Secretariat junction.

When it was afternoon and time for Muslim Jumat prayers, one of the Imams in the protest called for the suspension of the protest to allow the Muslim protesters observe their Jumat prayers. Their Christian counterparts provided security for the Muslim to observe the prayers before they resumed the protest.

Continued online

S&P REPORT ANTICIPATES DANGOTE REFINERY TO SHAKE UP INTERNATIONAL CRUDE OIL MARKET WHEN FULLY OPERATIONAL

dozens of Nigerian cargoes remaining in-country and US WTI Midland, a comparable light, sweet grade, being imported, the S&P report disclosed.

The mega-refinery could therefore tighten the light, sweet crude market.

"Its diet is WTI and the lighter Nigerian [crudes] so if you were chasing those barrels you'd probably feel it quite keenly," a West African crude trader told Commodity Insights.

"Once they get to 650,000 b/d without any WTI Midland, 'severely disrupted' (will be) the headline."

WTI Midland crude initially emerged as the favored feedstock to supplement Nigerian supply, with the refinery signing long-term supply contracts for the US grade and noting its competitive pricing. Platyt's, part of Commodity Insights, last assessed WTI Midland into Rotterdam at \$82.36/b on July 31, while Nigeria's Bonny Light was assessed at \$82.80/b on the same day.

The US grade has accounted for 30 per cent of crude delivered to Dangote, through 18 cargoes.

Domestically, Dangote has alleged that IOCs had been charging it a \$6/b premium for crude in June, leading Nigeria's government to seek to mandate local supply at "market price" and facilitate crude payments in naira.

On July 14, owner Aliko Dangote said the facility would broaden its feedstock sources with Libyan, Angolan, and Brazilian crude.

"The refinery was built to use Nigerian crude and add value to it within Nigeria. Why should we deviate from that focus?," a Dangote executive said, adding that the crude supply issues were, "getting resolved," but that the refinery remained open to all opportunities "to supplement it".

"Dangote refinery is designed to process a range of light and medium grades of crude oil, including Nigerian grades," Associate Director and Head of Refining at

S&P Global Commodity Insights, Rasool Barouni said.

"Other similar grades including other WAF grades could be an option."

Crude flows in and out of the Dangote refinery have been felt in other markets, especially in Europe, the largest consumer of light, sweet Nigerian crude.

S&P Global commodities at sea data shows European imports of Nigerian crude have slumped since January, with only imports of US oil falling by more. Meanwhile, Brazil, Egypt, Libya and Guyana have boosted supply to Europe. Analysts caution that refinery maintenance and other factors could have played a role.

Nigeria – which previously did not import crude – has seen the largest increase in WTI Midland imports globally since the refinery's inauguration.

A growing call on WTI Midland could affect Asia and Europe, the main export markets for the US crude

which has emerged as a "swing" grade in recent years.

For two consecutive years, Europe has ramped up WTI Midland imports by 20 per cent to plug gaps left by sanctioned Russian oil.

On a macro basis, Nigerian exports have fallen in successive quarters since last year. CAS data shows Nigeria exported 1.4 million b/d in Q1 2024 and 1.24 million b/d in Q2 2024, down from 1.5 million b/d in Q4 2023.

Analysts are waiting for the plant to hit 600,000 b/d and start producing gasoline before assessing its impact, but note it is already leaving a mark on the light, sweet complex.

"The refinery's opening has certainly had an impact on trade flows, especially for Nigerian crudes and WTI," research associate director at Commodity Insights, Payam Hashempour said.

"But, we should see the full impact on global trade flows once the refinery's operation ramps up."

underperformed a Bloomberg index of frontier and emerging-market sovereign dollar debt. The biggest laggard was the 2051 bond, the price on which slid to 75.4 cents on the dollar as of 12:36 p.m. in London — down 1.4 cents on the day and the lowest in over a month.

Reforms introduced by Tinubu included the scrapping of costly fuel subsidies, and allowing the naira currency to trade more freely in a bid to attract foreign capital inflows.

However, the protesters are campaigning against the policy changes which have driven inflation to a near three-decade high in a country where 40 per cent of the population lives in extreme poverty. Organizers of the demonstrations have called for 10 days of protests through August 10.

However, the Citi strategists do not expect the Nigerian protests to reach the scale of the recent unrest in Kenya, where the government was forced to abandon measures seen as crucial for increasing budget revenues. For that reason, they maintain their "middleweight" rating on Nigerian bonds, adding "the curve may start to look attractive on a relative value basis."

Meanwhile, on the NGX, on the

PROTESTS: NIGERIAN BONDS DROP, STOCK MARKET RECORDS MIXED PERFORMANCE

first day of the protest, the stock market depreciated by N236 billion in market capitalisation to close at N55.278 trillion as the Nigerian Exchange Limited All-Share Index (NGX ASI) lost 414.46 basis points or 0.42 per cent to close at 97,359.76 basis points.

There was a twist yesterday, as the market capitalisation appreciated by N219.14 billion to close at N55.497 trillion from N 55.278 trillion the stock market opened for trading.

Consequently, the NGX ASI gained 385.97 basis points or 0.4 per cent to close at 97,745.73 basis points from 97,359.76 basis points it closed the previous day.

However, in its Week-on-Week (WoW) trading activities the overall market capitalisation was down by N108 billion as the NGX ASI depreciated by 455.76basis points or 0.46per cent as investors trade the stock market with caution.

According to analysts at Cordros research, "While we expect the ongoing H1 2024 earnings season to ultimately guide the market's direction over the short term, we still expect bearish sentiments to remain the key theme as investors remain cautious and continue to exhibit weak appetite for Nigerian tickers."



PAYING FINAL RESPECTS...

President of the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (NACCIMA), Mr. Dele Kelvin Oye (right), with Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Abayomi Oyebanji, at the burial ceremony of Oye's father, Pa Benson Ogunlusi, in Efon, Ekiti State...recently

CBN Moves to Tackle Growing Forex Demand with Retail Dutch Auction System

●Cardoso: Financial policy, cross border movement, others key to AfCFTA success

James Ermejo in Abuja and Nume Ekeghe in Lagos

In a bid to address the growing unmet foreign exchange (FX) demand from end users, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) yesterday, announced a strategic intervention through a Retail Dutch Auction System (DAS). The announcement by the apex bank came on same day its Governor, Mr. Olayemi Cardoso, said decisions on financial policy, currency convertibility, cross border movement and transactions, and payment systems remained key determining factors for the success of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

For the retail auction, the apex bank directed all authorised dealer banks to submit a comprehensive

and legitimate list of outstanding FX demands from their end users.

This initiative, set to take place next Wednesday, aims to mitigate the increasing demand pressure in the FX market and stabilise the exchange rate of the naira.

In a circular to banks, the CBN noted that it observed a significant rise in unmet FX demands from end users with banks, which has exacerbated the pressure on the FX market and adversely impacted the naira's exchange rate.

It stated: "The CBN has noted growing unmet FX demand from end users with banks. This has continued to increase the demand pressure in the FX market with adverse impact of the exchange rate of the naira."

"Authorised dealer banks therefore are to provide to the CBN, a legitimate

list of all outstanding FX demand by end users.

"This list must include comprehensive information about each customer, such as their name, address, and contact details including email, telephone number, Bank Verification Number (BVN), account number, Tax Identification Number (TIN), type of transaction, Form A or Form M, and Letter of Credit (LC) Number.

"The CBN will undertake a Retail Dutch Auction System (DAS) to mitigate the demand for eligible transactions through authorised dealers on Wednesday, 07 August, 2024.

"Consequently, all authorised dealers are to provide the information above via email in the attached template to EMDEXDealers@cbn.gov.ng on or before Tuesday, August 06, 2024.

"The account of prospective customer should be naira backed as a prerequisite to participate in the auction for immediate settlement upon confirmation of bid acceptance by the CBN.

"The CBN's directive mandates authorised dealers to provide this information via email to EMDEXDealers@cbn.gov.ng using the attached template. The deadline for submission is Tuesday, August 6,

2024. Additionally, the accounts of prospective customers must be naira-backed to qualify for participation in the auction, ensuring immediate settlement upon confirmation of bid acceptance by the CBN."

Meanwhile, Cardoso, speaking at the opening of the 2024 African Caucus Meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, with the theme, 'Facilitating Intra-African Trade: Catalyst for Sustainable Economic Growth in Africa', in Abuja, said the continent stands at a crossroads with unprecedented opportunities for development alongside significant challenges.

He noted that to navigate the

complex landscape and set the continent on a path of sustainable economic growth, Africa must leverage the support of its global partners, particularly the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG), both of which play critical roles in the equation.

Cardoso said their expertise and resources could provide the essential impetus needed to unlock the continent's vast potential.

He said the continent now stands on the threshold of a new era in African economic cooperation through the AfCFTA, the largest such agreement in the world by both area and number of countries.

Military Tightens Security Across Nigeria to Checkmate Violent Protests, Kills 572 Terrorists in One Month

Ikechukwu Aleke in Abuja

The Defence Headquarters (DHQ), yesterday, said that it has emplaced measures to curtail the excesses of the miscreants, hiding under the umbrella of protests to loot private businesses and destroy public infrastructure, as well as unleash mayhem on law-abiding citizens.

The DHQ also noted that its troops deployed to counter terrorism, banditry and insurgency across the federation killed no fewer than 572 terrorists and arrested 790 others in the

month of July.

In his regular update on military operations across Nigeria, the Director Defence Media Operation, Maj. Gen. Edward Buba, also revealed that troops of operation Delta Safe in South South joint operations retrieved petroleum products worth over N3bn in the month of July.

This, he said was in addition to the recovery of 3,650,080 litres of stolen crude oil, 625,518 litres of illegally refined AGO, 450 litres of DPK and 1,230 litres of PMS amongst other item.

KEDCO Disconnects Kaduna Government House Over N2.9bn Electricity Bill

John Shiklam in Kaduna

The Kaduna Electricity Distribution Company (KEDCO) has disconnected Government House, Kaduna, for non-payment of over N2.9 billion electricity debt.

The disconnection took place yesterday, hours after the Kaduna State Internal Revenue Service (KADIRS) sealed the head offices of the electricity company along Ahmadu Bello Way Kaduna for not paying over N600 million tax liabilities.

KEDCO, in a statement by its Head, Corporation Communication, Abdulazeez Abdullahi, said the

Government House had not paid for electricity bill for seven months.

He said the disconnection took effect after extensive efforts to resolve the issue through consultations and reconciliations.

The statement added "In a dramatic move that underscores growing tensions between utility providers and state governments, Kaduna Electric has cut off electricity supply to the Kaduna State Government House and other state government accounts due to unpaid bills.

"Kaduna Electric announced the disconnection after extensive efforts to resolve the issue through consultations and reconciliations.

NLC, Atiku, Obi Urge Tinubu to Address Nigerians

Chuks Okocha and Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

As the nationwide #EndBadGovernance protests enter the third day across the country, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC); former Vice President and presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party in the 2023 election, Atiku Abubakar and presidential candidate of Labour Party, Mr. Peter Obi, yesterday, advised the President Bola Tinubu to engage in sincere dialogue with the leaders of the #EndBadGovernance protests.

The NLC in a statement signed by its Head of Information and Public Affairs, Benson Upah, said the position of the Labour movement has not changed regarding using dialogue to address social dispute.

It added: "We find it necessary to reiterate that on our statements of July 22nd and 23rd 2024, we had advised government to dialogue with the leaders instead of engaging in unhelpful rhetoric, as it was within their constitutional rights to protest.

"Our position on government meeting with and engaging in sincere dialogue with the leaders of this action remains unchanged. It's the best way to go."

Atiku described the ongoing nationwide protests against economic hardship in the country as significant. This was even as he admonished the Nigerian government to heed the voices of the people and come down from its high horses, insisting it is time to demonstrate a sincere commitment to addressing the demands of the protesters.

Atiku said the protests have opened a vital channel for the public to express disapproval of government policies.

In a post on his X handle yesterday, Atiku said protesters have conducted themselves with admirable peace and must be commended for their restraint and dedication.

He also urged the security agencies to identify and isolate the minority elements who are resorting to violence and looting.

Atiku's words: "The commencement of public protests across the country yesterday is noteworthy. These demonstrations have opened a vital channel for the public to express disapproval of government policies, furthering the essential conversation about good governance in our nation.

"For the most part, protesters have conducted themselves with admirable peace and must be commended for their restraint and dedication. However, in some isolated instances, there have been reports of violence, leading to regrettable

clashes and brutalities by the police.

"I urge the protesters to maintain their peaceful stance and call on more Nigerians to show solidarity and support for the #EndBadGovernance peaceful protest. This is a pivotal moment for our collective voice to be heard, and it must be done with dignity and respect for the law.

"I also call on the police to engage more professionally in managing these protests. The needless killing of innocent citizens by security agencies is unacceptable. The police must refrain from the molestation of journalists who are merely reporting the protest. It is imperative that security agencies exercise restraint while enforcing law and order.

"Security agencies are encouraged to identify and isolate the minority elements who are resorting to violence and looting, ensuring that the actions of a few do not tarnish the majority of peaceful protesters.

OPEC Oil Output Rises in July on Saudi Rebound, Survey Reveals

OPEC oil output rose in July, a Reuters survey showed yesterday, as a rebound in Saudi Arabian supply and small increases elsewhere offset the impact of ongoing voluntary supply cuts by other members and the wider OPEC+ alliance.

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) pumped 26.70 million barrels per day (bpd) last month, up 100,000 bpd from June, according to the survey based on shipping data and information from industry sources.

The increase comes despite OPEC+, which comprises OPEC and allies such as Russia, keeping in place most of its output cuts until the end of 2025 to bolster the market in the face of tepid demand growth, high interest rates and rising U.S. production.

A meeting of top OPEC+ ministers on Thursday kept oil output policy unchanged including a plan to start unwinding one layer of output cuts from October, and repeated that the hike could be paused or reversed if needed.



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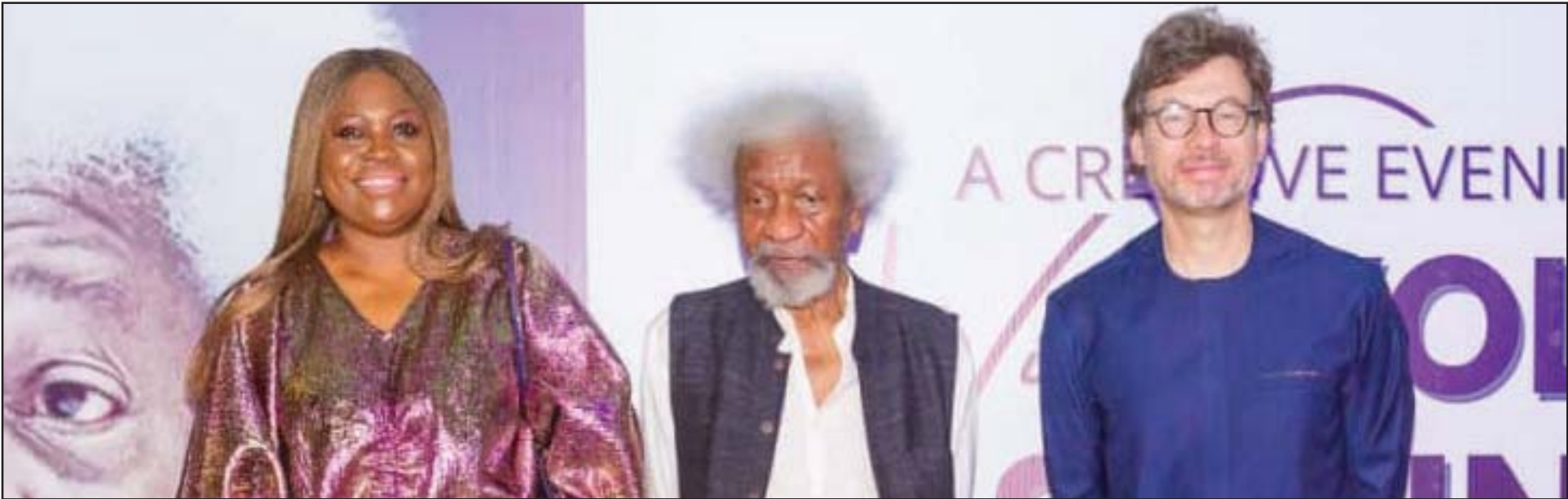
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NEWS



CELEBRATING WOLE SOYINKA...

L-R: Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Health District 3, Dr. Monsurat Adeleke; Prof Wole Soyinka, and British Deputy High Commissioner, Lagos, Nigeria, Johnny Baxter, during an event organised to celebrate Soyinka's 90th birthday held in Lagos... recently.

Kamala Harris Secures Enough Votes to Become Democratic Party Nominee

Sunday Ehigiator with agency report

United States Vice President, Kamala Harris, has passed the threshold to

clinch the Democratic presidential nomination in a vote of party delegates.

Speaking by telephone, the BBC quoted Harris to have said she was,

"honoured to be the presumptive nominee" as the virtual roll call continues ahead of the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Chicago later this month.

"It's not going to be easy. But we're going to get this done," she added. "As your future president, I know we are up to this fight."

Harris is the first black woman

and first South Asian woman to become the White House standard-bearer for a major US political party.

If she defeats Donald Trump, the Republican nominee, in November she would be America's first female president.

Harris as his successor less than two weeks ago.

Harrison pledged that Democrats "will rally around Vice President Kamala Harris and demonstrate the strength of our party" during their convention in Chicago later this month.

The announcement was made before the online voting process ends on Monday, by the Democratic National Committee Chair Jaime Harrison.

The Democratic National Committee did not provide details of the delegate vote count, including a number or state-by-state breakdowns, during a virtual event that had the flavour of a telethon, with campaign officials keeping tabs on a delegate-counting process whose result is a foregone conclusion.

Corruption is Deadly Cankerworm That Destroys Society, Soyinka, Fashola Insist

James Sowole in Abeokuta

Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka and two-term former Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Raji Fashola, yesterday, delved into various aspects of corruption describing it as a deadly cankerworm that destroys society.

The duo spoke in Abeokuta, Ogun State capital, at the 26 Annual Lecture, organised by the National Association of Seadogs otherwise known as Pyrates Confraternity to mark the 90th birthday of Soyinka.

The lecture with the theme, 'The Baby or the Bathwater: Navigating The Dark Tunnels of Systemic Corruption to Nationhood', was delivered by Fashola, who was two-term Minister of Works and

Housing.

According to Soyinka, corruption is a scourge that lays great nations in ruins and puts the people at great disadvantage.

He said that without attitudinal change and readiness of everyone to begin to do the right thing, winning the war against the mounting corruption challenge in the country remains an impossible task.

Commenting on the lecture, Soyinka said that the challenge of corruption is such that it runs from the top to the bottom in Nigeria and only the decision of every citizen to change for good can help halt its deadly march in the country.

He said, "The particular aspect of this lecture that struck me is corruption, corruption is not just

when you change money, it is a cankerworm that eats deep into the fabric of the society from the top to the bottom and corrupts our very nature, our very existence.

"And one aspect of the lecture emphasised that cure for the corruption begins from the inside. Yes, we can talk about institution, government, we can talk about exercise of power unfairly, inordinately to the disadvantage of the rest of the community and all that as part of corruption but ultimately, the solution, short term, immediate and long term must begin from the inside and this is one of the motives for establishing Pyrates Confraternity 62 years ago."

Speaking on the misconceptions about the group he and others

formed in 1962, Soyinka said the Pyrates Confraternity is a registered association and not a blood-thirsty secret cult but an association founded to push for justice and advance the betterment of the country.

He lauded the members of the association for organising the event and urged them to continue to push for the ideal of social justice and good governance which is the core mandate of the association.

Soyinka alongside the former Secretary General of Commonwealth, Chief Emeka Anyawu later unveiled a book, 'Ship Ahoy' written to document 60 years history of the confraternity.

Giving his lecture earlier, Fashola described Soyinka as not only a gift to the country, the continent but the entire civilisation.

ActionAid Nigeria, NGO Demand Immediate Action from President

Michael Olugbode and Kuni Tyessi in Abuja

ActionAid Nigeria has called on President Bola Tinubu as a matter of urgency to immediately address the nation on the ongoing protests against bad governance.

Also yesterday, the Building Blocks for Peace Foundation called on Tinubu to address demands made by citizens.

Executive Director, Rafiu Lawal who made the call yesterday in a statement, said this has become necessary, adding that a clampdown on protesters will only worsen insecurity.

ActionAid Nigeria stated that the organisation stands with the courageous Nigerians taking to the streets in the #EndBadGovernance protests.

"The demands for pro-poor policies are not just valid; they are

urgent and necessary. Inflation is crippling livelihoods, and some of the government's current spending priorities are out of touch with the harsh realities faced by millions of Nigerians.

"In the face of widespread protests and rising public discontent, it would be disheartening for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to remain in the background, sending spokespersons to address the nation on his behalf.

"The President must immediately address the nation, acknowledge the grievances and concerns driving the #EndBadGovernance protests, and provide a detailed plan, complete with clear, time-bound actions, to address bad governance and adopt pro-poor policies that can alleviate the severe economic hardships currently being faced."

Bayelsa Monarch Pleads with Protesters to Stay Action

As the #Endbadgovernance# and hunger nationwide protests continue, the traditional ruler of Azuzuama, Southern Ijaw, Bayelsa State, Eyewei (V), His Royal Highness, Selky Kile Torughedi known as General Young Shall Grow in his Niger Delta agitation days, has called on Nigerians to stop action having made their points.

The monarch told THISDAY that given the fears of the protests getting out of control and leading to destruction of public infrastructure and loss of lives, there was need to rethink and pull back from pressing ahead with it.

According to him, "though it is the

fundamental right of the citizenry to protest, not all protests are justified as proper means of solving problems. In the end, everybody will still come to the table for dialogue, so we should explore dialogue rather than continue with the protest."

Torughedi cautioned youths to desist from delving into actions that have negative consequences on development, pointing out that they should refrain from a repeat of what happened during the 2020 EndSARS protests with regrets of destruction in its wake, causing severe losses to businesses and livelihood.

"I join all well-meaning Nigerians

and stakeholders of the region to call on all ex-agitators and agitating youths of the Niger Delta and Nigeria to stop the protests which began on the 1st of August 2024.

"I acknowledge that things have been especially difficult but the leadership of the country is not resting on its oars as the President has been exploring every avenue to turn things around for economic prosperity.

"As Grand Commander of the Nigerian youths. I plead with us to be weary of being used by politicians. We should know and believe that we are stronger than we think, braver than we feel, and smarter than we know.

"Don't let anyone make you feel like you're not enough. You are unique, talented Nigerian youths, and capable of achieving amazing things. Embrace your individuality, take risks, and chase your passions. The world needs more of what you have to offer than sacrificing for those who fight for only their will," he counselled.

He noted that reports coming from different parts of the country have confirmed the fears that such protests were susceptible to being hijacked by hoodlums, pointing at reported vandalism of some top facilities built for the good and use of the youths.

COREN Postpones Annual Engineering Assembly over Ongoing Nationwide Protests

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN) yesterday announced the deferment of its Annual Engineering Assembly earlier scheduled for between August 5 to 7, 2024 in Abuja.

In a briefing in Abuja to intimate local and foreign guests expected during the event, President of COREN, Prof. Sadiq Abubakar, said that the postponement had become important because of concerns occasioned by the ongoing nationwide protests.

COREN, a statutory body, has the mandate to regulate and control engineering education, training and

the practice of engineering in all its aspects and ramifications in Nigeria.

The Annual Engineering Assembly helps bring all cadres of engineering practitioners together to discuss issues that will lift the profession to greater heights.

According to the COREN president, the new date for the event will now be September 2-4 this year.

He said: As you recall, in our last session we held, we informed the media and the nation at large of our annual gathering called Engineering Assembly, the 32nd, which was scheduled to hold in Abuja on the 5th to the 7th of August, that is on Monday to Wednesday, next week.

UI Offers Lifeline to Candidates with Low Score in 2024 UTME

Kemi Olaitan in Ibadan

The University of Ibadan has come to the rescue of thousands of candidates who could not sit for the 2024 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) through its open distance e-learning offers.

The Director of the Distance Learning Centre of the university, Prof. Babatunde Omobowale, made the disclosure while speaking with

journalists in Ibadan.

He also added that candidates who scored below the cut-off mark of 200 or less could also catch on the opportunity offered by the premier university.

According to him, the Centre which will be officially open on September 2, offers a flexible, open, online, and seamless blended learning experience that allows learners to join live lectures in

real-time and have authentic learning experiences from home, office, on the go or anywhere they are.

He stated that UI is committed to making quality education accessible to all, stating that UI ODeL is very affordable and has flexible payment schemes, with students paying only N50,000 to register and partake in all course activities while paying the balance before the exams.

He said, "Those who scored below

200 in JAMB UTME or did not sit for the UTME can also take advantage of this opportunity, and enrol in any of the university undergraduate programmes in ODeL mode, including BSc Computer Science, BSc Economics, BSc Sociology, BSc Psychology, BSc Political Science, BA Communications and Language Arts, Bachelor of Social Work, and Bachelor of Nursing Science, among others.

NEWS



CREATIVE LEAP ACCELERATION PROGRAMME LAUNCH....

L-R: Chairman ISN Network and Founder Dexude, Charles Emembolu; MD Founders Institute and member of ISN Network, Mrs. Ajuma Ataguba; Minister of Art, Culture and Creative Economy, Hannatu Musa Musawa and Director General National Council of Arts and Culture, Obi Asika, at the pilot launch of the Creative Leap Acceleration Programme...recently

Lagos State Govt, Afenifere Condemn ‘Igbo Must Go’ Tag, Call for Arrest of Proponents

●Stop profiling Igbos, South-east lawmakers warn

Adedayo Akinwale, Sunday Aborisade in Abuja and Sunday Ehigior in Lagos

The Lagos State Government and the Pan-Yoruba socio-political organisation, Afenifere, have denounced a recent social media post calling for the forced departure of Igbo people from Lagos and the South-west region of Nigeria. In the same vein, yesterday, federal lawmakers from the Eastern part of the country in both chambers of the National Assembly warned that there could be a repeat of civil war in the country if nothing was done to stop profiling their race in the ongoing protests against bad governance. The threat, which appeared on the X handle LagosPedia, had

threatened a massive protest from August 20th to 30th, 2024, under the hashtag #IgboMustGo. However, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu in a statement signed by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Gboyega Akosile, has distanced himself and the Lagos State Government from the "reckless, divisive, and dangerous rhetoric," emphasising that Lagos remains a home to all Nigerian citizens regardless of their ethnic nationality. According to him, "The attention of Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu has been drawn to a post by LagosPedia, a social media handle on X (formerly Twitter) that calls on the Igbo to vacate Lagos and South-west of Nigeria and brace up for a massive hashtag #IgboMustGo

protest from 20th to 30th August 2024. "The Governor of Lagos State and indeed, Lagos State Government wish to distance themselves from the reckless, divisive and dangerous rhetoric, saying Lagos remains home to every Nigerian citizen regardless of their ethnic nationality. "Governor Sanwo-Olu views the post as not only reckless and divisive but an attempt to sow a seed of discord between the Yoruba in the South-west and other tribes, especially those who have made Lagos their permanent place of abode. "The governor appeals to Lagosians not to allow any person or group of individuals to create tensions in the state, calling on the security agencies to promptly investigate those behind the handle and bring them to justice.

"Mr. Governor enjoins Lagosians to ignore the post and any post of that nature, promising to double his efforts towards ensuring lasting peace in the State." Similarly, Afenifere, has called on all Nigerians living legitimately in any part of Yorubaland to entertain no fear about their safety or be afraid of being forced out of the area. Its National Publicity Secretary, Jare Ajayi, gave the assurance in a statement issued yesterday while reacting to a post by a non-descript social handle tagged 'LagosPedia' which warned Igbos living in Lagos and South-west Nigeria to leave the area within one month. The post specifically reads: "Lagosians and every South-west stakeholders should prepare for the

massive protest of #IgboMustGo on the 20th – 30th of August. "They have 1 month from now to leave and relocate their business from all South-West states. We urge all Yorubas living in the South-East to return home." However, Afenifere dismissed such a threat, saying those behind the unwarranted, provocative and divisive

campaign were out to cause disaffection between Ndigbo and Yorubas. It said: "In view of the serious danger such a call for expulsion poses to peaceful co-existence, Afenifere is hereby calling on the security agencies, police especially, to round up those behind this unpatriotic move as contained in the quoted LagosPedia post."

FG Directs Organisations to Provide Safe Breastfeeding Places for Mothers

Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja

As part of efforts to promote six months exclusive breastfeeding practice among women in Nigeria, the federal government has directed all public institutions and organisations to designate a comfortable place within their establishments to enable nursing mothers to breastfeed their babies. Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate while speaking on the commencement of this year's World Breastfeeding Week in Abuja, said that the government is seeking better ways of encouraging all mother's to breastfeed their babies for at least six months and to continue to practice good nutrition practices for their children. Pate, who spoke to journalists during the formal launch of the FCT Medical Palliatives initiative at the Gwarinpa General Hospital in Abuja, also called on the private sector organisations to

provide places where women can feel comfortable to breastfeed their children while at their workplaces. He said: "Breastfeeding is such a vital low hanging fruit and in the World Breastfeeding Week that just started, we are encouraging all mothers to breastfeed their children for at least six months and to continue to practice good nutrition practices for their children. Breastfeeding is not only a good source of nutrition for the child but also allows that child opportunity to bond with the mother. "It's good for the child, it's good for the mother. It builds the brains of the children. The federal government has directed that all institutions should provide safe places for women to breastfeed their children in the workplaces and we call on the private sector to also do that so that women should feel comfortable to go their workplaces and breastfeed their children, so we can build a healthier nation in the years to come."

Edo 2024: I Don't Need Outlandish Grammar to Tackle Insecurity, Fix Dilapidated Infrastructure, Says Okpebholo

Adibe Emenyonu in Benin-City

Edo State Governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the September 21st, 2024 election, Senator Monday Okpebholo, has said that he doesn't require big grammar to tackle insecurity, provide functional health care, fix dilapidated roads, respect traditional institution and revamp the collapsed educational system in the state if

voted into power. The APC governorship hopeful who made this statement in an apparent reference to his political critics who in a derogatory manner described him as a "mute" candidate, also declared that state urgently need a 'panel beater', to fix deplorable state broken infrastructures and restore the state back to it lost glory. Okpebholo who spoke to

THISDAY in Benin-City, said under his watch his administration will immediately declare a state of emergency on insecurity adding that he doesn't really need a manifesto to understand how to deal with the multi-hydra-headed problems and suffering inflicted on the state by the PDP led government in the state. He also challenged Governor Godwin Obaseki to give account of the huge monthly allocation,

security vote and Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) the state has received in the almost eight years of his administration. He said, "If elected by the special grace of God come September 21st, my job is to do things differently and restore Edo State back to its lost glory. We therefore need a courageous leader that will do things rightly for the benefit of Edo people.

Creative Leap Accelerator Programme Set to Revolutionise Nigeria's Creative Industry

Agnes Ekebuike

In a bold move to harness the nation's creative potential, the Federal Ministry of Art, Culture, and the Creative Economy has unveiled an ambitious plan to position Nigeria as a global leader in the art, culture, and creative sectors. The minister, Hannatu Musawa

made this known on Tuesday, at the flag off of the Creative Leap Accelerator Programme (CLAP), a flagship initiative designed to drive economic growth, foster innovation, and empower creative talents. In a statement by her Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Nneka Ikem Anibeze, Musawa stated that with a vision to contribute \$100

billion to Nigeria's GDP by 2030, CLAP represents a twenty-fold increase from the current state. She emphasised the importance of capacity building, incubation, and collaboration in achieving CLAP's objectives. "CLAP is designed to foster an environment where talent can thrive, ideas can flourish, and new industries

can emerge. Through comprehensive training, mentorship, and resources, we aim to empower our creatives to excel and innovate. "We are committed to providing comprehensive training, mentorship, and resources to our creatives, ensuring that they have the skills and expertise needed to succeed in the global market.

Firm Petitions Sanwo-Olu, IGP Over Demolition of Property, Threat to Life

Wale Igbinatade

The management of Jesenem Iron & Steel Ltd, has petitioned the Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu and the Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, over alleged unlawful demolition of its property, intimidation, threat to life by officials of the Lagos State Ministry of Environment and Water Resources. The firm had in a petition signed by it's lawyer, Mr. Audu Augustine, urged the governor to carry out full scale investigation into allegations of threat to life and abuse of power after the demolition of its property located along Lagos-Ikorodu Road, Majidun area of the state by officials from State Ministry of Environment and Water Resources. A similar petition was also sent to the Inspector General of Police, Egbetokun. The petition was tagged, 'Complaint against wanton destruction and vandalism of property, intimidation,

harassment, assault and threat to life by officials of the Lagos State Ministry of Environment and Water Resources particularly Mr. Durojaye, Mrs. Bakare and Mr. James of Waterfront, an appeal to investigate and bring the perpetrators to justice'. In the petition dated July 30, 2024, the firm alleged that on July 29, 2024, officials from the Ministry of Environment invaded its property with soldiers armed with various weapons and destroyed about 4,000 moulded blocks, opened over 30 bags of cement left on site and poured water on them to ensure that the bags cement are wasted. The petition further stated that officials later returned to the site on Wednesday, July 31, 2024 and further destroyed over 4,500 blocks, opened additional 70 bags of cement and poured water on them and allowed them to congeal. According to the petitioner, a total of 8,000 blocks and 800 bags of cement were destroyed.

Gov Eno to Compensate 5,000 Youths Monthly for Not Joining Protests

Okon Bassey in Uyo

Akwa Ibom State Governor, Umo Eno, has praised the youths in the state for distancing themselves from the nationwide protest thus maintaining the peaceful ambience of the state. In compensating the youths over their action, the governor announced plans by his administration to launch a social welfare programme that will provide monthly support for about 5,000 youths in the state.

Governor Eno made the promise at the August edition of the Monthly Covenant Service, held at the Banquet Hall of Government House, Uyo, tagged 'But They Shall Proceed No Further'. He said by resisting the temptation to join in the protests, Akwa Ibom youths have averted the much anticipated violent outcomes as reported in some other states, and urged them to maintain their resolve throughout the 10 days the protest is scheduled for. The governor assured that the planned

social programme will be unveiled and possibly launched in October 2024, adding that it will accommodate youths yet to be employed across all local government areas in the state. "Let me start by thanking Akwa Ibom youths. They have done extremely well. Let these words get to them that I am very proud of them. I am proud of them for keeping Akwa Ibom safe. "We celebrate all of our youths wherever they are. They did not protest, not because the Police stopped them,

but God spoke to them. I am extremely grateful to our youths for understanding that we can dialogue and get all what we want, and that we can work together as a people. "We will launch a programme that will support about 5,000 youths in Akwa Ibom State monthly. It will go round across the entire local government areas. We should be able to support youths that are not employed to have something that will help them, because they have made us proud.



NNPCL: A CALL FOR CAUTION

1 AGENDA has noted a recent publication attributable to a member, which calls for the resignation of the GCEO of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) and the ACE of the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA). We want to clarify that this statement reflects a personal opinion and not the position of the House of Representatives.

As members of **1 AGENDA**, we wish to state the following unequivocally:

- 1. The GCEO is entitled to a fair hearing, and the House has responsibly constituted a committee to investigate the activities of NNPCL. This is not only right but a constitutional entitlement
- 2. Therefore, any call for resignation at this stage is both unnecessary and premature.
- 3. However, the NNPCL is encouraged to embark on measures that will boost its fortunes and guarantee the country's self sufficiency in oil and gas production.
- 4. We urge the general public to disregard the publication in question and to support President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's efforts to reform the oil and gas benefit of all Nigerians. sector for the

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- 7. Hon. Leko Jafaru Gambo
- 10. Hon. Amobi Godwin Ogah
- 13. Hon. Abdullahi M. Gwarzo
- 16. Hon. Danladi S. Aguye
- 19. Hon. Afuape Afolabi Moruf
- 22. Hon. Aliyu Wakili Boya
- 25. Hon. Alhaji Kabiru Yusuf
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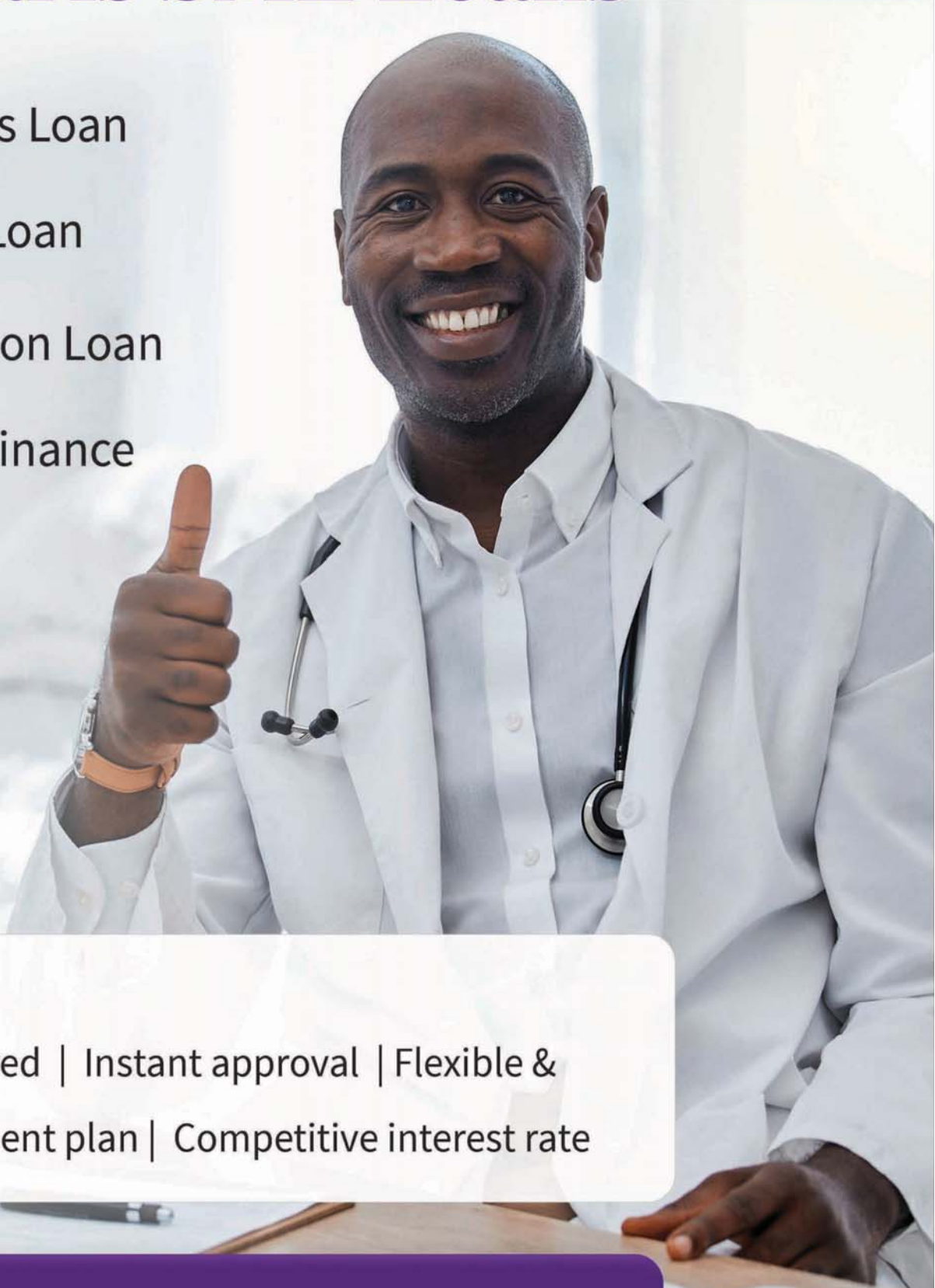
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- 99. Hon. Hashimu Adamu
- 102. Hon. Aliyu Mustapha
- 105. Hon. Usman Banye
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L-R: Group Managing Director, Wetherheads Advertising Group, Mr. Abiodun Iderawunmi; Head of Card, Providus Bank, Mr. Lanre Ogundare; Chairman of Association of Mobile Money and Banking Agents in Nigeria, Lagos chapter, Mr. Olugunwa Ibirogbu; Managing Director of Mango Assets Management, Mr. Ola Sowemimo, and honorary director of EmbassyCard, Mr. Olaleye Popoola, during a media parley and stakeholders' forum of EmbassyCard held in Lagos...recently

Tinubu: We're Executing Bold Reforms to Tackle Multiple Global Economic Shocks

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu yesterday declared that his administration was undertaking bold economic policies to propel the nation's economy out of the downturns occasioned by multiple shocks in the global economy.

He also called for global cooperation among African countries to tackle their shared economic challenges and take advantage of opportunities.

The President who spoke when he declared open the 2024 African Caucus Meeting in Abuja, said, "As a government, we have initiated bold economic reforms aimed at steering our economy away from the downturns caused by multiple shocks in the global economy toward a path of recovery and resilience through significant economic transformation.

"Our reform efforts have been strategically focused on fostering fiscal and monetary efficiency, driving sustained long-term economic growth, and catalysing job creation in alignment with the SDGs' priorities.

"We remain committed to optimising our economic potential, delivering favourable outcomes for our citizens, and ensuring the overall sustainable

development of the regional economy. Our efforts are yielding positive results, with improved macroeconomic stability and increased investment."

He noted that although Africa is grappling with "numerous challenges across economic, humanitarian and social spheres," countries on the continent must take necessary measures to translate opportunities in natural resources and human capital into growth, innovation and collaboration.

Tinubu, who was represented at the event by Vice President Kashim Shettima, said the African Caucus Meeting was an opportunity to brainstorm on the major "challenges and strategies for fostering inclusive growth and sustainable development in Africa."

Established in 1963 to strengthen the voice of African Governors in the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs), the African Caucus chaired by Nigeria's Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun, meets twice annually; first, in the host country of the Chairperson of the Caucus and secondly, at the venue of the Annual Meetings of the IMF and WBG.

The theme of this year's meeting,

'Facilitating Intra-African Trade: Catalyst for Sustainable Economic Growth in Africa', reflects the collective commitment of member countries to moving the continent forward economically.

Delivering the President's address titled, 'A Shared Vision for Africa's Growth', the Vice President outlined ongoing efforts by his administration in Nigeria to address the global economic challenges.

He urged African countries to improve the quality of life for people across the continent by ensuring that democracy, good governance, and economic institutions work together.

Tinubu further drew attention to the need to enhance international tax cooperation to combat illicit financial flows and ensure multinationals contribute fairly to economies on the continent.

Saraki: Tambuwal Didn't Inform Me of His Withdrawal for Atiku in 2023 Presidential Primary

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

More than two years after the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) presidential primary election, former Senate President, Dr. Bukola Saraki, has refuted the claim made by former Governor of Sokoto State, Senator Aminu Tambuwal, that he informed him (Saraki) before withdrawing for former Vice President Atiku Abubakar during the 2022 presidential primary of the party.

The PDP presidential primary election took place inside the velodrome of the National Stadium in Abuja.

In a statement by his Media Office signed by Yusuf Olaniyonu, Saraki while responding to a claim made by Tambuwal in an interview aired on Arise TV programme titled 'Untold Stories With Adesuwa', stated that Tambuwal never informed him that he would withdraw for Atiku.

He said he was also surprised like everybody present at the

PDP presidential convention that Tambuwal returned to the podium to announce his withdrawal after he had addressed the delegates seeking their votes to fly the PDP presidential flag in the 2023 general elections.

The statement reads: "I need to set the record straight. When I saw Tambuwal returning to the podium after he had earlier addressed the delegates to canvas for their votes, I wondered what was happening. His announcement that he had withdrawn from the

race and that the delegates who were supporting him should vote for Alhaji Atiku Abubakar took me by surprise.

"Tambuwal is my friend but he should take responsibility for his decisions and actions. He never discussed withdrawal from the race with me. I never contemplated withdrawing my candidature from the race and had nothing to do with the decision process that led to his withdrawal in favour of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar," Saraki stated

Cleric Commits to Tackling Hunger

Amidst the growing hunger crisis in the country, the Senior Pastor of Christ LivingSpring Apostolic Ministry (CLAM), Dr. Wole Oladiyun, has shared a proposal to address food insecurity in Nigeria by implementing an agricultural model through local governments.

During his sermon, Oladiyun, in a statement, reassured his congregation that God was working to fix Nigeria. While acknowledging the complexity of the nation's challenges, he cautioned that repairing a flawed system takes time. He encouraged Nigerians to remain hopeful, as improvements are imminent.

In his proposal, Oladiyun suggested revamping food security through a local government model. With Nigeria having 774 local government areas, he proposed that the federal government should collaborate with the Africa

Development Bank (AfDB) to initiate a massive food production project in each of these areas.

The cleric recommended allocating a significant amount of land for agriculture in each local government. "This would ensure ample space for farming and agricultural activities across Nigeria."

He also emphasised the need for AfDB to provide funding and support for the project, including the provision of machinery and intensive training for the youth.

To ensure the success and security of the project, Oladiyun suggested that the federal government establish a special community security force in each local government. Additionally, he called for the legislative arm to pass the necessary bills and laws to enable the implementation of this agricultural initiative.

Hunger Protests: Pharmacists Call for Constructive Dialogue

The Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria (PSN) has called for constructive dialogue between the government and the citizens to avert the consequences of violent protests in the country.

The President of PSN, Prof. Cyril Usifoh, who blamed the economic situation in the country on decades of poor economic planning by successive governments, said PSN was concerned that protests may lead to unprecedented violence and

ugly consequences which the Nigerian economy was not primed for.

He appealed to the agitating citizens to shelve the demonstration and embrace dialogue as "protests can be vulnerable to becoming a consuming evil of unimaginable destructive magnitude."

PSN said that although "Nigerians have been subjected to the extremes of deprivations and sufferings albeit in unprecedented dimensions in the

last few months, it calls for caution to avoid more economic setbacks that may result from the violent actions of the protesters."

Usifoh said it could be argued that economic hardship appears to be a global phenomenon, but that Nigeria's situation appears self-inflicted due to decades of poor economic management.

"Nigerians have been subjected to the extremes of deprivations and sufferings albeit in unprecedented

dimensions in the last few months. It has been argued by some schools of thought that Nigeria cannot be an exemption because this hardship appears to be a global phenomenon. But the reality about Nigeria remains that we are paying for defective planning of over 60 years of nationhood which has manifested in hardship like never before within the short life of this incumbent administration," he said.

Be Good Ambassadors of Your Alma Mater, Proprietress Charges De-Gloryland College Graduands

Agnes Ekebuike

The Proprietress of the De-Gloryland College, Ejigbo, Lagos, Mrs. Maryann Igbinovia, has charged the set of 2024 graduands to be good ambassadors of the school as they continue their educational pursuits in life.

Mrs. Igbinovia, who gave the charge during the graduation ceremony of the

set of 2024 held at the Multipurpose Hall of the school, implored the graduands to use the exposure, creativity and the leadership skills you have acquired from the school to lead their society responsibly.

The Proprietress, whose speech was delivered by the Director of Gloryland Schools, Mrs. Deborah Osayonwanbo, thanked parents of the graduands for their support over the years.

"To our outgoing students, I say congratulations to you all for this remarkable progress in your lives. You are the prospective leaders of the society and hope of our great school. For that, you cannot afford to fail us. It is our sincere hope that the exposure, creativity and the leadership skills you have acquired will reinforce you to be good ambassadors of our great school

by leading the society responsibly.

"It will be our great delight and utmost pride to hear good news from you in the nearest future. To achieve this, my fervent advice for you is: "Never forget your root" which is your origin of inspiration and nurturing. It is an undeniable fact that our experiences, whether home or school, reflect who we are and who we shall become.

ACPN Celebrates Breakthrough in Fake Drugs Control

The prevalence of fake and substandard medicines in the country would soon be a thing of the past following the introduction of key control mechanisms in the nation's drug distribution system.

The immediate past National Chairman of the Association of Community Pharmacists of Nigeria (ACPN), Mr. Adewale Oladigbolu, who disclosed this during his valedictory speech at the 43rd Annual

International Scientific Conference of ACPN, said that the initiatives were part of the association's development scheme including online Supply Chain Coordination System for the distribution of medicines in Nigeria.

While reeling out achievement of his regime, Oladigbolu explained that the programmes which were part of his administration's agenda: 'Achieving the Dream', also included Community

Pharmacy Expansion Scheme aimed at planting community pharmacies in every state, especially in under-served areas.

He further explained that the scheme was planned in the interest of those who live in areas without the services of community pharmacists and are in danger of substandard and fake medicines.

According to him, as of September 2021 close to 70 per cent of local

government areas in Nigeria did not have a community pharmacy, but through his regime's pragmatic effort, the statistics are changing.

He disclosed that Kano and Kwara states branches of the association have also commenced the setting up of pharmacies in under-served and under-privileged areas, adding that two states have benefited from the system and financial support from

the national secretariat of ACPN.

According to him, the Clean Medicines Initiatives was aimed to revive the collapsed rational drug distribution system in Nigeria which has resulted in the creation of online supply chain coordination for the distribution of medicines in the country (www.phamart.ng). "Essentially this offers transparency and clean distribution of medicines in Nigeria with avoidance

of substandard and fake medicines.

He announced the inauguration of the first Pharm-Care Centre in the country recently in Afijio LGA of in Oyo State, adding that "with the strong support of Pharmacy Council of Nigeria (PCN), the Pharmaceutical Society of Nigeria (PSN), ACPN secured a memorandum of partnership with the National Primary Health Care Development Agency in 2021.

INSIGHT



Protest against hunger...

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.

Resolving Issues in the Nigerian Legal System

The Nigerian Legal System is marred with various issues and difficulties, which are due to bad leadership, inadequate financing, and lack of judicial/quasi-judicial personnel or trained personnel and legal practitioners.

One major problem of the Nigerian Legal System is the delay in court proceedings and the backlog of cases. This problem strains everyone involved in litigation, from the Lawyers, Judges, Litigants, and even Court Officials. The problem stems from having a limited number of Judges, Courts, and Judicial workers when you bear in mind the number of cases filed in court on a daily basis.

Implementing an electronic case filing system and digitizing court processes can speed up case management and reduce delays in legal proceedings, judgments, and execution of judgments. The Lagos State High Court, Magistrate Court, and the National Industrial Court have taken this initiative, however, there is a need for every court nationwide to adopt same. Even with the available e-filing systems, there is still room for improvement as it relates to virtual hearings, and service of all court processes digitally without recourse to an order for substituted service.

Also, Lawyers and other Judicial personnel should be trained on utilizing these electronic tools for efficacy, more staff should be employed. Doing this will definitely not only solve a problem in the legal system but will resonate with the common man and grow the confidence of Nigerians in the Judiciary as an independent body that can serve justice within the shortest possible time. Remember the popular saying that justice delayed is justice denied.

Access to justice is also a major problem faced by the Nigerian Legal System, as many Nigerians have limited access to legal services. This is because of the high rate of illiteracy among the Nigerian populace. The majority of Nigerians do not even understand something as simple as how to go about contacting

a Lawyer or reaching out to agencies/NGOs whose objectives are to help those seeking justice.

Developing a digital platform that connects individuals with pro bono lawyers or legal aid services can help improve access to justice in Nigeria. The platform can either be powered by AI or not. This platform will seamlessly help people seek justice with the right prompts.

Enhancing transparency in the legal process is crucial, especially in a society that is corrupt as ours. Most legal practitioners face the issue of having to make extra financial commitments to court officials even after paying official rates. Court administrators are also faced with the headache of tracking some of the fees paid into court.

Implementing blockchain technology for recording and tracking legal transactions can ensure data integrity and transparency thereby solving this problem.

Okoi Edward Onen, Lagos

Agony of Federal Roads in Edo

I must express the frustrations of Edo people over the neglect and condition of federal roads across the state, and the absence of political will to fix them over nine years of the APC- led federal government. All federal roads in Edo have collapsed. Edo 2024 governorship election is crucial to vote out APC in 2027 and the process will start from September 21 in Edo State. The ongoing protest to end bad governance in Nigeria is a protest against APC in Edo State. The dilapidated expressways have dealt a deadly blow on the markets across Edo State, and Governor Godwin Obaseki had on several occasions engaged topnotch construction firms to do some palliative works and make the carriageways passable. Governor Obaseki administration has created an alternate road from Benin to Auchi since the federal government

could not fix its roads to ensure smooth movement of goods and services across the state. Governor Obaseki wrote a letter to federal government requesting for all federal roads in Edo State to be handed over to Edo State government for rehabilitation under former President Buhari but the federal government refused. Governor Obaseki has completed the Sobe-Saboginda road project which today is transforming Edo's infrastructure. Today Benin-Ekpoma-Auchi will take motorists seven hours but Benin-Sobe-Saboginda-Auchi road will take motorists less than two hours. Today construction work is being carried out by Edo State government on Benin-Abraka road which is a federal road. We know where to drop our votes in September.

Inwalomhe Donald, inwalomhe.donald@yahoo.com

One Brave Soul Returns Home

Seeing the release of numerous prisoners including Evan Gershkovich reminds us how important our freedom is and the need to protect it. The specific case of Evan Gershkovich is a warning about press freedoms too. No matter what he was charged with, the reality was he was imprisoned for his journalism work, his capacity to tell us the truth and hopefully we will still be able to hear him.

The world will be a better place when there is nothing to warn us about, but until then we need the bravery of Evan and many others, and to remember those who have lost their lives warning us. There have been too many lost to us.

Dennis Fitzgerald, Melbourne, Australia

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Monday, 29th July 2024

OUR CALL ON GOVERNMENT AND APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE OF NIGERIA ON THE PLANNED NATIONWIDE PROTEST

1. We have consistently and in no unclear terms, called Government's attention to the sufferings of the people of this country and the need for Government to take clear and decisive steps to revamp the economy and get Nigerians out of hunger and poverty, caused largely by incidents of the insecurity across the country. The current state of the nation was engendered and sustained by corruption in its different forms and shades, in both public and private sectors. While this cannot be solely blamed on the current administration, we had on the subject of National Security, vide my letter of 12 June 2023 to President Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, called the attention of this administration to the need for informed investments in the security sector of this country. This was absolutely necessary, because of the direct impact of insecurity on the economy and the prosperity of our people. We impressed upon the President as follows:

"Your administration must neither be afraid nor ashamed to make the right investments in the security of this country. What Nigerians require is a well thought-out, informed, all-inclusive and purposeful intervention, with as much information made available to the public, to the extent permitted within the parlance, so as to reassure Nigerians of the sincere commitment of government in the area of security. This is necessary to build back the confidence we individually and collectively need as a people. Government must be transparent; the people must, by deliberate and conscious investment in manpower development and equipment purchase/procurement, be taken out of the state of fear, which decades of bloodshed and flourishing criminal activities have plunged the country into; the psyche of Nigerians must be recovered from the place of despair and despondency! The right people must be given the task of implementing security plans and policies. To achieve this, respect for professionalism must be the primary consideration in all deployments to be made by your administration. We in the NBA would hold Your Excellency accountable to your commitment to prioritise security. As rightly affirmed by Your Excellency "neither prosperity nor justice can prevail amidst insecurity and violence." There is no denying that our present-day experience is one that has hampered the prevalence of prosperity and justice in many respects."

2. We also addressed the issue of the economy, where we referred to the withdrawal of fuel of subsidy, (which was commended by many experts as a bold, necessary, and desirable decision), and called on the President to ensure that the sufferings or sacrifices of Nigerians count for something. we said:

"With the level of infrastructural deficits in many respects and the reliance on petroleum products as the primary source of power for most businesses, entrepreneurs and private users, there is the urgent need to put in place policies that will help cushion the effect of this otherwise laudable decision before its positive impact will begin to be felt or noticed within our socio-economic space. We note Your Excellency's call on Nigerians to make sacrifices and bear the pains of subsidy removal with the assurance that, "the government I lead will repay you through massive investment in transportation infrastructure, education, regular power supply, healthcare and other public utilities that will improve the quality of lives". This assurance, offers a genuine basis for the sacrifices expected of Nigerians and the NBA shall on behalf of Nigerians, watch out for the fulfilment of this covenant. Your Excellency, the pains and suffering of our people must never be taken for granted; it must count for something."

3. Further to the above, in a State of the Nation Address delivered on the 14 February 2024, we, amongst other things, made observations and recommendations to Mr President on the economy thus:

"It is said that Nigeria has the largest economy in Africa. There is an expanding market in all economic sectors including manufacturing, financial, communications, technology and service and entertainment sectors. Our reality today tells a different story. Our economy is dwindling, the Naira is on a free fall, prices of food stuff have skyrocketed, our future economic outlook seems to be on the negative trend. Inconsistent economic policies have largely led to weakened economic fundamentals including sluggish economic growth. The direct result of these is the low standard of living, alarming rate of poverty, high unemployment rate and the wide disparity in the socio-economic status of the Nigerian population. It would not be surprising given this current reality if the number of Nigerians living in extreme poverty has increased. The state of insecurity has equally impacted negatively on food sufficiency and food security as a nation. Those who rely on farming as their sole means of livelihood, have been thrown into abject poverty, because they no longer can go to their farms. While this administration may argue that it is only 7 months into office and it is not the cause of present-day experience, the fact remains that it is this government that has the responsibility of stemming this negative tide. As a government that prides itself with the credentials of Mr President who revolutionized and transformed the economic fortunes of Lagos State (which is not in doubt) and other egg-heads who have excelled as economic experts, it would be disappointing and embarrassingly so, if this administration, did not anticipate this situation as a fall out of the previous administrations and made provisions for how to exit this economic quagmire. Nigerians need to know, as we all are entitled to, in concrete terms, the plans this administration has to bring about the changes that will revamp our economy. It is the engagement with government that educates and informs Nigerians of the strategies for the recovery of our economy that will give Nigerians the hope to continue to persevere and remain resilient as we have always been. Not to do so, will cause a complete loss of confidence in the ability of this administration to truly deliver on the renewed hope agenda, and would be recorded as a monumental failure on the part of Government. President Tinubu must take seriously the cries of 'we are hungry' by Nigerians across ethnic and religious lines."

Going forward, we recommend that the Government must, as a matter of urgency, announce deadlines for specific fundamental economic steps to be taken towards economic recovery. This will enable all stakeholders to assess the performance of government in regard promises it has made and become a basis to hold government accountable to the people. Secondly, the Tinubu administration must show demonstrably a commitment to diversification of the economy. There is so much talk by Ministers on what the government wants to do in the areas of agriculture and solid minerals. It is time to back up talking with concrete deliverables.

Thirdly, we need to deal with our security challenges. As earlier stated, we simply cannot dream of economic growth amid rampant insecurity. Economic activities nationwide are presently grinding to a halt because of the threat of bandits, terrorists, and criminals."

4. We, had on the same date, 14 February 2024, written a letter to Mr. President, wherein we made observations on the state of insecurity in the country as follows:

"It is no longer news that Nigeria, across its length and breadth is bedevilled by challenges of insecurity in alarming proportions. From the ravaging activities of bandits, terrorists, to the scourge of kidnapping for ransom and other forms of criminal activities. Bloodshed have become a daily occurrence, and the news of these dastardly incidents pervade the airwaves and psyche of Nigerians, sending shock and fear to the populace. These criminal activities have left many Nigerians homeless, many families and businesses completely destroyed and these incidents, rather than abate are clearly on the rise. From the kidnap of pupils and their teachers in Ekiti to the continued onslaught on the people in the Northwestern states, the killings and massacre in Plateau, Benue, Kogi, Kwara, the destruction of electricity infrastructure in Bauchi; the murders in Anambra, Imo, Enugu and other parts of the country, not excepting the Federal Capital Territory – the seat of the government of the federation. There is literally no part of the country that is not enmeshed in one form of insecurity challenge or the other."

5. By the turn of the year, precisely on 12 June 2024, as part of the 2024 Democracy Day celebrations, we issued a statement where we, again, called Government's attention to the challenges in the economy and the plight of the people. This is what we said:

"There is no gainsaying that Nigerians are passing through hardship on account of the mismanagement of our resources by successive administrations in this Country. Notwithstanding, it is the responsibility of this Government led by President to proffer solutions to our challenges. After all, government is a continuum and one of the governance and political credit which accrued to the President from his days as Governor of Lagos State, is his ability to assemble men and women with the intellectual sagacity and experience, to address challenges and turn around fortunes for the benefit of the people. This was done in Lagos State and there is considerable high expectation that, it will be replicated across Nigeria. While, as many have said, and I do not have a basis to disagree that, it may be too early to fairly assess the performance of this government given the state of the nation at the time it took over, it is doubtful that some of the appointees of Mr President have keyed into, or do understand the vision of this administration founded on the renewed hope agenda."

There is need for more energy, focus and purposefulness to be injected in certain areas of this administration; to compliment the work and efforts from other quarters to achieve a holistic delivery of the benefits this administration intends for Nigerians. There is need for Government to self-evaluate and be bold about taking decisions in favour of productivity in governance for the benefit of the people.

It is on record that tough, bold and apparently unavoidable decisions have been taken by this administration, with the attendant consequences on the living standard of many Nigerians. It is important that more interventions are made to assuage the sufferings of the people, and this will greatly help in managing the expectations of Nigerians and assure the citizenry current hardship is only temporary. Government actions must elicit the confidence that, sooner than later, the sufferings will cease, as that is the only way to make the sacrifices worth the while. Nigerians should be able to see light at the end of the tunnel, and I am confident that with the right deployment of resources (human and material), under a purposeful supervision, this is achievable. I will conclude on this by reminding Mr President that exactly a year ago, he assured Nigerians that "the government I lead will repay you through massive investment in transportation infrastructure, education, regular power supply, healthcare and other public utilities that will improve the quality of lives." Nigerians are waiting and the expectations are high!"



6. It is clear from the foregoing that, not only is the NBA aware of the plight of the people, particularly by reason of its large network of 130 branches across the country, we have also consistently spoken to the issues and called Government's attention to the need for urgent intervention in line with our responsibility to hold Government accountable on behalf of the people. We have also, engaged with government officials at various levels, on the need to focus on people-driven initiatives and policies.
7. Therefore, given the fact that the insecurity and the economic hardship do not appear to be abating, it is not difficult to see that the call for the nationwide protest, rightly or wrongly, and the seeming heed to the call by some Nigerians, is simply a reaction to the prevailing hardship across the country. Also, the fact that Nigerians are largely unaware of efforts by government, to salvage the situation, has no doubt, fueled the dissatisfaction of the people against government at all levels.
8. As earlier noted, Nigerians need to be convinced of the sincerity of Government in taking us out of this quagmire. The efforts by Government in dealing with the present economic hardship must be communicated to Nigerians at all levels in simple terms, accompanied by tangible interventions that will provide the necessary succour to alleviate our sufferings in the immediate, while giving us reasons upon which to place our hopes and general aspirations in the long term, for improved welfare and standard of living. Nigerians are a resilient and hardworking people, who deserve the respect of their leaders. Understanding and true followership need to be reciprocated with purposeful leadership; Government has the responsibility of translating its purposefulness and sincerity into concrete benefits to the people.
9. While in the few times that I had the opportunity of engaging with Mr. President, his sincerity in dealing with the affairs of this nation and achieving amongst others, his promise to take majority of Nigerians from poverty to prosperity is quite palpable. It is however doubtful if there is a robust understanding or alignment by some of Mr President's appointees with this noble resolve, towards achieving the renewed hope agenda.
10. It is therefore important that Mr President undertakes an evaluation of the performance of his appointees with the view to injecting more energy into the administration and close all the loopholes that would not allow the sincerity of Mr President to translate into tangible benefits to all Nigerians. This, for me, is one way we can successfully deal with these issues, and it is with, in the words of Mr. President "a change of mind, a change of attitude and a change of approach to governance." We all, as Nigerians, must quit playing politics with the lives and welfare of the people. We must resort to measures devoid of any political, ethnic, religious, regional, and other primordial sentiments in order to guarantee our exit from the myriads of challenges that we now deal with as a people.
11. In our letter to the President on 14 February 2024 mentioned above, we did observe that:
- "Some Nigerians have lost, and many more are fast losing confidence in the ability of the Federal Government to deal with the security situation in Nigeria. At this time, when public confidence in the sincerity of government in dealing with insecurity is at its lowest ebb, I strongly recommend a government/people engagement, that will at the minimum, inform the people (to the extent that security protocol may allow) about what is being done to secure the nation. Alternatively, let there be clear indicators that, indeed, government is sincerely paying attention to the plight of the people and is committed to its constitutional responsibility of providing security for the lives and properties of Nigerians.*
- Unfortunately, however, government posturing appears to be far from this expectation. When for instance, in the face of these challenges and daily experiences of Nigerians, the National Assembly embarks on projects for their personal welfare, involving humongous amounts of money and the requests are indulged by the Executive, that is not a posture that will give Nigerians any hope. ..."*
12. The members of the three arms of Government, must be mindful of their conducts and ensure they do only such things that will be consistent with the sincerity of Government to deliver its programs and policies for the benefit of the people. There must not be any posturing that will appear to insult the sensibilities of Nigerians, giving our current economic realities.
- My Appeal to the Protesters**
13. I must begin by making it clear that, this is not about "protesters" versus "non-protesters," it is about our dear country Nigeria, and no more – there cannot be any interest greater than Nigeria. Truth is, we all are protesters in one way or the other. It is how we protest and where we express our protests that differ from person to person, or from one group of persons to the other. So, in essence, it is about all of us. I have also not set out to talk about the legality or otherwise of the planned protest. While the importance of conducting ourselves in a lawful and orderly manner cannot be overstated – representing our respect for the supremacy of the rule of law, my appeal is to our collective duty as Nigerians, to see to the peace and order in our country which is necessary to guarantee its existence. We must all remember that our individual and collective aspirations can only be realised if Nigeria remains in existence. Therefore, dissatisfied as we may be with the state of affairs, we must find reasons to exercise restraint/caution, by avoiding anything that could cost us our dear Country. We need to have Nigeria in place before we can fix the anomalies and challenges that confront us on a daily basis – the leadership, the economy, security, and our general wellbeing, are only relevant when we remain an entity – one indissoluble and indivisible Nigeria.
14. As I indicated earlier, it is not in doubt that there is hunger in the land. The fear of insecurity has caused many to flee their homes and are, therefore, unable to cultivate their farmlands to feed, trade or practice their occupations. They have been thrown into misery and penury. Many Nigerians have lost their sense of worth, are living in dehumanizing conditions and human dignity is no longer what they long for, but survival. We have for these and many other reasons, become vulnerable. While not discounting any of our distasteful experiences, this is the time we must, for the sake of Nigeria, try very hard to hold back from any act or omission that could have a devastating effect on our existence as a Nation.
15. Only few months ago, we experienced a strike action that has cost Nigeria a fortune; the loss we suffered was colossal and it is our common loss. While that strike may have been resorted to in order to get the Government's attention on the matters being discussed at the time, we did not have to inflict such heinous injury or damage to our nation's economy just to get Government's attention. At the end, our situation became worse than what it was before the strike, thus adding to our challenges as Government's ability to deal with those issues was further diminished, by reason of the negative impact of the strike on the economy.
16. According to economists and financial analysts, strikes (as well as protests) come with considerable adverse economic consequences, including but not limited to work stoppages, reduced production related to lost workdays, stalled infrastructure projects, and delayed service delivery, often amounting to huge financial losses. It has been estimated that the cost of a one-day strike in Nigeria can be as high as 100 million dollars. Social unrests and the attendant fear have severe long-term effects, such as decline in investment. They send the wrong signals to foreign investors thus resulting in capital flight. This affects foreign exchange as it puts undue pressure on our currency, thereby worsening an already bad economic situation.

17. At this time, when we are all burdened and distressed by the hardship in the country, our vulnerability is heightened and suggestions which would ordinarily be dismissed with a wave of the hand as unreasonable and non-beneficial, begins to get attractive. Difficult as it is, this is the time to sit back and allow the voice of reason to prevail. The voices we hear and hearken to will determine our actions/reactions and the consequences therefrom. We must be careful about those we lend our ears to. Not everyone who speaks to the issues we are dealing with does so for altruistic purposes. Many have their selfish pursuits, while some others are simply waiting to cash in on the protest to unleash mayhem on the people, our properties, and the country as a whole. Unknowingly, some of us have become ready tools in the hands of these detractors with sinister motives, who do not mind the collapse of our nation.
18. We will all recall that prior to the 2015 elections, prediction from the West was that the 2015 elections were not going to hold, and that Nigeria was going to plunge into civil a war and disintegrate. This caused many to sell their properties and flee the country. To the Glory of God, we defied that evil prophesy, went on to hold elections and remained indissoluble and indivisible. We still stand as a nation to the shame and disgrace of our detractors. In October 2022, (less than two years now), Nigerians were alarmed by the threats of a possible break up. Prophets of doom were at it again! They predicted that Nigeria would not survive to see the conduct of the 2023 general elections and suddenly, we saw foreign nationals close down their embassies and were evacuated out of the country. Again, to the Glory of God, we conducted the elections, we did not disintegrate, and we are standing as a nation. In a statement issued on the 14 of March 2023, we observed as follows:

"With all the emotions surrounding the general elections, particularly the Presidential elections, I quite understand how quickly one may forget how far we have come as a country in our journey towards a more perfect electoral process. We are not where we should be, but we definitely have made some progress. Needless to recount the human and material losses we suffered as aftermaths of previous general elections; the fear of disintegration as a nation and even recently; the "prophecy" of doom which saw many, if not all, foreign nationals evacuated out of Nigeria by their respective governments; they moved out with their pets (dogs and cats) signifying lack of hope and confidence in our survival and continued existence as a people.

The movement by the foreign nationals out of Nigeria was sudden, almost spontaneous, created a terrible sense of emergency, and heightened concerns/fears about the security and stability of this nation. But these same nationals sneaked back into Nigeria. There was no drama when they came back; they joined in monitoring/observing the elections that were not to hold, were we to go by that prophecy of doom. When whatever made foreign nationals to scamper out of Nigeria in October 2022 either ceased to be or was overcome, we were not informed. We also, at least speaking for myself, do not know what caused the anxiety that was responsible for that exodus. Whatever that was, we weathered the storm.

That we are here today not only thinking about the possibility of the conduct of the elections, but that Presidential and National Assembly elections have actually held, is in itself one of the greatest successes recorded by us as a nation. The level of cynicism and suspicion about the holding of the elections was so palpable that many Nigerians either contemplated moving their families out of Nigeria or already did so. The situation became so bad that insinuations of military takeover were so rife which necessitated the spokesperson of the Defence Headquarters, Brigadier General Tukur Gusau, to make a public statement and reassure Nigerians that the Nigerian Armed Forces has no intention, desire, and/or plans to do such an uncivilized, unpatriotic, unlawful and unconstitutional act."

19. Without trivialising the seriousness of our challenges and experiences and the corresponding right of the people to express their dissatisfaction with the current state of the affairs, I would be complacent to think or assume that our detractors and naysayers may not either be interested in the planned protest or are directly instigating and encouraging the same.
20. It is against this background, that I most humbly appeal to Nigerians, particularly, those that have decided to embark on the planned street protest to have a rethink and take a second look at what could be the possible outcome of embarking on such exercise to our security, economy, and existence. Our past experiences with mass protest are that they are usually hijacked by unscrupulous elements who use the opportunity to commit heinous crimes and thus turn an otherwise peaceful protest into a riot. Whatever we are going through right now, cannot be compared to the experience of a civil unrest and the chaos that could ensue therefrom. Needless to mention nations that are currently going through wars with the attendant carnage and destructions. We do not even want to imagine what the experience would be, and we must forbid it.
21. My humble call and appeal, therefore, to both Government, the organisers and/or proponents and supporters of the planned protest, is to call off the protest, come together for a frank and sincere discussion on what must be done to immediately begin to turn around the plight of the people for good. Mechanisms should be put in place for government/people engagement on a regular periodic basis. Timelines for certain specific actions should be put in place and implemented as the circumstances dictate. We call on members of the National and State Houses of Assembly to immediately engage with their constituents based on the plans of Government at the federal and subnational levels to address the demands of the people. We further recommend that a National Security Summit be convened, where serving and retired military, police, intelligence, and other law enforcement officers will assemble to reexamine our security situation, proffer workable solutions and implementation strategies. Traditional institutions and religious leaders should be co-opted and given specific tasks in this regard. Civil society organisations should be engaged at all levels of the proposed dialogue and in the monitoring of the implementation of the decisions that may be reached.

22. God bless the good and hardworking people of Nigeria,
God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Yakubu Chonoko Miakyau, OON, SAN
PRESIDENT

NATIONAL OFFICERS:

Yakubu Chonoko Miakyau, OON, SAN President

Adesina Adegbite, FICMC, General Secretary; Linda R. Bala (Mrs), 1st Vice President; Chukwuemeka Clement Ugo, 2nd Vice President; Amanda Ego Demechi-Asagba, 3rd Vice President; Caroline Ladidi Anze-Bishop, Treasurer; Chinyere Gladys Obasi, Welfare Secretary; Akorede Habeeb Lawal, Publicity Secretary; Daniel K. Kip, Assistant Secretary; Charles Ajiboye, FICMC, FCAI, ACIS Assistant Publicity Secretary

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SHOWBIZFLAIR

Onyeka Onwenu Exits in Blaze of Glory

Ferdinand Ekechukwu and Tosin Clegg

Year: 2011 and the venue was Eko Hotel and Suits. The event was the 40th birthday celebration of Ifeanyi Ubah, CEO of Capital Oil and Gas. Sammy Okposo performed alongside the inimitable Onyeka Onwenu. Incidentally, today, all three notable personalities above-mentioned have all passed on! That is the nature of life, so transient. The latest being the legendary Onyeka Onwenu.

In the wake of her demise, floods of heartfelt tributes from across the country and beyond have continued to pour in for the late iconic singer, songwriter, actor, aged 72.

Waves of emotion and nostalgia have taken cause, eliciting affectionate comments on her life and times. Onwenu has a special place across generations who grew up listening to her heartwarming music. A songstress like no other, Onwenu, passed on Tuesday night.

Onwenu, graced her friend's birthday party when she took to the stage to perform. She reportedly collapsed following her performance at the birthday celebration of Stella Okoli, owner of Emzor Pharmaceuticals. She was subsequently pronounced dead at a hospital in Victoria Island. That appearance, in a shocking turn of event, sadly, marked her last set on earth. Nigeria's creative community is still in grief, grappling with the reality of her death.

Shortly after the news of her death broke, social media channels and news platforms were engulfed with posts and comments, many wishing the news turn out false.

Soon, videos of her supposed last performance went viral, showing the 'One Love' crooner serenading guests, including Mr. Peter Obi, Dr. Alex Otti of Abia State, and other notable faces at the event.

One particular clip captured her getting acknowledged by Obi. Of interest to many was how vibrant she was while performing. Her elegance defied her age as she moved about superbly gesturing at the birthday guests. On the night of her death at the 80th birthday ceremony which took place that fateful Tuesday 30th of July, Onwenu shone with brilliance.

A statement from the sons of the late singer, Abraham and Tijani Ogunlende, would later confirm the incident, noting that she was rushed to a hospital after a performance, where doctors made every attempt to save her life, while acknowledging those who were with her during her last moments.

They said: "It is with heavy hearts that I and my brother wish to announce the passing of our mother, the much-loved Onyeka Onwenu. She passed away last night, Tuesday, July 30 2024, in Lagos Nigeria. She was rushed to the hospital after an amazing last performance, where doctors made every effort to save her life... sadly she passed."

Describing her as a national treasure, an icon and a legend, who inspired multiple generations of Nigerians, and people around the world with her music, acting, philanthropy and humanitarian efforts, the statement added that "She is greatly loved and missed."

"We would like to extend our thanks to those who were with her in her final moments. Specifically, we are deeply grateful to Mr. Peter Obi, Mr. and Mrs. John Momoh and Mr. and Mrs. Okonkwo as well as Messrs Ajayi and Mr. Okpara all of whom were with her during her last moments.

"Governor Alex Otti joined to condole us soon after her passage. We are also appreciative of Reddington Hospital and all their staff for their efforts. As we take the time to make the necessary plans, we would like you all to take the time to remember her life, the contributions she made and the impact she made on so many lives, including ours."

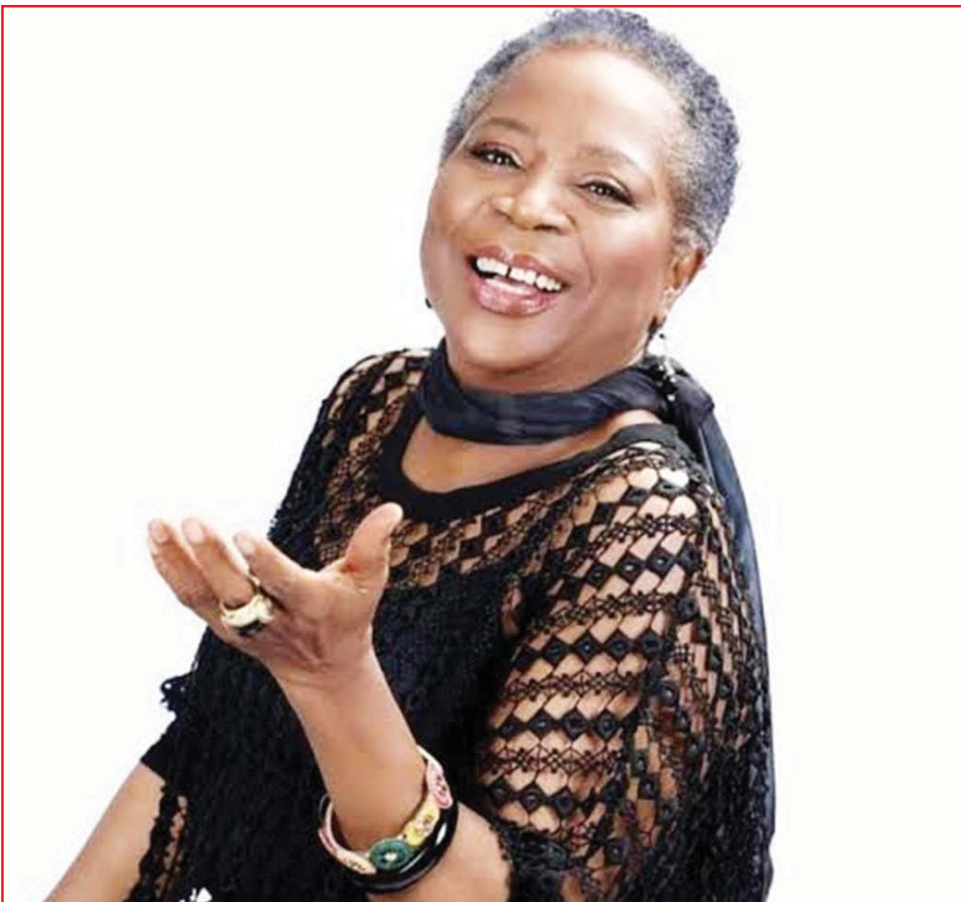
The much loved Onyeka Onwenu, whose music ruled the airwaves in the 1980s and beyond, is described as one with many caps. As fresh Mass Communication graduate from an American university, she not only excelled in her profession but became a music star with many hit songs.

Onwenu, born on May 31, 1952, was a multifaceted artist whose career spanned over four decades. She was not only a renowned singer and songwriter but also an actress, journalist, and politician.

In a reflection shared three years ago, the late Nigerian singer had revealed her wishes for how she would like to be remembered and buried. The music diva, known for her powerful voice and activism, had written "Do it quickly, quietly and privately," in an opinion piece in 2021.

She had emphasised that her burial should be devoid of unnecessary fanfare.

"Celebrate me with prayers, lunch or dinner afterwards. Share some jokes about me and laugh.



Onwenu



Onwenu's last appearance with guests...

Make merriment and then go about your business. If my friends want to celebrate me, they should do so while I am alive.

"So that I can enjoy it with them, not when I am gone and have no idea about this. That is me Onyeka Onwenu," she had said.

In that piece, Onwenu also reflected on broader cultural practices, frowning at the lavish display of wealth often seen at Nigerian funeral ceremonies.

"I am very uncomfortable with the lavish display of wealth on any occasion, especially in a time of hardship and lack for most others," she had remarked, calling for more modest and meaningful ways to honour the dead.

Renowned for her evergreen songs, and often referred to by the Nigerian press as the "Elegant Stallion," she held various influential roles throughout her career. "Some people have said so many things about me without meeting me. However, I have learnt to be myself and be comfortable in my own skin.

"They said I was everywhere singing, acting, getting involved in politics, and now, I am even writing. I will continue to do what God wants me to do," Onwenu, had said at the unveiling of her book "My Father's Daughter," in 2022, as she took newshounds and invitees into her world.

In 1984, she wrote and presented the internationally acclaimed BBC/NTA documentary 'Nigeria: A Squandering of Riches'. Her piece was turned into a film about corruption in Nigeria, as well as the intractable Niger Delta agitation for resource control and campaign against environmental degradation in the oil-rich region of Nigeria.

Remarkably on a number of projects, Onwenu, sometime in March, 2024, had revealed she was

working on producing a film that would delve into her experiences which span decades within the music industry. She had expressed eagerness to share her firsthand account of the evolution of Nigerian music.

In addition to the film project, Onwenu discussed her efforts to release her classic songs through collaboration with emerging artistes, promising fans a compilation of rebranded tracks later in the year.

When you hear or remember evergreen songs such as Iyogogo, Ekwe, You and I, Wait For Me featuring King Sunny Ade and One Love, her name comes to mind which resonates with a unique vocal style and a captivating lyrical delivery

A versatile artist, her contributions to the Nigerian music scene is one of admiration and an appreciation of how her lyrical impact was for social change, national unity and pride. Sequel to her transition to gospel music in the 90s she was a secular artist and had her songs centered around health, peace and mutual coexistence, respect for women's rights, and the plight of children.

Over the years her music served as a powerful voice, using her platform to continue to raise awareness and inspire change. Her seamless blend of artistry and activism earned her the love of many as her legacies would continue to influence and inspire the future generations.

An active figure, Onwenu served as the Chairperson of the Imo State Council for Arts and Culture and was later appointed as the Executive Director of the National Centre for Women Development in 2013. Her activism extended to advocating for artists' rights, notably confronting NTA over unpaid royalties in 2000.

In recognition of her contribution to music and arts

in Nigeria, she has been celebrated by professionals like Mahmood Ali-Balogun, Laolu Akins, Charles O'Tudor, and former PMAN president Tony Okoroji among others in the creative industry in Nigeria.

Beyond music, Onwenu also made her mark in Nollywood, earning acclaim for roles in films like Widow's Cot, Half of a Yellow Sun and the Netflix first Nollywood Original, Lionheart in 2018.

Her first movie role she played Joke, a childless woman who adopts an abandoned baby in Zik Zulu Okafor's Nightmare. She featured in numerous Nollywood movies, and in 2006 she won the Africa Movie Academy Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role for her performance in the movie "Widow's Cot".

She was also nominated that same year for Africa Movie Academy Award for "Best Actress in a Leading Role" in the movie "Rising Moon". It was indeed a shock as many were beyond emotional as they digested and processed the news of her death.

Her death is indeed a big blow to the Nigerian music industry but her legacy and impact embedded in her music remains evergreen on the hearts of many. The fact that she bowed out, engaging in the very craft she adores, which fundamentally transformed her life has given solace to many.

Interestingly, noteworthy is a post which emerged following the news of her death, titled, "Reflections on Onyeka Onwenu, the 'Elegant Stallion'". The post claimed details of how she got branded the 'Elegant Stallion' by a renowned entertainment journalist, Azuka Jekose.

He wrote: Today, Nigeria mourns the loss of a beloved creative talent, Onyeka Onwenu. Rather than focusing on her passing, I'd like to share a personal reflection on how I came to brand her as the "Elegant Stallion." In the 1980s, Onyeka was Nigeria's beloved music diva and broadcaster.

"Her success in music and pop culture paved the way for her entry into movies when Nollywood exploded in the 1990s. Her iconic nickname, "Elegant Stallion," was born out of entertainment journalism and became a brand she proudly identified with until her death.

"In 1987, I had the privilege of covering a Music Against Apartheid tour in Southern Africa, featuring Onyeka, late Sonny Okosuns, and Christie Essien-Igbokwe. As the entertainment editor of The Punch, I was invited to be the MC for the sold-out concert at Rufaro Stadium in Harare, Zimbabwe.

"Sometimes in 1987, a young Zimbabwean music promoter, Steve Chigorimbo, arrived to Nigeria's music business. He came from Harare and recruited famous Nigerian musicians for a Southern Africa tour, billed as Music Against Apartheid. I was invited to cover that event. The night before a stadium sold out concert, Steve urged me to be the MC.

"Earlier, the tour had taken the groups to Lusaka, Kitwe and Kabwe, major cities of Zambia. The first major performance in Zimbabwe was at the Rufaro stadium. By midafternoon of the concert date, Rufaro stadium was packed with excited concert goers, including university students.

"The mood was intense. When Onyeka walked onto the stage, she was poised, elegant and magnificent. She approached the microphone confidently; her band slowly began to belt out rhythms from her latest dance release then, Winnie Mandela, one of the tracks from DANCING IN THE SUN album.

"She walked onto the stage, seduced the microphone, held it tightly as she smiled at the crowd: then she steadily began to caress the microphone. As she began to sing, toned back muscles of her legs cushioned her neck vein vocals popped and pushed the smooth chocolate skins onto radiance.

"The night before the concert, I met a young Zimbabwean woman named Zolfor West, who would later inspire the nickname "Elegant Stallion." After an unforgettable one night stand together, she called me her "stallion," symbolizing power and strength from our previous night's happy ending rendezvous.

"The next evening, as I watched Onyeka perform on stage, I was struck by her poise, elegance, and magnificence. I wanted to capture her essence in my review, so I drew inspiration from my encounter with Zolfor. I wrote: "Onyeka has matured from a saint to a sinner, from a pretender to a real performer. Here comes our Elegant Stallion."

"That description stuck, and thanks to entertainment journalism, Onyeka Onwenu became synonymous with the "Elegant Stallion" brand. Today, we remember her as an iconic, hot, sexy, brilliant broadcaster, singer, and entertainer who left unforgettable moments on our lives. She has galloped into eternal sunset. Go well, my elegant stallion."

After Successful Show in Abuja, Real Warri Pikin Targets Global Audience

Tosin Clegg

After a successful event in July, RWP Entertainment Nigeria, the brains behind Real Warri Pikin's "Unapologetically Me" has announced plans to take the comedic experience global, with upcoming events planned for the UK, US, and Canada. The just concluded event was held on 28th of July 2024, at the prestigious Thisday Dome in Abuja and it recorded huge success. Following a promise made on her social media page prior to the event, she delivered an experience she coined "Comedygasm" to her guests. The audience was captivated by a night filled with side-splitting laughter and exceptional music, leaving them thoroughly entertained and satisfied. With a record breaking 3,000 guests who bought tickets which varied from Regular, VIP, Premium

and Executive options it was indeed a resounding success and a testament to her commitment and resilience made towards the show. The night featured stellar performances from comedians such as Funny Timo, MC Royal, Zigabella, Freemouth, and MC Yanis. Crowning the day, super star acts, Peruzzi and Reekado Banks treated her guests to a captivating performance which added extra layers of excitement ensuring the event was a memorable blend of music and comedy. Ace Comedian, AY and other public figures including Seyi Vodi, Temisan, Ivie Okujaye and many more came out to support the comedienne as their presence added a touch of glamour as well as star power to the event detailing the camaraderie in the industry. The event success was further bolstered by the support of top-tier brands such as Air Peace, Maltina, Goldberg, Fidelity Bank, Lisa Suites among others.



Real Warri Pikin

Mercy Idegwu Releases New Single, Immortal Invisible God

Tosin Clegg

Mercy Idegwu is thrilled to announce the release of her latest single, "Immortal Invisible God." This stirring worship anthem, available now on all major music platforms, is a

profound declaration of God's omnipotence and majesty. This song showcases Idegwu's signature soulful voice and heartfelt lyrics, capturing the essence of God's infinite power and the awe-inspiring nature of His might. The song is a melodic journey that invites listeners to reflect on the greatness of God and to worship Him in spirit and truth. Reminiscing on creating the song she shares, "This song is a testament to my

awe and reverence towards God. It is a reminder of His unmatched power and the wonders He performs. I hope this song will inspire and uplift everyone who listens to it." Produced with meticulous attention to detail, the song combines rich instrumental arrangements with her powerful vocals, creating a captivating and spiritually enriching experience. The song's message is simple

yet profound: it highlights God's eternal and invisible nature, encouraging believers to trust in His boundless power. The release of the song marks another milestone in Mercy Idegwu's illustrious music career, further solidifying her position as one of the leading voices in contemporary gospel music. With numerous hits and a growing global fanbase, Mercy continues to inspire and touch lives through her music.

At 12-year-old, Makayla Malaka an Emerging Super Star

Tosin Clegg

Barely a few weeks ago, young rising star, Makayla dropped her 5th studio album titled 'Twelve' and the 10-track all-rap album includes some major hit singles such as 'Watch Out', 'Bounce', 'Hard Work Pays', and 'I Don Try'. Exactly a month after the release date she held a concert last weekend, 27th of July 2024 at the prestigious, Balmoral Hall, Federal Palace Hotel in Lagos where she performed all of the songs on her just released album. The moment she came on stage at the concert held last weekend she got the audience captivated as she seamlessly

transitioned from her chart-topping hit single, 'I'm Not a Morning Person' to new and exciting tracks off her latest album. She delivered each song with passion and a usual energy which had her guest mesmerized illustrating her incredible range and depth. The blend of her fans favourite and the new releases left an unforgettable experience with many who attended. Makayla Malaka in Concert was a vibrant celebration of young talents with an impressive line up of kid stars such as the delightful performance of the Ugandan Internet sensation, Rango Tenge Tenge and the energetic, Ghetto Kids. Temitayo Abodunrin, a talented saxophonist wowed many with her soulful melodies while Star Kids showed some impressive vocal abilities. Topping it up with humor,

Emmanuella and Sister Stella served hilarious performance that had everyone cracked up. The concert wrapped up as a testament to the talents of these young and rising super stars. As she continues to redefine the boundaries of being a young rapper, she expressed her gratitude post-concert starting, "I'm super excited about the outcome and I couldn't have done it without God, my parents, my manager, the production team as well as every performer that graced the event."

CHANGE OF NAME
I formerly known and addressed as **PHILOMENA LIZZY OYAILO**, now wish to be known and addressed as **PHILOMENA ONOENGBOKPOHAN OYAILO**. All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.

DISCLAIMER



Bello Mohammed



Olaitan Daniel Sunday



Ekpa Ojonugwa

BigzIQ Poised to Make Waves with 'On Code'

Ferdinand Ekechukwu

Big Ten Records is thrilled to unveil Ziqcode EP and the music video for "On Code" by their talented artiste, BigzIQ. Bom Mirade Aina Simileoluwa Isaac, BigzIQ is poised to make waves in the music industry with his unique sound and infectious energy. Growing up in Ilorin, in his home State, Kwara, Nigeria, BigzIQ discovered his passion for music early. His involvement in his church's youth choir helped him hone his skills and develop a deep connection to music. By 2018, he began writing his own songs, further cementing his dedication to his craft. BigzIQ's debut single, "ON CODE," was officially launched in 2024 and has quickly gained traction. The song showcases his distinctive blend of traditional African rhythms with modern beats,

following his debut EP title "ziqcode" a six track project showcasing his diversity. All songs produced by the talented young producer Greamar, have been gaining significant traction since release a few weeks ago, and amassing over 1,000,000 plays on streaming platforms and counting. With its infectious rhythm and catchy hooks, "On Code" has solidified BigzIQ as an artist to watch. The official music video for "On Code," directed by the renowned African Director Pink, promises to captivate audiences worldwide. The video takes viewers on a journey that vividly interprets the song while offering a sneak peek into how BigzIQ plans to showcase his craft and talent. "We are thrilled to bring this music video to BigzIQ's fans," says Ewaen Ediae, BigzIQ's manager. "This video represents a new chapter in his career, and we are excited to share his vision and creativity with a wider audience."

This is to bring to the notice of the general public that the above named persons whose pictures appear above are no longer in the employment of Solpia Nigeria Limited, Lagos.

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MANAGEMENT.

PERSPECTIVE

NNPC as National Lifeline Under Mele Kyari

Tunji Ojo

When you advocate for efficiency and positively impact society, you will always find individuals rallying behind you. Integrity and proficiency cultivate trust. When individuals consistently exhibit excellence, openness, ethical conduct, and proficiency in their duties, they garner the trust and admiration of those in their midst.

This trust serves as the cornerstone of robust, nurturing relationships, be it in personal life or the professional realm. People are naturally inclined towards those they can depend on, and they are more inclined to support and champion individuals whose skills they hold in high regard.

The Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO) of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL), Mele Kyari, has demonstrated remarkable competence and formidable capabilities in the way he has positively transformed the fortunes of the company since assuming office on July 7, 2019, as the leader of the former NNPC.

This transition occurred during a crucial juncture not only for the organization but also for the entire Nigerian oil and gas sector, as well as the national economy. It was a tumultuous period marked by diminished production, escalating vandalism of oil pipelines, widespread oil theft, and a disheartened workforce within the organisation.

He embraced a strategic framework for operations that was founded on four fundamental principles: Transparency, Accountability, and Performance Excellence. These core values played a pivotal role in signaling a significant shift towards improvement, a prophecy that was indeed fulfilled. His endeavors swiftly commenced the revitalisation of the NNPC, and following his appointment in 2021 as the chief executive officer of the revamped NNPC by then President Muhammadu Buhari, these guiding principles became the cornerstone for the ongoing efforts to guide the company towards global excellence. Since assuming the role of NNPC GCEO, the company's performance under his leadership has been nothing short of remarkable. He has successfully navigated through challenges and obstacles that once seemed insurmountable, turning them around with finesse.

A significant aspect of his legacy will center on his endeavors and monumental progress in revamping the company's fortunes and the entire oil and gas sector, particularly through his vigorous campaigns against the rampant theft of Nigeria's oil by criminal syndicates and individuals. This situation had long hindered Nigeria from meeting its oil production targets. While this accomplishment is commendable, it represents only a fraction of the exceptional work he has undertaken. Kyari has adeptly leveraged his extensive experience and foresight to oversee the metamorphosis of the NNPC into a more transparent, efficient, and lucrative entity.

Of course, every captivating narrative encounters challenges. The recent discrepancies between select private sector entities and regulatory bodies in the oil and gas industry appear to be one of those obstacles.

However, I am confident that these hurdles will not tarnish



Kyari

an otherwise impeccable track record of service to the nation. It comes as no surprise that loud voices of support are resonating from various quarters in favor of Mele Kyari amidst calls for his dismissal. These negative calls have been amplified by a statement attributed to the deputy spokesperson of the House of Representatives, Phillip Agbese, who expressed the House's readiness to demand the removal of the diligent and effective NNPC leader due to the recent turmoil in the oil and gas sector.

Most recent among such expressions of solidarity is the pronouncement issued by the Coalition of Anoma Youths Stakeholders. The essence of the extensive press release by the Coalition revolves around their strong disapproval of the remarks made by Phillip Agbese, particularly his insinuation that the House of Representatives may advocate for the removal of Mele Kyari.

The coalition condemned Agbese's assertions as reckless and deceptive, affirming that Kyari and the NNPC have indeed provided backing to private sector entities within the bounds of legal regulatory frameworks. The coalition took it further and questioned Agbese's motives, noting his prior silence on legislative matters and accusing him of prioritizing personal interests.

They defended the efforts of Kyari thus far and his impacts in turning the fortunes of the company around in his time at the helm and urged the House leadership to caution Agbese to maintain neutrality and impartiality.

This articulate rebuttal by the Coalition of Anoma youth stakeholders is not unexpected, and further similar responses are anticipated due to the substantial positive impact of the work accomplished by the NNPC leader thus far. Particularly noteworthy is his unwavering commitment to ensuring the company operates at an international standard, thereby preventing any individual from monopolising the oil and gas sector.

Kyari has consistently emphasized the necessity of adhering to due process in all endeavors, while unequivocally asserting that the establishment of private refineries is encouraged. However, he emphasises that the sale of crude

oil must adhere to global norms, devoid of any semblance of corruption or favoritism.

One of Kyari's most remarkable accomplishments during his tenure has been the introduction of measures to enhance transparency and accountability within the NNPC. Under his guidance, the corporation released its audited financial statements for the first time in its history, establishing a new benchmark for openness in Nigeria's oil and gas sector. This initiative has been commended for cultivating increased trust and confidence among stakeholders, including the government, international investors, and the Nigerian public.

Kyari has orchestrated a remarkable financial transformation for the NNPC. Under his stewardship, the corporation achieved a profit not seen in almost 44 years, garnering a net profit exceeding N200 billion in 2020. This exceptional feat is ascribed to prudent cost-cutting strategies, heightened operational efficacy, and a strategic emphasis on revenue-generating initiatives.

Throughout Kyari's tenure, the NNPC has undertaken numerous pivotal projects geared towards augmenting Nigeria's oil and gas production capacity. These initiatives include the successful execution of the Ajaokuta-Kaduna-Kano (AKK) gas pipeline project, poised to elevate domestic gas utilization and bolster industrial expansion. Furthermore, Kyari has played a pivotal role in advancing the refurbishment of Nigeria's refineries, with a keen focus on attaining self-sufficiency in refined petroleum products.

Kyari has also been a staunch advocate for industry reforms. He played a pivotal role in the enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), which seeks to revamp the regulatory framework governing Nigeria's oil and gas sector. The PIA is anticipated to attract more investments, improve governance, and ensure a fairer distribution of resources. His exceptional leadership during the challenging COVID-19 pandemic is truly noteworthy. Furthermore, his recognition of the significance of community engagement is evident as Kyari has prioritised corporate social responsibility initiatives. Under his guidance, the NNPC has initiated various projects aimed at enhancing the quality of life in oil-producing regions. These initiatives encompass educational programs, healthcare projects, and infrastructure development endeavors.

Looking forward, Kyari's vision for the NNPC appears to revolve around further diversifying Nigeria's energy portfolio, with a specific focus on renewable energy and reducing the carbon footprint of the oil and gas industry. He has articulated a dedication to transforming the NNPC into a globally competitive energy corporation that contributes to sustainable development. Mele Kyari's tenure as GCEO of the NNPC has been characterized by notable accomplishments in transparency, financial performance, project implementation, industry reforms, and community involvement. His leadership has not only revolutionized the organization but also positioned Nigeria's oil and gas sector for a more sustainable and prosperous future. Consequently, he rightfully receives the widespread support he is garnering as he appears revitalized to continue the struggle against those aiming to monopolise and impoverish our collective resources.

Tunji Ojo writes from lagos.

Governance and Grievance: Highlighting President Tinubu's Achievements

O'tega Ogra

It is disheartening to see various discourses on the protests by some Nigerians turn into ugly narratives that should never have a place in our national space. Here are my thoughts, and feel free to engage respectfully.

1. It is every Nigerian's constitutional right to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression
2. The Nigerian state also has a constitutional obligation to guarantee every constitutional rights of every Nigerian, including free movement, safety, and security. It is also the right of hundreds of millions of Nigerians to choose not to join any protests as many have chosen - and all parties must respect this. Asserting one's rights should not lead to the denial of another's.
3. If you claim you want to have a peaceful demonstration yet have allowed some actively involved in your protest to use your platform to mobilise people publicly in the name of causing destruction and chaos, you are also responsible for whatever chaos they cause.
4. To the protest leaders, can you confidently say you have a grip on the behaviour of those you have sought to join you in the protests? To those who have chosen to join the protests, can you confidently say you are fully aware of the plans—seen and unseen—of those mobilising you to demonstrate?
5. Even worse, if you haven't come out to openly condemn and dissociate your protest platform from calls for the destruction of regular Nigerians' livelihood and violence against the Nigerian people and state, it could mean you consent to your protest platform to be used for chaos - directly or indirectly.
6. President Bola Tinubu is aware of the pains Nigerians are facing due to global economic shocks and local policies that have been put in place to secure a prosperous future for Nigeria.
7. Mr. President listens—just as he has been listening since Day 1 of his Presidency. He has shown a willingness, never seen at this level before, to return to the drawing board where policies may have been unpopular.
8. Today, the numbers speak for themselves—foreign reserves have not been depleted despite paying off over \$7.5 billion in outstanding obligations/backlogs. The frivolous and sometimes unconstitutional use of the CBN's way and means to borrow



Tinubu

money from the CBN and mortgage our meagre revenues while putting the nation further into penury is no longer the case. Now, spending is mainly tied to earnings.

9. We are also seeing the rate of inflation slowing considerably. Families can now breathe a sigh of relief and enjoy more disposable income, thanks to initiatives such as the student loans scheme and credicorp.

These programs alleviate the pressure of making immediate bulk payments for everyday expenses. Additionally, the P-CNG Initiative is driving down commercial transportation costs by providing free conversion kits, enabling the use of more affordable CNG fuel for commercial vehicles. These are all in addition to other programmes like I-DICE, NIYA, and various MSME support programmes/interventions. The number of taxes is being reduced by at least one-fifth, with some out of the way already. Imports of critical food items have been exempt from levies for a period of time. What more?

On the security front, we have successfully reduced incidents of internal insurrection and kidnappings. Over 5,000 of our fellow Nigerians have secured their freedom, and an impressive number of terrorists and insurgents (over 11,000) have been either neutralised or captured.

Our tactical operations will persist until Nigeria is entirely

safe. We trust in the protection of our brave men and women in Uniform who courageously risk their lives daily, even leaving their loved ones for extended periods, to secure our freedoms. Institutions like the EFCC actively pursue those exploiting gaps in our system to undermine the country.

10. The country is experiencing a resurgence in foreign direct investments (FDIs), particularly in the energy/oil & gas sector, thanks to the new presidential directives (40, 41, 42), which plug some of the gaps in the PIA. As you may already know, the NNPC now operates as a fully commercial enterprise whilst regulatory functions have been removed and clearly defined under crucial regulatory agencies - NUPRC and NMDPRA, who regulate the petroleum value chain and all local and international players, including NNPC. Total Energies/NNPC JV has signed the Final Investment Decision on the USD550m Ubeta Gas Development project on the back of executive directives 40/41, &42. More are to be announced in due course. The international scene is more confident than they have been in recent years about coming back to Nigeria.

11. Foreign companies leaving? Yes, some are, but we must not ignore that many of those leaving failed for years to invest in the value chain of their businesses or did not adopt suitable approaches to the local markets. Others were following a global trend to cut down their scale in markets such as Africa. However, for every company that leaves, their businesses have been taken over by other foreign investors who see the opportunities in Nigeria or local investors who have built the capacity to operate in this environment. The high exchange rate may not be ideal, but what about the opportunities presented? Countries like Indonesia and Vietnam, with exchange rates between 12,000 to 25,000 in their local currencies to the dollar, have used similar opportunities to push their countries to become two of the fastest growing in the world spurred by increased productivity, value addition, and exports, which a weaker currency provides. Nigerian companies that add value and are export-focused are already taking advantage of this.

Ogra, a Senior Special Assistant on Digital/New Media to President Bola Tinubu writes from Abuja

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PEOPLE

DEBBIE ODUTAYO:

Cinema Businesses Struggling to Survive Because People Can Barely Eat

Debbie Odutayo, the Group Executive Director, Royal Roots Communications Network, is a seasoned practitioner in the world of broadcasting. Odutayo's journey in the industry is one she always looks back to with joy. She shares some of her moments while speaking to **Ferdinand Ekechukwu** on a number of issues. Excerpts:

Broadcast station owners recently met and made some demands from government. What necessitated such demands?

I am not hundred per cent sure what necessitated the demands but you all know that a lot of things have been wrong in the broadcasting industry. Even we as broadcasters right now, we can't do it alone you need the government to support. Power is a major issue for us. We just fixed solar here for millions of naira because the generator alone cannot work. I have been out of power for five days in this axis and we are running a TV channel and a radio station, how do you entertain the viewers? Tell us. How? And nobody is talking about that? And yet we have to pay salaries, we have running cost, we have to keep the environment clean, we have tax to pay. There are so many things you have to do. At the end of the day, nobody supports you. And in our own environment here we do a lot of CSR because the community where you have people that do not have means of livelihood (I don't want to say jobless), we try to empower them. So, most of our interns here we try to make sure that they are within this environment, this community. When we need anything to be done in the office here, when we have a job or need crowd or freelancers we call them here so that we can empower them. And this place has become like their home, so they protect it. You know during #EndSARs, area boys were destroying everywhere, why? Because those businesses had not impacted, no relationship with the community, so we learnt from that. That look if you want people to protect, to guide and to want to belong to this community you have to love the community and let the community love you back. So we do a lot. Every year December, we give to widows especially we give them foodstuff. We do that kind of CSR and like I said, in anything we do here we engage the community more. So for the broadcast stations, we need the government's intervention and we are not asking for money. We are asking for tax cut. I am not in a position to say everything. But in most of the things they tax us for, even if it's a reduction. Because, like I said, if we fold up now – we are in three units – we have production, we have radio, we have TV alone here we have cinema. So, we are just saying, while the economy is bad, is there a way we can meet and cut some of those things that affect us so badly. Basically that's all I can say on that now.

From owning radio and television stations and recently venturing into cinema operations what has the experience been like?

Hectic! Sleepless nights... Why do I say that? Because how many people are going to the cinemas on a regular basis if it's not a festive period? People can barely eat; people can barely afford to have three square meals a day. Are they the same people that will take N5,000 to the cinema, watch a movie at N3,000, buy popcorn buy a drink? At the end of the day we had to take money from other projects or other line of business to support the cinema. So, it's not been really a venture that we enjoy. So, we said to ourselves let's go back to what we know how to do best which is producing contents.

But is the cinema still running?

No, the cinema right now is temporarily shut down. After one year of not making money we had to shut down. It's not our wish to shut down. It's the reality. You do not invest in something and after one you can barely meet up on anything. Of course we just had to say 'okay what do we do?' You keep paying and sweating and squeezing?

You can't squeeze your blood or your sweat.

Why did you venture into cinema operations in the first place?

We did that because we saw the opportunity; we have the land and we felt that the community needed it and as at the time we invested into it, it was doing very well the first two, three months when you would say business will be slow, it was doing very well. Then the crises of petrol came; cost of living became terrible... so everything changed. And it became so hard for people. Even the community when we even charge them N1,500 to come and watch a Yoruba movie that just came out it's like you are begging them to come.

The situation in your case would have affected some other cinemas I'm just looking at the number of cinema houses, are the contents churned out enough for the cinemas?

How many movies have been done this year? It has reduced drastically compared to what we had two years ago and last year. But we are still talking of crisis. Last year Funke Akindele made how many billions? Some people would say it's doing well, some people will say it's in your locality it depends on where you are, some people would say. Some cinemas have shut down some have come up. I remember when we started the cinema, one or two shut down during that period as well. So, I really cannot say this is the reason why most of the cinemas are shutting down or why most of them are rising up. But it still goes down to the economic factor. Everything is interwoven.

You have spent over three decades in content production and channel/station management. Does that sort of put pressure on you on projects you handle?

It has to. If it doesn't then I'm doing something wrong. Because every project I have I want to exceed what I did before. Be it TV commercials which I do, be it content creating, be it whatever it is I must improve, better than I did the last one. You can only be as better as your last job. And that's why this one is being a while since I produced content myself. Well I have been doing executive production which I did for Africa Magic Unscripted, which was a very successful show. I was commissioned by Africa Magic. It was really nice but I was executive producer I hired the people to produce.

What's the feeling like that comes with such experience looking at those you impacted over the years?

Oh... amazing! And I have a lot of them, success stories here and there. I mean it tells from even when I'm celebrating my birthday, even when I'm praying nobody remembers I still get overwhelmed by people just trying to appreciate and some things that you even do some people you have touched I can't even remember anymore a lot of them like that but I just keep very day thanking God for. I always say as Ayefefe, he would say 80 per cent of the people can appreciate me the remaining 20 per cent I leave them to God. So, you can't satisfy everybody but I do look at those that I have impacted, those that have done massively well. I go for premieres of people that I have held their hands that have asked my opinion or have just come here to have a chat on the job and it works out well for them. And I go there and my head is swollen with gratitude and joy every time. But I have a number of them.

Can you share a significant event or experience that influenced your career path?



Odutayo

AMVCA... For me it's still my biggest and most proud assignment I have been given. First to be nominated amongst thousands of women in Nigeria at the inception of the AMVCA to be the only female Nigerian to be taken to South Africa all expenses paid by Multichoice and to be trained and put in that process with Uncle Femi Odugbemi and ever since then being call upon to serve I see it as something that is humbling because if you are doing something right, people keep calling you. That means I'm doing something right somewhere. And is one that I know, I witnessed that it's the most sincere and most credible award and whenever I see their email to come and serve again I have never thought twice even if I had something to do, even if I was out of the country, most times I am, I'm always happy to say I will come back for it because there's nothing you want to be proud of at this my age now everything must be credible and it must impact on you. And then the growth of the industry every year I get to see what people are doing better and what they have done from last year it just amazes me that we have a lot of talent in this country. And the only thing that keeps everybody is just the economy. If a lot of these young filmmakers had five per cent of what their counterparts have abroad, this nation will be something else. I do think for me every year that's what gladdens my heart that we are growing despite all odds the industry is still growing. And because it's an industry award to me it's just befitting. Last year 10th anniversary just made my mind I was blown away.

Take us a bit back on your first job?

It was in NTA in 1986 I was a contract staff 1986, I was privileged to work with a lot of producers then the late Sadiq Daba, the late Enebeli Elebuwa, Alhaji Danladi Bako, those were the producers I worked with then, even late CY Okonkwo famous documentary producer. Those are the producers I worked with as contract staff then in those days NTA had contract staff when you are in school you can go back. And every time I went back each

producer will want me to work on their project because I was like a tomboy. And I was able to pay attention to details so they would want me to do their continuity and sit down in the post production. It was just an experience looking up to those people and they always want to 'Debbie are you available? come and work with me' Those were the days NTA used to do telemovies that's what it was called and they will go to Badagry and shoot those movies. It was quite encouraging because we had more men than women. I can't remember having any younger lady around me. Later with time other young ladies started coming in but it was always a good experience. They were all brother figures; uncles, senior brothers, father figure and all that. Tade Ogidan, late Jimmy Atte, Peter Igbo, all of them I mean there was none of them that I've never worked with. They would always want me to be on their projects. So I'm sure they are smiling at me now saying well done, we knew you would be here and those that are still alive I'm sure they will be reading about me or looking at me when I do anything that I knew she will do well for herself.

Are there any personal milestones or achievements that hold a special place in your heart?

I think I have done well and I thank God for that. I have been running a business for 27 years with my husband. I have been working and earning my own money for the past 36 years of my life. I think I have done well for myself. My grey hair is not just grey hair (laughing). It's grey hair of hard work and fulfillment. And again I say, God has blessed me with the best children ever that have given me peace of mind. And they were all trained abroad. Peace of mind, fear of God has been my watchword. I have just in a way will say I'm almost there. I'm happy honestly. I'm happy as a mother, I'm happy as a producer. I can smile when I want to. I can take a trip when I want to. There are some things in life that you don't have to think about it before doing it. I have great family support. From a one bedroom to a shop to a flat now to this empire, it's God at work.

What advice would you give to aspiring individuals looking to pursue a career similar to yours?

Dedication, commitment and consistency; I think what has worked for me is the consistency. I tell people I don't know how to sell shoe and bag if you give me or to sell clothes or whatever. This is me; all I know is television, movies, radio, and content. There are a lot of people that if this doesn't work, this works and they go from one to another. I mean radio, TV, cinema, it's all in the same entertainment industry. And when you are consistent, the people that will support you, that would advise you, that would guide you that would even key into that your vision that would tie you into that you dream. And don't take no for an answer but first you yourself must be convinced that you can do it.

You celebrated your birthday recently, what and how does it feel?

Okay, so 57, for me, not tiring. But I think it became for me a time that I had to show off what I have done or where I'm coming from. Or to give double of what I was given to the society. It became necessary for me to crosscheck how far I have gone. And what legacy I am leaving behind. So I want to leave behind a story that everybody can reflect on individually; I should be able to see my life in it, I should be able to see what good it has brought for me and where I am going as an individual. So I don't want to just see just the challenges.

INTERVIEW

Tahir: Nigeria’s New Licencing Rounds Can Boost Investment, Competitiveness in Oil Sector

Salahuddeen Tahir, is the chairman of the Society of Petroleum Engineers, Nigerian Council, and Head of Assets and Investments Management at NNPC Gas and Power Investment Services, where he oversees strategic investments in power, LNG, and gas-based industry initiatives. Tahir brings over 22 years of experience in the oil and gas sector. In this interview, he discusses the forthcoming 2024 SPE Nigeria Annual International Conference and Exhibition and sheds light on pertinent industry issues.

Sunday Okobi brings the excerpts:

The upcoming SPE-NAICE is the 47th edition. In what ways has SPE-NAICE grown or changed throughout its history?

The Society of Petroleum Engineers Nigeria Annual International Conference and Exhibition (SPE-NAICE) has significantly evolved since its first event in 1977. Now approaching its 47th edition, SPE-NAICE has expanded its scope and become a major event in the oil and gas industry, attracting global professionals. It serves as a platform for knowledge sharing, networking, and showcasing industry advancements. Key milestones include introducing technical sessions and workshops to enhance skills, embracing digital platforms for accessibility, and focusing on sustainability and environmental responsibility. The conference continues to foster collaboration and innovation, with the upcoming edition expected to uphold this legacy.

Based on the theme of this year’s NAICE, why is SPE Nigeria focusing on midstream and downstream development?

The theme: ‘Petroleum Industry Value Chain Optimisation: The Inevitability of Midstream and Downstream Development,’ emphasises the critical role of midstream and downstream sectors in sustaining the upstream business. These sectors manage the transportation, storage, refining and distribution of crude oil, essential for value chain efficiency. Optimising midstream and downstream operations enhances the petroleum industry’s efficiency, reliability and profitability, boosting economic growth and development in Nigeria and Africa. As global energy transitions toward alternatives and reducing carbon emissions, these sectors are pivotal in distributing natural gas and renewables. Investing in their infrastructure and technology ensures energy security and reduces reliance on imports, making this focus timely and crucial for sustainable growth and resilience.

What are the main challenges faced by the Nigeria’s petroleum industry in optimising midstream and downstream segments?

The Nigerian petroleum industry faces several challenges in optimising its midstream and downstream segments. Insufficient and outdated infrastructure, such as pipelines and refineries, hampers efficient operations. Security issues, including pipeline vandalism and oil theft, disrupt operations and cause revenue losses. Transparency issues deter investment, while the regulatory framework needs improvement to attract capital and encourage innovation. Access to finance is limited, hindering infrastructure development. Environmental concerns about air and water quality require stricter regulations and sustainable practices. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration among the government, industry stakeholders, and regulatory bodies to create a more efficient and sustainable petroleum industry in Nigeria.

How can investment in midstream and downstream infrastructure lead to cost savings and increased revenue for petroleum companies?

Midstream and downstream infrastructure investment can yield significant cost savings and increase revenue for petroleum companies. Upgrading infrastructure like pipelines and storage facilities reduces transportation costs and delays, enhancing efficiency and lowering operational expenses. Improved refining and processing facilities elevate product quality, allowing companies to produce higher-value products that meet market demands, attracting more customers and boosting revenue. Expanding infrastructure enables better market access and diversification, reducing reliance on a single market and increasing profitability. Strategic storage and distribution investments optimise supply chains, reducing costs and ensuring timely deliveries. Increased flexibility in processing various products allows companies to adapt to market changes, maximising revenue potential.

How do regulatory frameworks impact the development and optimisation of midstream and downstream segments?

Regulatory frameworks are crucial in shaping the development and optimisation of the energy industry’s midstream and downstream segments. These frameworks include rules and policies to ensure safety, efficiency, and fair competition. In the midstream segment, regulations govern



Tahir

the construction and operation of pipelines, terminals, and storage facilities, focusing on safety and environmental standards. In the downstream segment, they cover quality standards for fuels, pricing, consumer protection, and competition policies. While these regulations promote fairness and public safety, excessive complexity can hinder innovation and increase compliance costs. Therefore, striking a balance is essential to ensure both safety and a favorable business environment, significantly influencing industry development.

How is the role of midstream and downstream segments expected to evolve in the future of the petroleum industry?

The midstream and downstream segments of the petroleum industry are set to evolve significantly due to emerging trends. The energy transition towards cleaner sources will likely lead to investments in infrastructure for transporting and storing renewable fuels like hydrogen and biofuels. Digitalisation and automation will enhance efficiency through advanced analytics, AI, and automation, optimising supply chain management and refining processes. Stricter environmental regulations will drive eco-friendly practices, such as carbon capture and emissions reduction. Product diversification will see companies exploring alternatives like petrochemicals and plastics. Additionally, energy security will focus on strengthening infrastructure to ensure reliable supply amidst these changes.

In what ways has the Presidential Executive Order on Oil and Gas Fiscal Terms influenced the operational landscape of Nigeria’s energy industry?

The Presidential Executive Order on Oil and Gas Fiscal Terms has significantly impacted Nigeria’s energy industry by creating a more transparent and attractive investment climate. It reduces fiscal burdens on companies through lower royalty rates and tax incentives, encouraging increased investment in exploration and production. The order also promotes technological innovation, enhancing efficiency and productivity in the sector. Additionally, it emphasises collaboration between government agencies and the private sector by establishing a coordination committee for stakeholder engagement. Overall, the Executive Order aims to attract more investments, boost production, and foster growth in Nigeria’s oil and gas industry.

Given that SPE Nigeria strongly advocated for Nigeria to host the African Energy Bank, what are the next steps to ensure this development benefits the country and broader African economy?

Hosting the African Energy Bank in Nigeria offers significant opportunities for the country’s petroleum industry and the broader African economy. Key strategic steps include strengthening collaboration with other African nations through knowledge-sharing and joint investments to build an integrated energy market. Prioritising infrastructure investment in pipelines, refineries, and storage facilities will enhance Nigeria’s production and export capacity. Promoting local content can boost job creation and reduce foreign dependency. Investing in research and development for new technologies and renewable energy will drive innovation. Capacity building and training programs are crucial for developing a skilled workforce. These steps will maximise the benefits and foster economic growth.

How do the recent government announcements on new oil bids and licencing rounds impact Nigeria’s position in the global energy market?

The recent government announcements on new oil bids and licensing rounds could significantly impact Nigeria’s position in the global energy market. As one of Africa’s largest oil producers, Nigeria aims to attract competent oil producers to explore and extract hydrocarbons, potentially increasing its reserve base and production. This could lead to higher revenue and strengthen Nigeria’s role as a key energy supplier, meeting global energy demands. However, the impact will also depend on factors like global oil prices, geopolitical dynamics, and competition from other producers. Overall, these announcements could attract investments and enhance Nigeria’s standing in the energy market.

Encomiums as Corona College of Education Lagos Celebrates 10th Anniversary Praise

Oluchi Chibuzor

It was a moment of glamour, celebration and honour as Corona College of Education Ilupeju, Lagos held its 10th anniversary and 6th convocation ceremony on Saturday, 13 July 2024.

A total of 225 graduating students of the 2022/2023 academic session bagged a Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), a Professional Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education (PDECCE), a Professional Diploma in Educational Leadership and Management (PDELM) and a Professional Diploma in Education (PDE).

They were also inducted into the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) and issued certificates and licenses, having passed the council’s exam excellently.

The event was attended by notable personalities in the academic sphere, who commended the school management and graduating students for their efforts in sustaining sound education.

Delivering the convocation lecture, Prof. Chinedum Babalola, Vice Chancellor of Chrisland University, Ogun state, spoke on private tertiary institutions’ commitment to

raising the standard of education with the use of technology in Nigeria despite limited funds.

Babalola urged the government and all stakeholders to promote quality education, provide quality educators and practice quality education.

In her message to the graduating students, she charged them to aim for more and keep improving themselves as they set out to impact the world positively.

Registrar/ Chief Executive Officer, Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria, Prof. Olusegun Ajiboye, felicitated with the institution on its 10th anniversary, describing it as one of the private Colleges of Education doing exceedingly well in Nigeria.

“Corona College of Education has quality graduates. This is evident in the results of their students who write the professional qualifying examination of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria. They perform very well,” he said.

Speaking on the state of the teaching profession, Ajiboye said there was a shortage of teachers in Africa and globally, making the profession urgently needed

across the world.

This is as he urged Nigerian teachers to see themselves as global teachers and get acquainted with technology to progress into the global market.

“The world needs teachers. There is a shortage of teachers globally. We have a shortage of about 45 million teachers. In Africa and a shortage of 15 million teachers in Nigeria accounting for a larger percentage of teacher shortage in Nigeria.

“Today, we have teachers’ mobility. They move across the world. In two years, the UK has recruited about 2000 Nigerian teachers. In 2022, Canada recruited about 600 Nigerian teachers. This shows that teachers’ mobility is high now. Not just doctors moving abroad, teachers are also moving out now in their numbers.

“Anyone that wants to take up this profession shouldn’t see himself as a local teacher. You must be well prepared and know how to use technology. You are for the global market. See yourself as a global teacher. You can teach in any part of the world. Many Nigerians should be encouraged to come into the teaching profession.

FEATURES

Campbell: Nigeria Has Great Future with International Students’ Desire to Give Back

As far as Julie Campbell, International Student Advisory Manager of Ulster University UK is concerned, Nigeria is one of the beautiful nations on earth. However lopsided you think that view is, what you cannot fault is the effervescent manner the Briton has taken to Nigeria in general and Lagos in particular. **Bennett Oghifo** writes

Having been to Idumota for shopping barely 24 hours upon landing in the country, International Student Advisory Manager of Ulster University UK, Julie Campbell, said what she has seen of Nigeria, especially the infectious energy of its commercial hub, contrasts sharply with the measured surroundings of Northern Ireland, one of the seemingly more tranquil nation states in the United Kingdom.

Reflecting on her experience in Africa’s most populous country, she said: “I’m having an amazing time. Honestly, everything is so vibrant and full of life. Coming from the UK, it’s a bit different here. Every time I step out, people are always greeting me with a warm ‘Hi, how are you? How are you finding it here?’ or ‘You should visit this place, you must see that.’ The friendliness is just incredible.”

Campbell continued, “The experience here has been absolutely phenomenal. This is my first time in Nigeria and Africa, and I wasn’t sure what to expect. I always keep an open mind when I visit new countries, but the warmth, kindness, and genuine interest of the people have been overwhelming. The Nigerian people are so eager to talk about their country and what it has to offer and are equally interested in learning about me, Ulster University, Northern Ireland, where we’re from, and what we’re doing here.”

However, her love for Nigeria did not begin upon setting foot in Lagos; it began long before due to her observations about international students from Nigeria.

Reflecting on her observations, Campbell said, “I initially thought that the Nigerian students we’ve welcomed in the past were just being polite, but now I see this genuine warmth is a defining characteristic of the Nigerian people. This is my first time attending an in-country event like this, and it’s been an enlightening experience. In my role as International Student Advisory Manager, I offer advice and support to international students, guiding them from the offer stage right through to graduation.

“It’s a privilege to speak directly with prospective students, agents, and counsellors, to understand the challenges they face and how we can better support them—not just in terms of recruitment but also having a first-class experience and achieving successful graduate outcomes and career opportunities. We aim to support their journey and help them succeed.”

She continued, “I’m excited to share this information here in Lagos and Abuja. Nigerian students have a unique quality compared to other international students we receive from Europe, Asia, North and South America. The Nigerian community is exceptionally generous with their time and eager to give back. They are not only supportive of fellow Nigerian students but are also willing to assist any new students coming in. Their willingness to help and their big hearts really make them stand out.”

Campbell emphasised the impact of Nigerian students’ generosity, stating, “Their hearts are so open, they are continuously willing to give back and support. I am truly excited about the future of Nigeria with such passionate young people. I hope these graduates gain the experience and qualifications they desire in the UK and bring those skills back to help Nigeria grow and reach its full potential. Our graduates often express a strong desire to give back to their people and country, and we are privileged to support that ambition.”

She also highlighted the comprehensive pre-arrival support provided to students at Ulster University, including an app called UUniReady, which assists students in integrating into



L-R: International Student Advisory Manager, Ulster University Northern Ireland, United Kingdom, Julie Campell, Regional Manager, Middle East and Africa (Global Recruitment and Engagement), Niall McAleer and Country Manager, Nigeria and Ghana, Temitope Ademuyiwa during Ulster University’s team engagement with new students to Ulster University, held in Lagos... recently

their new environment and ensures a smooth transition to living and learning in the UK and at Ulster University.

For the Regional Manager for Middle East and Africa at Ulster University, Niall McAleer, the trip to Lagos was to meet with students preparing to travel to Belfast in September.

“It’s really important that we connect with our new students and by coming to Lagos, we can meet them in person and help them prepare for coming to study with us. We will look at things like preparing them with the visa process, their accommodation, what to pack, travel, how to get the university, orientation and simply to put their minds at ease. We are here to support the students so that their journey from Lagos to Northern Ireland in the UK is as smooth as possible and they can get settled quickly.

“Yes, so for us, we typically find that Lagos and Abuja are where many of our students will be located. We’re holding the event today here in Lagos and we will be hosting one in Abuja. It’s an opportunity for students in that region to come along and meet us in person as well. So, they have always proved to be very beneficial events. And that really draws in a nice crowd of students,” McAleer added. According to Niall, Ulster University is lucky with two full time members of staff based here in Nigeria, one in Lagos and one in Abuja, along with several agencies working on in partnership with the university. Country Manager for Ulster University for West Africa, basically covering Nigeria and Ghana, Temitope Ademuyiwa, described her roles as “challenging but rewarding.”

“Upon joining Ulster University, I was very skeptical about people not gravitating towards Northern Ireland, which wasn’t popular in Nigeria as a UK region in those days. People said things like ‘I don’t want to go to Northern Ireland; I want to go to UK’ and I had to start educating them about Northern Ireland being a part of the UK.

“But those who accepted at the time have lovely testimonials which has been drawing people to Ulster University till date.”

Ulster University is a top UK University with track records of overall excellence. Many of our courses are ranked between top 1-20 in the UK. Therefore, International students are bound to receive great return on their investments.

“We are welcoming and supportive: Ulster is a university that do not only preach inclusion but practice same. For instance, some of our current Students’ Union Executives are Nigerians. Our overall

International Students Experience Team, the academic staff, all operate on open-door policy.

“We are international (recruiting from about 100 countries) and dynamic.

Employability: There are thousands of local and international organisations which are actively recruiting international students during and post-study. As a University, our employability rate is high commendable. I can go on and on,” Ademuyiwa enthused.

One of the students getting ready to leave for Belfast in September is Habeeb Adedapo, a media practitioner who was convinced by his younger sister. Now, he cannot wait to get started in Northern Ireland.

“I was informed or let’s say, there was a change of plan due to a piece of advice from an existing student who happens to be a younger sister. She advised me that instead of taking an offer in another European country which I already had at the time, I should come to Belfast. She first enticed me with the city, before she told me about the University, and I think I so much love the kind of experience she had and the kind of support that was given to her and I am hoping to have the same. I am thinking of what to do post-study, depending on what comes,” Adedapo said.

Upon the team’s visit to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, Julie Campbell said she was thrilled to extend the visit to Abuja, noting: “This expansion aims to provide exceptional support and opportunities for Nigerian students aspiring to study in the UK. As a highly reputable institution, Ulster University offers a comprehensive support system from pre-arrival to graduation, ensuring a smooth transition and rewarding academic experience for Nigerian students. I’m thrilled to see the rising number of Nigerians choosing Ulster University as their institution of choice in the highly competitive UK market. This trend is a testament to several key factors that make Ulster University stand out.”

She said Nigerians recognise the high calibre of programmes on offer at Ulster University meticulously designed to support their career aspirations, not only academically rigorous but also tailored to equip students with the practical skills and knowledge needed to excel in their chosen fields along with exceptional pre-arrival to graduation support.

Renowned for its diverse range of disciplines including business, IT and engineering, health sciences, and the arts, officials of Ulster University are proud to be a preferred choice for Nigerian students and remain committed to continuing the tradition of excellence, support, and hospitality.

According to Recruitment Coordinator in Nigeria, Olusola Opaluwa, being a global brand with incredible national and international ratings across facilities, teaching faculty, student experience, employability and affordability have made Ulster University really appealing to Nigerians.

“As one of the United Kingdom’s (UK’s) most dynamic and innovative universities, there are enormous benefits for choosing to study at Ulster University, Northern Ireland, UK. To mention a few, they include being a multi-campus institution with three campuses across Northern Ireland home to students from over 100 countries; state-of-the-art facilities, a robust curriculum, over 500 courses at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, a faculty comprised of leading experts in various fields as well as national and international reputation for excellence in teaching, research, innovation and entrepreneurship; the various teams available to support the whole student experience (accommodation, visa compliance, student advisory, student well-being, a welcome and orientation, careers service, etc).

Read full article online - www.thisdaylive.com

House on the Rock Hosts Night of African Praise

The African Praise Experience (TAPE 2024) recently held at The Rock Cathedral of the House On The Rock, was a resounding success.

The event which was in its 11th edition had the 14,000-seat venue, comprising the main sanctuary and overflow spaces filled to capacity with enthusiastic attendees who arrived the venue as early as six hours ahead of the event start.

According to a statement yesterday, since its conclusion on Saturday, July 27th, the event which brought together diverse communities for an inspiring and joyous celebration of faith, culture, and music has garnered over five million views on social media.

“From soul-stirring performances by the

multi award-winning worship leader, Sinach, to the energetic dance infused ministrations by Adeyinka Alaseyori, the attendees were led from one level of praise to another in celebration of the goodness of God.

“Other song leaders in the all-night event included, Bidemi Olaoba, Eben, Prinx Emmanuel, Moses Bliss, Frank Edwards, Beejay Sax, Tobi Jeff Richards, GUC, Onos Ariyo, Ebuka Songs, Mr M & Revelation and of course the Lagos Metropolitan Gospel Choir ably led by Ministers Eno Michaels, Kikelomo Mudiaga, Fortune Abel and Ochuko Sifo. The worship leaders enriched the evening with spirit lifting ministrations, making it truly an unforgettable experience,” the statement added.

The Convener, Metropolitan Senior Pastor

of all House On The Rock, Paul Adefarasin, delivered a timely sermon at the event.

His message admonished attendees on how the positive use of their words could lead to the transformation of their lives, families, businesses, careers and the nation. He inspired the congregation with a vision of a nation we can all be proud of, driven by the transformative power of our words.

“In addition to the uplifting music ministrations, fervent prayers were offered for our nation, Nigeria, the government, the Church, families, and the individual. Led by eminent ministers such as Bishop Oscar Osai, Presiding Bishop of City of Refuge Ministries, Pastor Abraham Santos of the Indian Community Church, Nigeria, Pastor Yusuf Akila, Resident Pastor at House On The Rock,

Jos and Reverend Dr. Barnabas Arastus, Resident Pastor at House On The Rock, Kaduna who all prayed for the Nation specifically the leaders and the future generation of leaders.

“Adding a tinge of laughter to the event were comedians Bhage, Kenny Blaq, Forever, and “I Am Damola,” who had attendees laughing to their heart’s delight.

“This year’s event also featured an overflow on Sunday 28th July at the same venue. With special ministrations from Ministers Mercy Chinwo Blessed and Bidemi Olaoba, who all once again gave the parishioners an opportunity to connect with the Divine.

“The concert’s success was evident in the enthusiastic participation of the audience, both in-situ and online” the statement added.

PERSPECTIVE

Why Does CBN Want to Take Over Dormant Assets from Banks?

Toni Kan

The Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) plans to set up an "Unclaimed Balances Trust Fund (UBTF) Pool Account" under the guidance of a management committee to oversee the operation of the UBTF roiled the airwaves and blogosphere last week.

The response from the generality of informed and uninformed Nigerians was swift and mostly negative. Many commentators, however, spoke from a position, if not of ignorance, then a lack of understanding, which was also informed by the seeming lack of clarity regarding the CBN's proposed policy.

According to the CBN's July 19 2024 circular announcing the "Guidelines on Management of Dormant Accounts, Unclaimed Balances and other financial assets in banks and other financial institutions in Nigeria," it is setting up the UBTF pool account with clearly stated objectives that include: Identify dormant accounts/unclaimed balances and financial assets with a view to reuniting them with their beneficial owners; Hold the funds in trust for the beneficial owners; Standardise the management of dormant accounts/unclaimed balances and financial assets; and Establish a standard procedure for reclaim of warehoused funds.

Under this scheme, unclaimed balances are defined as "Account Balances and other financial assets that remained dormant for a minimum of ten years in the books of financial institutions and qualify for transfer to CBN."

The detailed circular went on to add that the "CBN shall treat unclaimed balances (dormant accounts and financial assets) as follows: Open and maintain the 'UBTF Pool Account'; Maintain records of the beneficiaries of the unclaimed balances warehoused in the UBTF Pool Account; Invest the funds in Nigerian treasury bills (NTBs) and other securities as may be approved by the 'Unclaimed Balances Management Committee'; Refund the principal and interest (if any) on the invested funds to the beneficiaries not later than ten (10) working days from the date of receipt of the request; where it is imperative to extend the timeline, a notice of extension shall be communicated to the requesting FI stating reasons for the extension."

Why is the CBN doing this and why this focus on dormant assets?

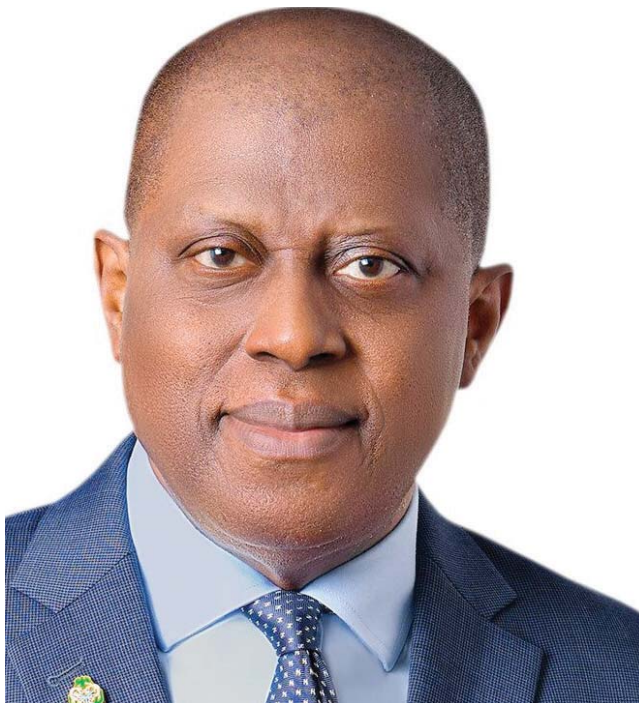
A report in Leadership has put the volume of dormant assets at N20 trillion naira. This is a huge sum of money and when money is involved it gets people's hackles up.

However, a consideration of the policy's letter and spirit will indicate that this is one policy for which CBN Governor Olayemi Cardoso and his team deserve praise, and this article will attempt to show why.

The idea of providing a warehouse for dormant assets in Nigeria's financial institutions was first mooted via an October 7, 2015 circular. The stated objective was to "curb abuses in the operation of dormant and inactive accounts and set operational standards."

The Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act, 2020 (BOFIA 2020) empowers the CBN to assume this function. Eight years after the idea was first mooted, it was revisited in a CBN circular of April 6, which drew further attention to the need to take action.

Olayemi Cardoso's CBN in issuing the July 19, 2024, circular has shown leadership in two distinct ways; one is that monetary policy leadership is a continuum especially where the health of a country's financial system is concerned.



Cardoso

Secondly, the CBN is showing that tough actions need to be taken to ring fence dormant assets and unclaimed dividends from criminal activity.

According to the circular, "dormant and unclaimed balances are increasingly susceptible to fraudulent transactions or abuse" putting undue pressure not just on the financial system but causing financial losses to the affected financial institutions.

Commenting further on the susceptibility of dormant accounts to the activities of fraudsters, the CBN Governor noted at the 296th Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting said, "With respect to dormant account... most times, they are more susceptible to fraudsters copying your identity and trying to gain hold of the system to grab your money. So, that is a problem I think most money banks face".

The warehousing of dormant assets is not peculiar to Nigeria. In the UK, the Dormant Assets Scheme has been in operation since 2011 and is held by the Reclaim Fund Ltd (RFL), which would be equivalent to the CBN's UBTF Pool Account. RFL is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), which regulates the financial services industry in the UK.

Since its inception in 2011, RFL has received £1.98 billion from 46 financial institutions, and £982m has been released via the scheme to various charities for social investment and other good causes that include Youth, Social Investment, Community Wealth Fund, Climate change; Environmental; Sustainability; and the Voluntary Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector, which for lack of a better word, we would call NGOs and charitable organisations.

In the UK, to qualify as a dormant asset, a bank or building society account must have been inactive for 15 years. Other financial institutions have other dormancy periods. According

to RFL, a key point to note is that financial organisations "need to demonstrate that they have taken extensive efforts to trace the original asset owners and reunite them with their money." At the same time, participation in the scheme is voluntary.

Ideas are spontaneous overflows that often require refining of the finer details when it comes to implementation and execution. This has happened in the UK and will ultimately happen in Nigeria.

In the UK, the bulk of the £982 million had been allocated to four major VCSEs: Better Society Capital, Access – The Foundation for Social Investment, Youth Futures Foundation, and Fair4All Finance. These organisations, led by and primarily focused on white charities and fund managers, raised concerns about inclusion and diversity. This prompted the establishment of the Adebowale Commission, which found that "social investment continues to have a serious problem with inclusion and equity, particularly in relation to race." The commission recommended revising the fund distribution to include qualified Black and Minority Ethnic VCSEs and BME fund managers.

The above shows that the warehousing of dormant assets can be a force for societal good, in addition to curtailing fraud and financial losses. This brings us to what the CBN intends to do with the UBTF funds, estimated to be about N20 trillion.

But before we answer this question, let us ask how accounts go dormant. People die without putting their affairs in order or fall sick and lose their memories and so become unable to issue instructions. Others may be stuck abroad for one reason or another, unable to access funds because of their source, or embroiled in legal cases that drag on. In the case of Nigerian banks before the advent of technology, most of the funds in dormant assets came from youth corps members compelled to open accounts in their places of primary assignment, which they subsequently do not use when they leave.

Like the RFL, the CBN plans to invest the UBTF funds. In this case, they would be invested in "Nigerian treasury bills (NTBs) and other securities as may be approved by the 'Unclaimed Balances Management Committee'. While this is important to ensure that owners or beneficiaries who emerge to make claims receive their "principal and interest (if any)," questions remain. Is it enough to warehouse the funds and the accruing interest?

The CBN has answered this question in part, noting that in implementing the scheme, its decisions and actions would be based on approvals by the Unclaimed Balances Management Committee, which means that the scheme is open to tweaking.

In that sense, one may then propose that where the bulk of these dormant assets are indeed traceable to accounts opened by youth corps members, then the CBN may consider expending the interest accruing on these funds in executing youth-centric projects that would benefit in the immediate term, serving youth corps members and younger Nigerians. This will provide the UBTF fund with some agency and currency as a source of good for the youth and society.

N20 trillion is a lot of money; many would be watching to see how transparently it is managed and utilised.

***Toni Kan is a PR expert who has worked in the UK Social Investment sector with the first Black Social Investment Vehicle**

South Sudan Boasts Many Potential Beyond Oil

James Alic Garang

Many people associate South Sudan's fortunes with oil resource. They are partly right because the country has immense oil potential with the latest statistics pointing to 3.5 billion barrels of oil, making it the singular contributor to the economy in the past.

What many do not know, however, is that there are many other factors that will ensure sustainable development for South Sudan.

For instance, South Sudan has other natural endowments beside oil. South Sudan has good investor friendly policies, including capital mobility. The core of these pursuits for growth is the Revitalized Peace Agreement, which has held relatively well since 2018. As a result, the country is gearing towards general elections in December 2024.

While the Sudan attained independence in 1956, South Sudan experienced a brutal conflict from 1955 till 1972 when peace accord

was signed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Again, the second civil war resumed in 1983 and continued through 2005.

That said, South Sudan attained autonomous status in 2005 following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in Kenya. Unfortunately, the country experienced internal conflict in December 2013, and the political settlement was reached in 2018 through the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan.

Notwithstanding the above tumultuous history, South Sudan has been establishing institutions of governance and accountability, while consolidating peace and strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations. Just like other countries in the region, South Sudan is now deepening relations with international financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and African Development Bank, among others.

RICH NATURAL ENDOWMENTS

Broadly, the oil has been the mainstay of the economy in recent years until it was interrupted by the ongoing conflict in Sudan, between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). It goes without saying that the biggest hindrance to diversifying the economy heretofore has been series of conflicts and the singular focus on oil exploration and production. In response to the resultant economic shocks, the government has now embarked on exploring other untapped sectors of the economy. This is more so because the country has many potentials, including in agriculture, tourism, fishing, timber, and mining among others.

The abovementioned areas have remained largely unexploited for one reason or another. The country is now focused on boosting local production; streamlining policies on mineral production; developing policies on gold mining, promoting eco-tourism, and enhancing revenue



Garang

collection, while augmenting transparency and governance reforms. Development partners have also shown greater interest and need to see improvements on these areas, with implications on efficient resource allocation,

Garang is the Governor, Bank of South Sudan, and Chair of the Monetary Affairs Committee for the East African Community

PERSPECTIVE

How NEPL/Seplat Energy JV is Transforming Education in Delta, Edo States

Raphael Adewoye

At a time when quality education is a crucial factor in national development all over the world, numerous challenges continue to bedevil Nigeria's education system. Despite the government's yearly budgetary allocations aimed at bolstering the sector and plugging the noticeable gaps, challenges seem to have become hydra-headed.

President Bola Tinubu's 2024 budget, while higher than previous years, allocated about 6.39 percent of the total budget to education—far short of the 15 to 20 percent recommended by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). This underfunding exacerbates the numerous challenges facing Nigeria's education system, including inadequate infrastructure, low-quality teaching, sectoral brain drain, and a significant gap between urban and rural educational opportunities. As the most populous country in Africa, Nigeria's education sector is in urgent need of intervention to ensure that its youth are equipped for the future and can compete on the front stage of the global economy.

In this regard, NEPL/Seplat Energy JV is providing hope through its education-focused initiatives. The just-concluded 13th edition of the NEPL/Seplat Energy JV PEARLS Quiz competition provides a pointer to the JV's dedication to fostering academic excellence and capacity building in Delta and Edo States. This annual competition not only challenges scholarly achievement among the students of both states, but also enhances the existing framework for education in these regions, proving a great example of social performance among corporations in Nigeria.

Designed to stimulate academic competition among secondary schools, the PEARLS Quiz has had a profound impact on the educational landscape of Delta and Edo States. This year's quiz saw stiff competition where only 142 schools progressed to the competition stage, after a rigorous qualifying test. The final event, held July 5, 2024, showcased the intellectual prowess of the top 32 schools, culminating in the victory of Imaguero College from Benin, Edo State. The winning school received a project-based cash prize of N10 million and a scholarship of N100,000 for each of the three participating students.

Securing the second place was Marble Hill School, Asaba, Delta State, awarded Five million naira for a project and a N75,000 scholarship for each of the three participating students, while the third place winner, Edo State's Baptist High School, received Three million naira for a project, and a N50,000 scholarship for each of the three participating students, respectively. All teachers of the schools that got to the competition stage were also given laptop gifts for their hard work and input.

Expressing her gratitude to the NEPL/Seplat Energy JV for organising the competition, Joy Obonodi, a student from Imaguero College said, "there are no words to express how I feel, I am overwhelmed. Like, is this possible? I don't know, because we were already losing.



Finalists from the NEPL/Seplat Energy quiz competition a

But the only thing I could think of was just to breathe and believe in God. "This kind of opportunity is an encouragement to the minds of people because I've been seeing this competition since I entered Primary 6. We have been doing it in my school. You are encouraging people. You are building the minds of individuals and we cannot thank you enough".

Speaking about Imaguero College's victory at the competition, Joan Osa Oviawe, Edo State Commissioner for Education commended Seplat Energy for the initiative.

"It is always a great thing when young people have an opportunity to participate in academic contests. I also want to congratulate our state's Secondary Education Board, the principal, executive principal of the school, teachers, and everybody who has had a role to play in what has happened today. It has been a long journey of reforming our education system through Governor Obaseki Edo Best 2.0 Education Reform Agenda, and I am quite elated to see that our public schools have come out on top."

What NEPL/Seplat Energy JV is doing is not limited to utilising the power of competition as an organising principle. The PEARLS quiz has been instrumental in driving infrastructural development in schools, which is pivotal to the establishment of the right learning environment for students. Since the start of the programme 13 years ago, winning schools have embarked on such endeavours as the construction of language laboratories, computer laboratories, libraries, and classroom blocks among other things. These upgrades are helpful for students as they are offered better study conditions and learning facilities, encouraging them to aspire to excellence. While considering the results of the PEARLS quiz, one cannot help but notice the radical academic change in the students from the two states. Over 57,875 students have benefited from the programme, and are now more confident persons with a sense of accomplishment. The initiative has also provided education grants to 108 students, with over 80 of them currently studying in various universities across Nigeria. Additionally, 22 students have benefited from

the NEPL/Seplat Energy JV undergraduate scholarship scheme, and three have undergone industrial training with the company. This holistic approach ensures that students are not only academically proficient but also prepared for future career opportunities.

It is pertinent to say that the PEARLS quiz has contributed significantly to the educational development of Delta and Edo States. The programme has been a key factor in maintaining high pass rates in external examinations such as the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) exams. By promoting a culture of academic excellence, the PEARLS Quiz has reinforced the value of quality education and the importance of lifelong learning.

The NEPL/Seplat Energy JV efforts have not gone unnoticed by state authorities. During the grand finale of the competition, Charles Ehiedu Aniagwu, Delta State Commissioner for Works (Rural and Riverine), representing Governor Sheriff Oborevwori, lauded the company's contributions to the educational sector. He affirmed that the state government's policies are in harmony with the JV's efforts in refining the inherent latent talents of youths and fostering growth and development. His remarks highlighted the shared values and collaborative efforts between Seplat Energy and the state governments in driving sustainable development.

"Even though over time, we have separated and become Edo and Delta, our children have been able to show us that they can compete, very favourably and very friendly. I am also so appreciative of the students who won, particularly coming from a public school. It's, of course, an indication of the fact that governments can indeed put more money into public schools," he said.

Emmanuel Otokhine, Base Manager of Seplat Energy's Western Asset, expressed his gratitude to the participating schools, students, and teachers. He acknowledged their hard work and dedication, which have been instrumental in the success of the competition. Otokhine reiterated Seplat Energy's commitment to supporting educational initiatives and investing in the future of Nigeria's youth.

He said: "We are involved in the whole education value chain. The key goal of Seplat is to promote academic excellence, encourage scholarship, encourage students to be more and more interested in education, and help to improve the quality of teaching skills of the teachers. And that is also why we do the Teachers Empowerment Program and a number of other programs. We also build school infrastructure. So, the whole length of the education value chain, we are all involved in that. Of course, this underscores our social development programs across the region, particularly in the Edo Delta State.

In his congratulatory remarks, Owunari Tomikeimeye, NNPC Exploration and Production Limited Representative dwelled on the possibilities that exist when education is given attention, especially in government-owned schools. Ezulu said: "I want to say a very big thank you to all the schools, the teachers, and the parents that have done so much for us to achieve this. There's one thing I want everyone here to take home, whether public or private school."

Nigerian Fashion House Champions Early Skills Acquisition for Children

Oluchi Chibuzor

In an era where digital screens often dominate children's free time, a pioneering fashion house is championing the importance of early skills acquisition in fashion and creativity.

Cedre Expressions, established in 2015, has been dedicated to nurturing the creative potential of Nigeria's youth through innovative educational programs.

The company's Creative Room offers flexible modules that provide a balanced approach to learning, combining practical hands-on experience with theoretical knowledge. From basic garment making to creative graphic design, the curriculum is tailored to engage children of various age groups and skill levels.

Cedre Expressions believes that fashion education can be as valuable as sports or music in a child's development. The firm sees fashion education as a tool for addressing broader societal issues, aiming to channel youthful energy positively and potentially reduce the risks of negative behaviours. By engaging children creatively from a young age, Cedre Expressions hopes to reduce the appeal of less constructive activities that often stem from boredom or lack of direction.

Several schools partnering with Cedre Expressions report increased engagement and enthusiasm among students involved in the fashion programs. Students not only learn to design and create garments but also gain confidence in their abilities and develop a sense of pride in their cre-

ations. This practical and creative engagement fosters a sense of accomplishment and self-worth among the young participants.

Behind this initiative is Toyin Dania, the Creative Director of Cedre Expressions.

"We believe that all children should have the opportunity to explore the world through their imaginations and creative expressions. Our aim is to shape children's future by providing platforms for skills acquisition crucial for today and tomorrow," Dania explained.

Dania's journey in fashion began with inspiration from her mother, a dressmaker, and was further fueled by her experiences as an undergraduate. Her diverse educational background, including degrees in Food Science and Engineering, Marketing, and Business

Administration, informs her holistic approach to fashion education. This unique blend of creative and business expertise is evident in Cedre Expressions' comprehensive training programs.

As Nigeria strives to diversify its economy and address unemployment, Cedre Expressions' approach to early skills acquisition offers a promising model for cultivating a more innovative, skilled, and economically diversified option. By prioritizing children's creative education today, the company aims to empower them to design their own future and contribute positively to society. Cedre Expressions stands as a testament to the power of education and creativity in driving positive change, shaping a brighter future for our world.



A model wearing one of the outfits from the academy



Participants during the training

IMAGES

It was a gathering of top dignitaries when Abdulazeez, son of the former ADC to the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, **Brigadier-General Mustapha Onoyiveta (Rtd)** married his heartthrob, Nusaiba, in Bauchi. Below are a few of the important personalities who graced the wedding reception held in Abuja, chaired by former President Goodluck Jonathan.



Parents of the groom, Mustapha and Princess Hassana Onoyiveta.



Former Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Ola Sa'ad Ibrahim and wife.



Wife of former Chief of Defence Staff, Mrs Victoria Iraboh and wife of former Chief of Army Staff, Mrs Felly Minimah.



Eng. D. U. Mohammed and wife.



Former First Lady, Hajia Turai Yar'Adua, the new couple, Abdulazeez and Nusaiba Onoyiveta and former President Goodluck Jonathan who chaired the reception ceremony.



Parents of the bride, Eng. Gambo Ibrahim and wife, Ayi.



Former Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Farouk Yahaya (Rtd.) and wife, Salamatu.



Former Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Azubuike Ihejirika (Rtd) and Major General S.N. Chikwe (Rtd.).



THISDAY editorial board chairman, Olusegun Adeniyi and Groom's auntie, Mrs Agatha Osagie-Erese.

IMAGES



L-R: Dean & Director, The FATE School, Bambo Adebowale; Economic Policy Advisor, Entrepreneurship Youth Employment & Healthcare Consulate-General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Lagos, Sonia Odije-Fajusigbe; Commissioner for Industry, Trade and Investment Ogun State, Adebola Sofela; Consular General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Lagos Nigeria, Michel Deelen; Executive Director, FATE Foundation, Adenike Adeyemi, and Director of Industrial Promotion, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, Ogun State, Engr. Kehinde O. Akintomide, at the launch of the Orange Corners Nigeria Hub in Ogun State...recently



L-R: Project Director, NewGlobe, Feyisayo Ayeni; Chief Executive Officer, Mobile Software Solutions, Mr. Chris Uwaje; Group Managing Director, NewGlobe Nigeria, Mr. Olusoji Akinyele; Director, Policy and Partnerships Africa NewGlobe, Kunbi Wuraola; Communications Director NewGlobe, Mr. Mayokun Aofiyebi and Director Schools, NewGlobe, Mr. Jeremiah Ogah, at the Titans of Tech Award event where NewGlobe was conferred with the Pan-African Digital Learning Company Award held in Lagos recently
ETOPUKUTT



L-R: Director, Odua Investment, Seni Adio; Group Managing Director/CEO, Abdulrahman Yinusa; Group Chairman, Bimbo Ashiru; Representative of Secretary to the Lagos State government, Omotayo Gbajabiamila; Directors, Chief Segun Ojo; Mrs Debola Osibogun and Otunba Lai Oriowo during the commissioning of Odu'a Investment Company Limited Lagos liaison office in Lagos...yesterday
Abiodun Ajala



L-R: Ekiti State Deputy Governor, Mrs. Monisade Afuye; Governor, Biodun Oyebanji; and Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, Mr. Ebenezer Boluwade, during the Inauguration of Livestock Productivity and Resilience Support [L-PRES] Project office and equipment; and flag off of fertiliser distribution to farmers in Ado-Ekiti...recently



L-R: Benevolence Coordinator, Caring Heart Initiative (CHI), Ayodele Da-Silva; Lead Evangelist, International Church of Christ Lagos (ICOC), Jide Ojo; HOD, Social Mobilisation Dept. LGEA Mainland, Mrs. Abimbola Oke; CHI Board Chairman, Imagbe Igbinoba; Board member CHI and Vice chairman fund raising committee, Anthony Osakwe at the Launching of Caring Heart Initiative Fund Raising for Early Childhood Development Program in Lagos..... recently



Rivers State Commissioner of Police; CP Tunji Disu addressing officers of the command before redeployment to their various duties at the Command Headquarters in Port Harcourt ...yesterday



L-R: Co-Project Lead; Fola David Team; Timisire Abayomi; Group Corporate Communication and Events General Manager; Tolaram; Temitope Ashiwaju; new Guinness World Record holder for the world's largest painting by an individual; Dr. Fola David; and Project Manager; Fola David Team; Oraka Nnanyelu during a press conference at Tolaram head office in Surulere; Lagos recently



(L - R) Mrs Funlola Abijo, Mrs Enitan Moss, the celebrant, Mrs Yetunde Awe, Mrs Deola Popoola and Mr Jide Moss during the 60th birthday celebration of Mrs Awe recently

CFAO Presents Salient Attributes of All-new Toyota Land Cruiser Prado

The Nigerian auto market has just received a significant boost with the grand unveiling of the all-new 2024 Toyota Land Cruiser Prado from Toyota by CFAO, an authorized distributor of Toyota vehicles in Nigeria.

This latest model promises to enhance both off-road and everyday driving experiences, making it an essential addition to any vehicle enthusiast's collection.

With over 11.3 million vehicles sold in more than 170 countries, the Toyota Land Cruiser Prado is one of the best-selling models in the world. The recent launch introduced two extraordinary editions—the Limited Edition, also known as the First Edition, and the Adventure Edition—at the CFAO Toyota showroom on Victoria Island, Lagos.

Boasting enhanced new features, the Land Cruiser Prado is designed to excel in both rugged terrains and daily commutes.

Toyota has ensured that this vehicle lives up to its reputation for quality, durability, and reliability, with a focus on creating a vehicle that can “go anywhere and come back safely.”

A Blend of Power and Performance

The all-new Land Cruiser Prado comes equipped with a powerful gasoline 2.4L turbo-charged engine with an engine torque of 430NM @ 1700 - 3600 paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission, delivering an exhilarating driving experience that balances power and efficiency.

Its robust design, advanced technology, and exceptional off-road capabilities ensure that every journey is an unforgettable adventure.

Since its first launch in 1951, the Land Cruiser has maintained its classic, sturdy body and chassis architecture. The new model developed on the same platform similar to the Toyota Land Cruiser 300, offers significantly enhanced all-terrain capabilities.



The all-new 2024 Toyota Land Cruiser Prado

Advanced Features for Superior Off-Roading

A key feature of the new Land Cruiser Prado is the stabilizer bar with a disconnection mechanism, introduced for the first time in a Toyota vehicle.

At the touch of a button, the driver can disconnect the front stabilizer bar system to increase suspension travel, making it easier to conquer obstacles. This system automatically reconnects at speeds above 30 km/h to ensure optimum road holding.

The Multi-Terrain Monitor and Panoramic View Monitor systems provide additional assistance during off-road driving, featuring four cameras with a high-resolution screen to help navigate challenging landscapes.

Classic Design Meets Modern Functionality

The Land Cruiser Prado's design artfully combines traditional elements with modern features, resulting in a vehicle that excels in both style and function. The exterior boasts a classic Land Cruiser silhouette with strong horizontal lines, while the new-generation model has significantly updated dimensions: 4930mm in length, 1980mm in width, and 1935mm in height, with an increased wheelbase of 2,850mm.

The vehicle also includes features like Crawl

Control for obstacle clearance assistance, a Heads-Up Display for easier reading of vital information, and up to 8 airbags for enhanced safety.

Reliability and Assurance

Toyota by CFAO ensures the availability of genuine parts for all customers and offers the new Land Cruiser Prado with a 3-year or 100,000-kilometer manufacturer's warranty, whichever comes first.

The unveiling coincided with the first anniversary of Toyota by CFAO in Nigeria, marking a year of meeting customer demands with a range of passenger cars, SUVs, commercial vehicles, and after-sales services.

Spiro Officially Launches Electric Vehicles in Ogun

Spiro, Africa's largest electric vehicle (EV) player, has announced the official launch of its operations in Ogun State. The launch event which took place on 31st July 2024 at a grand ceremony at the Arcade Ground, Ogun state Governor's Office, Oke-Mosan, Abeokuta, attended by His Excellency, Prince Adedapo Oluseun Abiodun, The Governor of Ogun State, Noimot Salako-Oyedele, The Deputy Governor of Ogun State, Sen. Said Alkali, The Honourable Minister of Transportation, other government officials, traditional rulers, industry leaders, and key stakeholders. This landmark expansion marks a pivotal moment in the electric mobility landscape of Nigeria's largest economy.

With more than 17,000 electric motorbikes already deployed across sub-Saharan Africa, Spiro's strategic expansion into Nigeria will see its presence in up to eight of Nigeria's major provinces, including Abeokuta, Ibadan, Lagos, and Abuja. This dedicated effort aims to electrify the nation's mobility, substantially reducing carbon emissions while promoting environmental sustainability and enhancing the quality of life for Nigerians.

In Africa, greenhouse gas emissions from transportation are growing at a rate of 7% each year. Air pollution is the second biggest killer across



Launch of electric motorbikes by Spiro in Ogun State... recently

the continent, associated with heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer. Around 1.1 million people die prematurely from air pollution in Africa each year.

Spiro's unique model is centered around battery swapping, allowing riders to use Spiro's swapping stations, fast and slow chargers, and

home charging solutions – a flexible solution to ensure the delivery of energy when and where our customers need it. State of Charge (SoC) technology significantly enhances the Spiro riding experience, offering a seamless, efficient, and environmentally friendly mode of transport.

Strategic Partnerships for Growing Nigeria's EV Ecosystem

The company's expansion is further supported by strategic partnerships that have accelerated the growth of Spiro's charging network. This network expansion is pivotal in making EVs a viable option for more people, contributing to a substantial reduction in carbon emissions and promoting sustainable development.

In Nigeria, Spiro has already announced strategic partnerships with Max, Dot, and Onocon, who share our vision for a cleaner and healthier world, where riders have access to affordable and reliable transportation and cutting-edge technology.

“Our expansion marks a new chapter for Spiro and the broader EV ecosystem in Nigeria. We'll deploy a significant number of bikes in our first year in Nigeria, enabling a lifestyle shift towards cleaner, more sustainable transportation options. Our goal is to electrify mobility across Africa, and Nigeria, as Africa's economic powerhouse, represents an important step on that journey,” said Kaushik Burman, CEO of Spiro.

Championing Environmental Sustainability and Quality of Life

Spiro's foray into Nigeria is underpinned by a commitment to innovation, sustainability, and the enhancement of the African smart energy ecosystem. Spiro's automated swap stations embody Spiro's dedication to offering efficient, reliable, and environmentally friendly transportation solutions.

WinPart by CFAO Now Distributes Motul Lubricant in Nigeria

Motul, a globally acclaimed leader in the production of high-performance lubricants and automotive fluids, has formally announced a strategic partnership with WinPart by CFAO, a distinguished multi-brand spare parts and lubricant distributor in Nigeria. This collaboration is set to significantly enhance the availability and accessibility of Motul's premium lubricants to retailers, workshop owners, fleet maintenance companies, motorbike enthusiasts, among others.

The partnership between Motul and WinPart by CFAO marks a significant step forward in Nigeria's automotive industry. Leveraging WinPart by CFAO's extensive distribution network and commitment to customer service, this alliance

ensures that Motul's high-quality lubricants are more readily available to a broader audience, making it easier for consumers and businesses to access the products they need for optimal performance.

Both Motul and WinPart by CFAO says they are committed to maintaining the highest standards of quality, so customers can trust that they are purchasing genuine Motul products that meet stringent industry standards.

“We are thrilled to join forces with WinPart by CFAO,” said Olivier De Pennart, Motul's General Manager for North, West, and Central Africa. “This partnership aligns perfectly with our goal of making top-tier lubricants and automotive fluids more accessible to our customers. We are confident that WinPart by CFAO's expertise and extensive network will help us achieve this aim.”



Motul, a globally acclaimed lubricant

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**STILL MANY
RIVERS TO CROSS**

A **THIS DAY** WEEKLY PULL-OUT

3.8.2024

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Kelechi Iheanacho
The New Sevillista

GLOBAL SOCCER

Kelechi Iheanacho

The New Sevillista

After several months of speculation as to his next destination, Super Eagles forward, Kelechi Iheanacho has finally put pen to paper for Spanish giants,, Sevilla after seven years with Leicester City making it the first time the 27-year-old will be playing professionally outside England. How well the U17 World Cup winner settles in at the Estadio Ramón Sánchez-Pizjuán; remains to be seen as the five-time Europa Cup champions are on a rebuilding process after most of the club's senior players left at the end of last season



Iheanacho gets past an opponent

Super Eagles forward, Kelechi Iheanacho has finally decided to pitch tent with Spanish giants,, Sevilla on a two-year making it the first time he would be plying his football trade outside England in spite of offers from Premier League clubs, notably Ipswich and Aston Villa.

Sevilla FC, has officially confirmed the signing of Nigerian international and former Leicester City forward, Kelechi Iheanacho.

The contract of the 2013 FIFA U-17 golden boy with the East-Midlands expired in June which ended his seven-year stint at the King Power stadium.

Meanwhile, the seven-time Europa League champions, Sevilla, emerged the frontrunner to secure the signature of the forward, with interests from top clubs in Europe for his signature.

The Super Eagles star has now penned a two-year contract with the Spanish club, bringing his free agency to an end and marking a significant addition to Sevilla's attacking lineup.

Sevilla has further solidified its relationship with Nigerian football by signing Chidera Ejuke, and now, with Iheanacho's transfer, the connection is set to grow even stronger.

This move will reunite the former Manchester City forward with his fellow Nigerian, Ejuke, mirroring his previous partnership with Wilfred Ndidi at Leicester City.

Iheanacho has indeed stated that

he is confident playing alongside his international teammate will bring Sevilla success and also revealed the how with Sergio Agüero, Edin Dzeko as well as playing under Pep Guardiola has assisted him.

Iheanacho is being brought in by the Andalusian club as a replacement for Youssef En-Neseyri who bagged 73 goals in 196 games for them.

Iheanacho is happy to link up with his countryman Ejuke who also signed for Sevilla this summer and is hoping the duo's presence can bring fortune to the club.

Speaking in his first interview, the Manchester City Academy product revealed his excitement about playing alongside Ejuke.

"Obviously, it's the first time having Nigerians in the team, so hopefully it will bring good luck to the team and we'll give our best for the football club and for the fans to help the team to achieve great success this season," Iheanacho said in a press release.

"I think we're happy to be here, and I know Nigerians are happy as well. So hopefully we enjoy it and it will be a good one."

The 27-year-old had the privilege of playing with Agüero and Dzeko while at Manchester City as well as being coached by Guardiola during his stay at the Etihad and revealed how much he has learned from them.

"I have learned a lot playing alongside those players and from a great coach like Pep. They are legends. I

hope that everything I learned there, I can contribute everything to this club and help reach greater heights."

Asked about his playing style, the Nigeria international disclosed that he likes to play as a lone striker or with a partner.

"As a striker, I can play as the only striker or with another teammate. I just want to play with my heart and give it my all."

"Go out and give it my all on the pitch, give 100% in every game. I hope we can achieve success together as a club. I can't wait to get started"

The club revealed on Wednesday that the erstwhile Manchester City forward arrived on a free transfer after several seasons at Leicester City. He signs for two seasons at Nervión with the option for one more.

Iheanacho is the club's fifth signing ahead of the 2024/25 season following the arrival of compatriot, Ejuke as well as Gerard Peque, Saúl and Albert Sambi.

"Kelechi Iheanacho has become our fifth signing of the summer. He signs on a two-year deal and arrives as a free agent, having spent last season at Leicester City," Sevilla confirmed on their website.

"The Nigerian striker, who began his career in 2014 in his homeland, made the move to Europe the following season with Manchester City, initially playing in the English club's youth teams.

"He went on to make 64 appear-

ances for the City first team, scoring 21 goals and providing seven assists over the next two seasons."

With this move, Iheanacho becomes the third African in Garcia Pimienta's squad after compatriot, Ejuke and France youth international of Ivorian descent, Tanguy Nianzou.

At the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan, the Super Eagle would be hoping to revive his stuttering career. Last season, he scored five goals in 23 league appearances as the Foxes secured their return to English topflight.

After finishing 14th in the previous season, Sevilla will not participate in the upcoming European campaign. However, Iheanacho's skills will be crucial in the upcoming season.

When Leicester City were relegated from the Premier League penultimate season, Iheanacho was one of the club's top players expected to dump the club but the £18m price tag on him served as a hindrance for clubs craving for his signature and after failure to secure a move away from the King Power Stadium, he decided to focus on getting Leicester City back to the Premier League.

"I didn't get to move and I'm here now playing for Leicester City.

"We went down, it's not ideal but we are here now and fighting our way up. I'm here concentrating on my football with Leicester City and hopefully we will get back up and everyone will be happy.

"We concentrate on that now and hopefully other players that didn't get to move as well all contribute to the team to get up there, which is the most important thing now," he had said.

Iheanacho came into the limelight at the 2013 U17 World Cup, where he helped Nigeria to win the trophy. His impressive performances ensured he won the tournament's Golden Ball and Silver Shoe awards.

Despite receiving offers from several top European clubs, the striker joined Manchester City from Taye Academy for an undisclosed fee.

The Nigerian scored his first career hat-trick on January 30th, 2016 against Aston Villa in the fourth round of the FA Cup.

Before leaving the Etihad Stadium due to his inability to tie down a regular place in Pep Guardiola's star-studded squad, Iheanacho accounted for 12 goals in 46 appearances across all competitions.

It however remains to be seen how well Iheanacho settles in at the Estadio Ramón Sánchez-Pizjuán; considering the five-time Europa Cup champions are on a rebuilding

Still Many Rivers to Cross as All Eyes Turn to Track and Field for Nigeria's Medal Hope

With the Super Falcons out of the women's football event and Nigeria's basketball team's hope of progressing hanging in the balance after Thursday's loss to France, and Anuolwapo Opeyori ouster in the badminton event, Nigerian would be turning to the track and field events which kicked off on Wednesday for any shape of medal, but there are still many rivers to cross, writes **Kunle Adewale**



All eyes on Tobi Amusan as tracks and field gets underway in Parishopeful

Boxing, track and field have always been the strongest hold of Team Nigeria at any Olympics and it was no surprise when the country's first medal-bronze, at the world's biggest sporting fiesta came from a pugilist, in the person of Nojim Maiyegun at the 1964 Olympics. Indeed, Nigeria's second medal at the Games also came from boxing.

It wasn't until the 1996 edition in Atlanta that football won gold for Nigeria and a bronze at the Rio edition in 2014.

However, Nigeria's biggest hope for a medal at the Olympics has always been on the track and Paris 2024 edition will not be different.

Like all other editions of Games before this year's, poor preparation has always been Nigeria's bane, but the country's sports-loving populace would be counting on the grit and determination of athletes such as Tobi Amusan, Efe Brume and Favour Ofili amongst others to wave their magic wands when the chips are down.

However, the country was dealt a great

2024 OLYMPICS

blow after it was discovered that Nigeria's national champion in the women's 100-metre sprint, Ofili won't run the race at the Paris Olympics because her country's track federation didn't enter her into the field in time in what can only be described as a monumental clerical error.

Ofili said on social media, 'It is with great regret that I have just been told I will not be competing in the 100 meters at this Olympic Games.'

'Have worked for four years to earn this opportunity. For what....to not be entered and compete at the Olympic Games because the responsible organisation (the Nigerian Olympic Committee) failed to enter me.'

The women's 100 prelims kicked off the start of Olympic track on Wednesday.

Ofili won Nigeria's national title in June with a time of 11.06 seconds, and her personal-best time of 10.93 would have made her a contender to race in the final in Paris. Though, she is still entered in the 200 metres and the 4x100 relay.

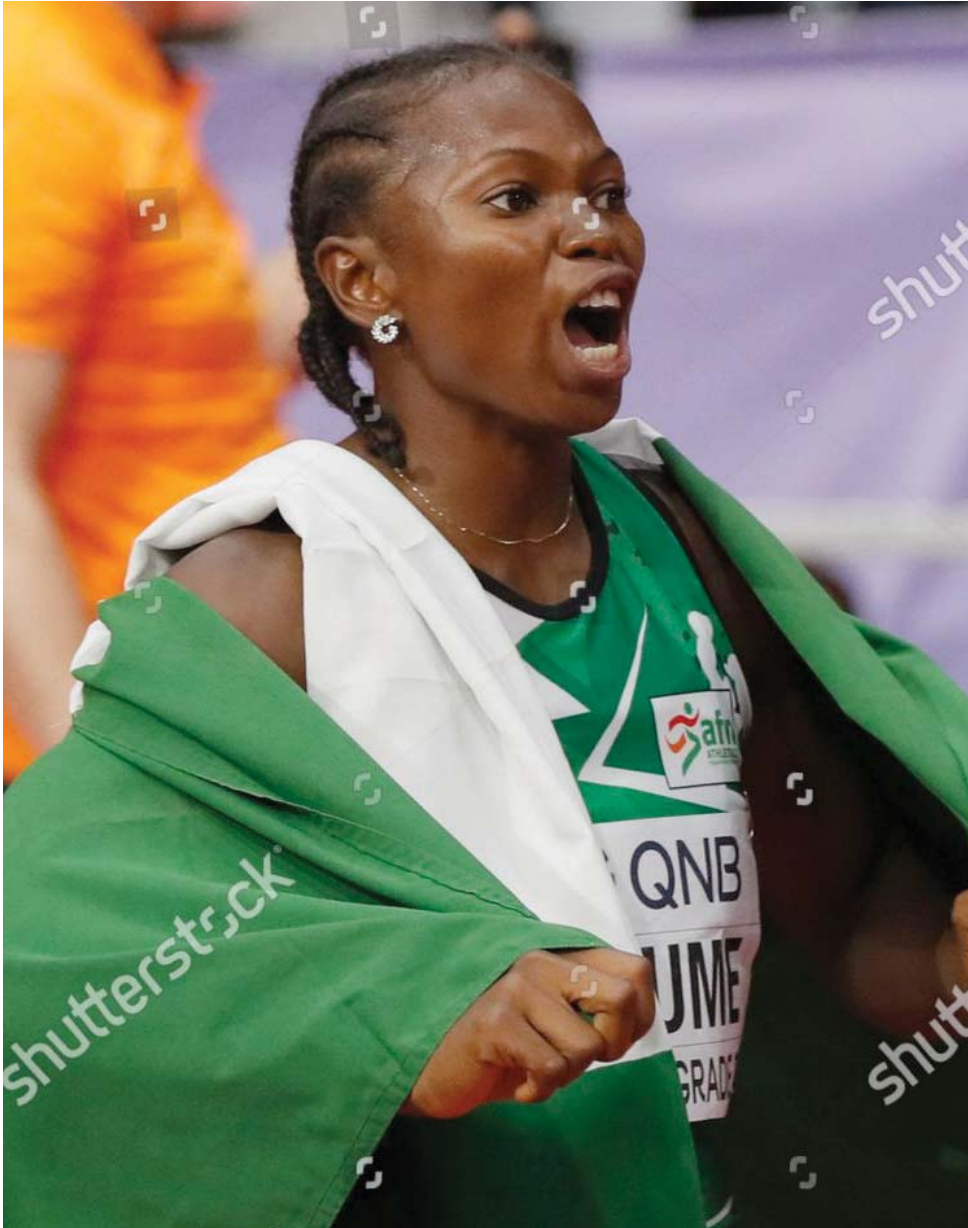
According to the Olympic news service, Ofili missed the Tokyo Games because Nigeria had failed to meet minimum testing requirements for a number of its athletes, as required by track and field's Athletics Integrity Unit.

She slammed the NOC and the Athletics Federation of Nigeria in a furious message on Instagram, writing: 'If those responsible are NOT held accountable for taking this opportunity from me, neither organisation can EVER be trusted in the future!'

Ofili is the Nigerian national champion in the 100-metre sprint - but she can't contest the glamour event in Paris

The 21-year-old did everything right in her quest to battle the fastest women in the world next week - but has been barred from the event due to an unforgivable clerical error.

In a statement, Nigeria's sports minister, John Enoh, said he had been in contact with officials from the country's athletics federation and they had assured him that Ofili had been



Ese Brume, another Nigerian medal hopeful

included on registration forms for the 100, 200 and 4x100, and the forms had been passed on to the Nigerian Olympic Committee to submit.

Enoh said he was waiting for an explanation from the head of the NOC as to why she was left out of the 100.

This isn't the first time Nigerian athletes have run into this problem. At the 2019 world championships, a paperwork mix-up almost disqualified Divine Oduduru and Blessing Okagbare from the meet, and they were allowed to race only after appealing to World Athletics.

Hammer thrower, Annette Echikunwoke ended up missing the Tokyo Olympics because of the same drug-testing issue that cost Ofili.

Indeed, the World Athletics have ruled out the possibility of Nigeria making a podium appearance in the Discus event. The World Athletics in its preview gave Nigeria's trio of Ashely Anumba, Obiageli Pamela and Chioma Onyekwere no chance of a medal podium at the Paris showpiece.

While Pamela is ranked 28th in the world, Onyekwere and Anumba are ranked 39th and 44th respectively.

In a chat with THISDAY, former Nigeria Olympics gold and bronze medalist, Enefiok Udo-Obon ahead of this year's summer Olympics in Paris, he admitted that Nigeria was not prepared for the sports' biggest showpiece.

"The truth is that we're not prepared for the

Olympics. Preparation is not about how much are we giving the athletes over time but how long have we put the athletes together. Are we trying to prepare? Yes, we are, but it's probably a little too late. Our preparation should have been over a four-year circle and getting ready in the last two-years. Even, there were lots of controversies over the team list, which shows that we're not totally ready for it.

"However, we still have a lot of hope to win medals because of some of our established athletes in Tobi Amusan, Ese Brume and the likes, who a getting closer to winning time. We have hope in javelin and discuss women and also one or two relays. We can have hope. But are we prepared, the answer is no. Is it something that we deserve? I really don't think so.

"At, best we can win three medals. I don't know the colour or the shape but not more than three. If we have to be very sincere with ourselves, we have to make our expectations consciously," he said.

"We have a young team, a good side and anything else we get from the Games is going to be a bonus. We are going to try, we are going to compete, but we should not be putting pressure on them because our preparation and selection process was not very smooth," Enefiok expressed.

With Nigerian athletes falling like pack of card at the ongoing Olympics, Amusan and Brume, probably remains the country's only hope for a medal, except the unthinkable happened.

GLOBAL SOCCER

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Osimhen celebrating one of his brace against Juventus

Napoli, Chelsea in Stalemate over Osimhen's Transfer Deal

The ongoing uncertainty surrounding Victor Osimhen is causing increasing frustration for the decision-makers at Napoli and Chelsea.

Napoli are eager to see the departure of Osimhen to kickstart their transfer plans, particularly to facilitate the arrival of Romelu Lukaku, who is lined up as Osimhen's successor.

However, the lack of any concrete offers for the Nigerian striker is proving to be a significant obstacle.

A few weeks ago, Osimhen appeared close to joining Paris Saint-Germain. Negotiations with Napoli were intense, with PSG's Luis Campos and Nasser Al-Khelaifi reportedly approving Osimhen as a potential replacement for Kylian Mbappé.

However, PSG manager Luis Enrique is not in favour

of acquiring the Nigerian forward at Napoli's quoted €130 million fee, which has stalled the move. Unless there is a change in PSG's stance, it seems unlikely that they will pursue Osimhen further.

This is a setback for Napoli, who were banking on the sale of Osimhen for at least €100 million to finance their transfer activities.

Lukaku, identified as Osimhen's replacement, is already waiting in the wings.

The Belgium international, a key player under Antonio Conte at Inter Milan, scored 64 goals in 95 games during their collaboration and is keen to reunite with the Italian manager at Napoli.

Chelsea, who are looking to offload Lukaku and his substantial salary (over €11 million per year), have agreed to

a €40 million deal with Napoli.

However, this agreement hinges on Napoli first selling Osimhen. The delay in Osimhen's sale is frustrating both clubs, as it is preventing progress on other potential transfers.

Chelsea's patience is wearing thin, especially as other clubs have shown interest in Lukaku.

Reports from Il Mattino indicate that an agreement with Aston Villa has been reached, but Lukaku is not interested in moving to Birmingham. He prefers a move to Napoli under Conte and is willing to wait for the situation to resolve, much to Chelsea's dismay.

In other words, the transfer market stalemate is largely due to the absence of any substantial offers for Osimhen, leaving both Napoli and Chelsea stuck in a frustrating deadlock.



Rangers Ekeson Okorie challenged by Fatai Abdullahi of Enyimba during the opening match of the Coal City International Cup at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium, Enugu

Football Development Can't be Put in Hands of Government Alone, Says Ikpeba

Fidelis David in Akure

Former Super Eagles player and 1997 African Footballer of the Year, Victor Ikpeba, yesterday said football development in Nigeria must not be put in the hands of government alone.

Ikpeba, who stated this in Akure, the Ondo State capital at a news conference ahead of the finals of annual Akogun Football Competition holding in Oka-Akoko, Akoko South-West Local Government Area of the state, said he will continually do more to support grassroots football development as he was also a product of grassroots football.

The former 1994 African Cup of Nations winner, noted that apart from discovering talents from the competition, it will promote unity, love, peace and

progress among the youths.

"It's a privilege to be in Akure, I am here to support Akogun Gbenga Omole for what he has been doing. I think this is the sixth edition, I am also a product of grassroots football.

"Though I have stopped playing, I still get myself involved in football, I am still part of Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) technical committee, so it's our role to support grassroots football.

"So when I was contacted to be part of this programme, and I saw what Omole has been doing in the past six years, I was impressed and I think there is no better way to give back to the community and see how you can develop these young boys and girls.

"I know people love football in Ondo State, I decided to come

and my teammates have been here before to support what he is doing. We are here to support him and it is a privilege to be in Akoko.

"I want to commend him and also appreciate the state governor, he saw us yesterday, I want to thank the people of Ondo State. It was peaceful when we got here yesterday," the 1996 Olympics gold medalist said.

He said for his teammates to have graced the occasion in the past, showed that the competition was on the right track in discovering more talents for the country.

The organiser of the competition, Omole, said the competition has produced more talents for local teams and with about five already playing outside the country.

Team Nigeria's Mixed Relay Hopes Fade as USA Set New World Record

● *Chukwuma to battle Richardson, Fraser-Pryce, Others in 100m S'final today*

Duro Ikazuagbe Live in Paris

Despite running a new national record of 3:11.99 to finish fourth in the second heat of the 4x400m Mixed Relay yesterday evening, Team Nigeria failed to make the cut for the final of the event at the ongoing Paris 2024 Olympic Games here in France.

The quartet of Samuel Ogazi, Ella Onojuvwevw, Emmanuel Ojeli and Patience Okon-George left Nigerians inside the massive Stade de France in despair with the performance. They were expected to be amongst the eight teams to battle for the 1600 Mixed Relay medals.

Nigerian track officials responsible for the selection of the team clearly missed the point in leaving out either Easter Elo Joseph or Omolara Ogunmakinu from this crucial event. Either of the two quarter milers was capable of running faster than Patience Okon-George the weakest link of the quartet that finished fourth in the

final leg of the mixed relay.

Expectedly, Great Britain won the heat with a new national record of 3:10.61 while The Netherlands (3:10.81) and Italy (3:11.59) picked the second and third spots to qualify for the final.

The biggest news of the day was the new world record of 3:07.41 set by the United States of America in the 4x400m Mixed Relay. They effectively erased their previous record of 3:08.80 set at the 2023 World Championships in Budapest.

"I always knew we were going to run fast, and we talked about how it was going to take a record to win a medal," said American Shamier Little. "It took a record to win our prelim."

The French team were willed across the finish by a partisan home crowd, as they held off Belgium (3:10.74) and Jamaica (3:11.06) to finish second in 3:10.60 in the rarely contested event. Belgium, Jamaica and Poland completed the field for the final slated for today, Saturday.

Also today, Nigeria's lone surviving sprinter in the 100m, Rosemary Chukwuma will have the unfortunate pairing with reigning world 100m champion, Shar'Carri Richardson (10.71) and Julien Alfred (10.77) drawn in her semifinal heat, for the two automatic tickets on offer for spots in the final.

Also to run in the same semifinal heat are two-time Olympic 100m champion, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce of Jamaica and reigning African Championships and African Games champion, Gina Bass.

Chukwuma will be hoping for a repeat performance of the 10.88 lifetime best she ran in May to set a new mark by a Nigerian woman in the semifinal of the event at the Olympics to put herself in contention for a place in the final either as one of the two automatic qualifiers or one of the two fastest losers.

The Nigerian lady was unsettled in the opening heat, barely managing to escape a false start to qualify for the semifinal in 11.26

Bright Start for Rangers in Coal City Cup, Edge Past Enyimba

An Agu Kenekchukwu's left-footed shot taken inside the box off Okorie Chiedozie's intelligent cut-back as he ran unto Isaac Saviour's defense-splitting pass on 51 minutes of play turned out to be the match-winner for reigning NPFL champions, Rangers International FC as they edged past oriental rivals, Enyimba, in the opening match of 042 Coal City International Cup preseason tournament.

The Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium, Enugu, was the perfect setting for this epic soccer show as the two most decorated clubs in the country battled for bragging rights on a

cold Thursday night in Coal City.

Okorie was at his element and a handful for the backline of the Aba boys but was not too lucky with hitting the bullseye when the opportunities came his way as was in the 6th minute when he was set up by diminutive, Isaac Saviour.

Coach Fidelis Ikchukwu handed starts to new boy and former Enyimba defender, Macben Otika who paired with Charles Okafor in the heart of the defense for Rangers while regular suspects like Kenneth Igboke and Joel Odoh held sway as wing-backs with Ejike Ugochukwu saddled with his

defensive midfield role in a 4-3-3 formation with former Heartland' hitman, Okafor Onyekachi leading the assault upfront.

At the end of the encounter, Ikchukwu said, "It was a very good game and a difficult test for my boys but we did well to contain our opponent and scored the only goal of the match which is very important. Enyimba showed great stuff today but we were very lucky to have won. We continue our rebuilding process leading up to the CAF Champions League and I commend my boys for standing out tall in this preseason encounter."

expect better tidings in the days ahead in the competition," Obruthe said.

IfaanyiChukwu Ogbu, Managing Director SKI HI Entertainment said he was particularly happy that all the participants were having a great tournament.

"We expect to stage a hitch-free event and that is why we have been working round the clock in the past few months. Thank God, the event is going on well," Ogbu said

The Coal City International Cup started with two tradi-

...Attendance Excites Organisers of Competition

The organisers of the first edition of the Coal City International Cup have expressed delight over the response of spectators at the stadium for the Day One of the event taking place in Enugu.

Director of Strategy for the competition, Onome Obruthe, said he was shocked to see the spectators turning up for an event in its inaugural edition.

"It was a surprise the way fans turned out and we believe this also affected the teams because the standard has been very impressive, we are so excited about this and

tional rivals, Rangers and Enyimba locking horns at the Nnamdi Azikiwe Stadium apparently in preparation for the CAF Champions League and Confederation Cup respectively.

Today is scheduled as a rest day for all the six teams taking part in the competition in Enugu.

The teams are Rangers, Enyimba, Shooting Stars, Remo Stars, Coal City and FC Kalon of Sierra Leone.

The tournament continues tomorrow, while the final is slated for August 8.

Niger Tornadoes Appoint Mohammed as Substantive Gaffer

Niger Tornadoes Appoint Mohammed as Substantive Gaffer

Niger Tornadoes FC Minna has officially confirmed Majin Mohammed as the team's Substantive Technical Adviser on a season-long contract. The appointment was formalized at a signing and unveiling ceremony held at the Niger Tornadoes Secretariat, Niger State Ministry of Youth and Sports Development.

In his address, Commissioner of Youth and Sports Develop-

ment, Ibrahim Gulbin-Boka praised the management for their decisive and timely decision towards ensuring the team's safety last season and commended Majin Mohammed for his exceptional performance in rescuing the team from the drop, urging him to exceed expectations now that he is fully in charge of the team.

Chairman of the Niger Tornadoes Management Committee, Ibrahim Dada, highlighted Majin Mohammed's impressive achievements as Acting Technical Adviser, notably

guiding the team from 19th position to avoiding relegation. He emphasized that this success made Majin the ideal candidate for the substantive role.

He re-echoed the need for Mohammed to step up his game as only his performance can guarantee his stay on the job.

In an interview with journalists shortly after his unveiling, Mohammed, expressed his gratitude to the team's management, his assistants, players, and entire staff for their support in making his appointment a reality.

StarTimes Gears Up for LaLiga, Carabao Cup, NPFL

StarTimes has freshened its sports offering for the 2024-2025 season with the return of La Liga and the new arrival, the Carabao Cup.

The 2024-2025 LaLiga season kicks off on August 15th, and StarTimes is bringing all 380 matches live to African viewers on its Sports Premium and Sports Life channels as well as StarTimes-ON app.

This dynamic duo joins StarTimes' already impressive

sports roster, including Bundesliga, Nigeria Premier Football League, Copa del Rey, Saudi Pro League and more.

Fresh off their UEFA Euro 2024 victory, Spain continues to reign supreme. Notably, 20 players from last season's champion squad honed their skills in LaLiga! And let's not forget Real Madrid's record-breaking 15th Champions League title last season, solidifying their position as the undisputed kings of the competition.

This season promises to be a star-studded affair: French superstar Kylian Mbappé has joined Real Madrid. LaLiga boasts the most star power of any league, with a staggering eight players valued at over €100 million, surpassing the Premier League's 6. Real Madrid's attacking trio of Mbappé, Vinicius Junior, and Jude Bellingham alone holds a combined value of €180 million, making them the most valuable attacking line in the world!

EXPRESSION

‘Unidentified Gunmen’ Wrong

THE Guardian of July 16 nurtured lexical falsehoods: "...were in Wase on Friday (a comma) last week (another comma) for the restoration of peace and normalcy in (to) the council."

"That last week (week's) attack on Wase..."

"...three persons were reported killed in Kanana village in Langtan South by unidentified gunmen in their resumed hostilities." Jettison 'unidentified' from the extract—these callous blokes are never identified or known. Spare readers the trite embellishments that are fast becoming components of Nigerian lexicon. (Vide the next sentence)

"It was learnt that unknown gunmen on Friday night..." Beyond the 'unknown gunmen' thrash, a reputable newspaper should obligatorily inform readers of what 'it learnt'—not hazy and indolent reportage.

"The sleeping and isolated Maza Ward in Jos North Local Council was also attacked..." Plateau crises: sleepy—not sleeping—ward!

Reporters should avoid these juvenile expressions: 'It was gathered'/'It was further learnt'/'Sources informed our publication that...' The foregoing and more demonstrate reportorial slothfulness! Go straight to the point.

"Reports say that the gunmen..." Why not 'Accounts have it that the gunmen...' It sounds odd for a publication that is reporting an event to be saying 'reports say...'!

Still on The Guardian: "BA plane

develops fault, grounded at airport" Where else would it have been grounded? At Rutam House of The Guardian? To ground an aircraft is to stop it or the pilot from flying: All aircraft were grounded yesterday until the inclement weather cleared.

"...they condemned the airline officials for keeping them in the dark as to the real cause for (of) the delay."

Not yet over with The Guardian of July 16 which contained four solecisms: "...the judiciary to whom (which) they look (look up to) for succour or redress has also turned to a haven of sorts for the looters."

"Corrupt public officers (officials) do not worry about their arraignment in court anymore." Except in rare extrajudicial circumstances, the only place for arraignment is court. Once someone is arraigned, it means that they were taken to a court. So, 'arraignment in court' is 'under-bridge'/'bend-down' English literature!

The last entry from The Guardian under review: "The party chairman and his entourage arrived at Obasanjo's Hill Top, (sic) Abeokuta residence at noon and held a three-and-half hours (hours') closed-door meeting with Obasanjo." The meeting was held behind closed doors—there is nothing like 'closed-door meeting'! And this: the party's chairman.

Point of grammar: If the noun that follows a percentage of is plural, use a plural verb after it: Only a small percentage of people are interested in politics in Nigeria.

Last week's unpardonable oversight: "This is why in the developed world,

(sic) creation of jobs is used as indices (an index) of measuring the health of the economy." (Daily Trust, April 11) Singular: index; plural: indexes or indices. Thanks to the eagle-eyed readers who noted this. I saw it shortly after I had hurriedly sent in my column, almost late. Apologies all the same!

Yet another slip-up: "...the level of unemployment generated on a monthly is key in information for the government." (Source: as above) A rewrite: ... the level of unemployment generated on a monthly basis or monthly is key for the government.

Feedback

"DEAR Mr. Wabara, your observation about the expression 'all nooks and crannies' in your column last week is inaccurate. The expression is perfectly correct. Note that although idioms, such as 'every nook and cranny' are fixed expressions, they are nevertheless not only malleable in certain contexts, they also have non-idiomatic equivalents. The expression in question—all nooks and crannies—is not idiomatic at all. It is an acceptable, Learner's Dictionary 8th Edition Page 994. Kind regards." (Dr. Garvey Ufot/07061248849)

MY response: I did not say that 'all nooks and crannies' is an idiom. 'Every nook and cranny' is the idiom used informally in reference to 'every part of a place'. The fact is that idioms and some entries are fixed/stock expressions that cannot—no matter the circumstance, privilege or poetic licence/liberty/freedom—be adapted, re-phrased, amplified, embellished, vitiated or tampered with in anyway if



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it is formal/standard/official writing no matter the context. 'A beehive of activity' cannot become 'a beehive of activities'; 'under the weather' (when someone is ill) will never change to 'in the weather'; 'meeting behind closed doors' cannot be transformed or altered entirely except 'closed-door meeting' which is a standard expression—the list is endless. So, 'every nook and cranny' remains right as opposed to 'all nooks and crannies'! The plural nature of 'all nooks and crannies' cannot make it synonymous with 'every nook and cranny'. Let me mention here that the painstaking work I do in this column is research-based, which does not, however, mean that I am infallible. Nobody is. I cherish superior arguments and contributions based on foolproof knowledge—not half-baked ones that will draw me back, unnecessarily, please. The 2010 Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 8th Edition you referred to (page 1001, not 994) is old! The example it gave which obviously misled you is a different, non-idiomatic context: 'dark woods full of secret nooks and crannies'! I use the 2022 edition of Longman Advanced Dictionary of Contemporary English (New Edition), among others. There is nothing like equivalence in idiomatic applications—idioms are independent and stand alone! Dispassionate and cerebral critiques are welcome—not jaundiced hypercriticisms!

I thank Dr. Ufot, for his scholastic intervention as I look forward to more.

The Hunger Protests, Deja Vu & Onyeka

THE political class were in frenzy in the days leading to the 1 August date slated for the nationwide protests, ominously dubbed "Days of Rage" - despite protestations of protest enthusiasts that it was meant to be a peaceful activity geared towards gingering those in control of the levers of state to deal a fairer hand to the Nigerian people. The cost of living in Nigeria was becoming overwhelmingly unaffordable.

On the other hand, with a sense of deja vu as result of the gruesome effects and devastating woes that truncated the October 2020 EndSARS protests, the political class viewed any and every protest championed by the Nigerian youth without clear-as-daylight leadership or accountable structure as recipe for disaster. The law enforcement agencies pressured the protest organisers to shelve the idea without much luck. The apparatchiks of state and their supporters deployed threats (including ancestral visitations), fear-mongering, dialogue-baiting, possible foreign infiltration by undisclosed, tough-talking anti-protest protesters, and other gimmicks, fair and 'somehow', but the fire-spitting organisers did not take the bait. Deja vu.

Worried observers and stakeholders in a peaceful and prosperous nationhood pitched in, asking for serious dialogue in dealing frontally with the multi-pronged demands of the protesters which, on some levels, cannot be dealt with by 'political' government or its officials, unless through long-winding democratic channels. Some counselled that a more reasonable and effective approach is to sit at a roundtable with the highest figures of the federal structure, including the president, Senate president (whose latest gaffe rankled the youth further by his "those who want to protest can protest, but let us be here eating" cant), and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The protest leaders would be protected by the force of this legitimate and righteous assignment endorsed by the majority of

Nigerian people who are indeed bent low by the current crushing hardship. That it was time to identify the protest leaders and coordinators, if indeed there is no other agenda behind the agitation, and submit themselves completely to the onerous duty of speaking and deliberating on behalf of the voiceless people of Nigeria without fear or folly.

Of course, every struggle has its pitfalls and hazards, but such is the overwhelming backing of many Nigerians for a present and tangible change in their economic and health affairs that the state would rather treat them with soft gloves and due regard - especially as they are pursuing their actions in a nonviolent, responsible manner.

Such a great opportunity was missed in 2020. We cried that we should not miss another in 2024. But the sour story remains the same. Now that the protests have begun in diverse forms, as I write this Thursday after, we do not know how it will end. Such perilous exercise is fraught with uncertainties that could easily have been averted. We all could see that the government was jittery about the recurrence of wanton destruction of lives and property as witnessed aftermath of the #EndSARS protests in many parts of Nigeria four years ago. Some states and non-state actors have not gotten over the trauma. Their fears were understandable and reasonable.

Consequently, most governments, especially at federal level, had started churning out remedial interventions, reversing obnoxious economic and financial policies, and fast tracking amelioratory programmes to assuage the hungry and angry droves, and stimulate commerce and industry. We do not know how much impact these effects would have, but they were non-existent prior to the call for "Days of Rage".

Our people (read the crusading Nigerian youth) should have added the weight of constant and unrelenting nudge and push on the backs of the government so that they do not put their feet off the pedals that have been set in motion. Sadly, we seem to

prioritise grandstanding and saber-rattling to conscious and proactive engagement with powers that are. Yet, neither the government, and its numerous agencies, nor the protest organisers can immediately stop the slide into anarchy, arson and pillaging when the usual hijackers exploit the opportunity of over-running unpoliced empty spaces.

Hopefully, it is not too late. Let us have a parley with the government, and avoid bloodletting - whether it is in error or deliberate is a needless wastage. While no one can fault the urgency and necessity of your course, all attention would easily shift from the gains that could have accrued, and be looking for culprits and victims in the event of any mishaps, however minute the incident, or whoever is the activator.

We must make haste while the streets are bloodless.

ONYEKA ONWENU: AND THE BEAT STOPPED

In this climate of protestations against failures of the Nigerian government in taking adequate care of its citizen is exactly the atmosphere that prompts her spirit to wax lyrically high, and find comfort in words and tunes that seek to draw the ears of government people to the need to do good, and quickly, to our youth and women. You see, the exponent of Love is also a fighter for social justice and equity. And she had many scars to show for that.

Nigeria's superstar, properly so called, is gone. Onyekachi Onwenu, a proud daughter of Arondizuogu, died while alive doing what she loved, served and slaved for: singing to bring joy and hope to people. On Tuesday, 30 July, 2024 she was serenading the Lagos guests of Dr. Stella Okoli (owner of Emzor Pharmaceuticals), a long time admirer whom she stretched her schedule to honour. She had planned to sing two songs, and join the others as guests, enjoying the adoring glances of the 80-year old celebrant. Then, because her fans wanted more, the siren of songs the Nigerian media have dubbed



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'Elegant Stallion' for over 35 years, could not stop performing - two or so more songs beyond her plan, she collapsed at the behest of her strained heart. The mother of Tijani and Abraham was helped to a high-brow hospital by a coterie of high society. But it was not enough; her beautiful heart stopped the music on the evening of Tuesday, 30 July, 2024 - she was 72 in January, 2024.

In fond memory of the timelessly elegant songstress, we have dug out this 1999 memento in praise of her astute positioning in the annals of Nigerian entertainment:

"She broke into our musical consciousness in 1981 with 'Everlasting Love'; caressed us with 'For The Love of You' (1982); sucked us in with 'In The Morning Light' (1984), and knocked us out cold with 'One Love' in 1985.

By the time she was 'Dancing in the Sun' in 1988, the entire country had come to accept (and cherish) her talent, doggedness, intelligence, strong will and charismatic aloofness. Nigerians could not but declare in suppressed amazement that Onyekachi Onwenu (48 on January 28, 2000) is the authentic Elegant Stallion.

If a toll is taken, it will become crystal clear to all that Onyeka runs one of the most disciplined bands, perhaps the most consistent private recording-rehearsal studio and a brand new all-purpose amphitheatre, The Unity Centre. Onyeka's current status will restore confidence in Nigerian womanhood such that the new flag will read: behind every successful woman is a woman of steely resolve and indefatigable resourcefulness."

• (The conclusion of Olumese@80: 'My Niteshift Coliseum Odyssey' shall return next).

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MISSILE

Northern CAN to Federal Govt

"There is no denying the fact that life in Nigeria has become unbearable as a result of these problems. Nigerians are indeed hungry, angry, and as resilient as they had always been, they are becoming hopeless about the state of the Nigerian nation...the planned protest is an indication that things have gone really bad. Hunger has now become a unifying factor for the masses" – Northern CAN Secretary General, Sunday Oibe, tells President Tinubu to apologise to Nigerians for failure to address insecurity, economic hardship crippling Nigerians.

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The Global Gender Crisis

The controversy around women’s boxing at the ongoing Olympic games revolves around the participation of two athletes, Imane Khelif of Algeria and Lin Yu-ting of Taiwan, who had failed gender eligibility tests in the past. These two have long competed as women, but were disqualified from the 2023 women’s world championships by the International Boxing Association (IBA) for failure to meet “eligibility rules”. But the current Olympic organizers got that reversed. The rest, and the fallouts, remain an unfolding world drama today.

In the following dialogue between Celeste and her friend, Jasmine, take up the twin issues of sexual orientation and gender confusion.

Jasmine: I would like to start today’s discussion by saying that we are no longer sure who is a man or a woman. Gender switching is going on; and this is all being promoted under the LGTBQI+ movement. What is one to make of growing same sex relationships?

Celeste: What I think is going on is that we are no longer in touch with our true essence as human beings today. It goes beyond what is generally called the global gender crisis, one aspect of which is the widespread promotion of gay relationships. For the sake of clarity, perhaps we should start by you explaining to me what the term LGTBQI+, which you mentioned, means.

Jasmine: Yes, that is very important. Celeste: It stands for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and others. The acronym is even sometimes written as LGTBQIA, to include asexual groups, where ‘queer’ is an umbrella term for non- straight people.

Jasmine: But we all grew up knowing gender to refer to the two sexes. That was before the term got expanded to cover many things that do not fall under established ideas of male and female. That is the problem for us today, as far as I am concerned.

Celeste: Of course, it is to some of us. Think, for instance, of those who say that they are Pansexuals, that is people who could be sexually attracted to animals, little children, or whatever catches their fancy at any point in time.

Jasmine: Pansexuals? Celeste: Yes. And all these now-freely-advertised sexual orientations, like the Asexual, Polysexual, Agender, Bi- gender, Ecosexual, Intersex, Androgynous, Gender Fluid, Non-Binary, Gender Queer, Transspecies, Transaging and Transable, are demanding the right to freely exercise their sexual preferences.

Jasmine: All of that? Please what do all these categories you just referred to mean?

Celeste: Polysexual refers to anyone who is sexually attracted to more than one gender including the unconventional, then there are the Bisexuals who are attracted to regular male and female, while Agender are people who do not identify themselves as belonging to any particular gender at all. The latter are different from the Bi-gender, who are sexually



Khelif

attracted to two genders outside the Cisgenders.

Jasmine: Just a moment, what do you mean by Cisgender? You used the term just now.

Celeste: Cisgender refers to people like you and me.

Jasmine: But we are perfectly normal people. How do we come into the gay movement?

Celeste: We are not part of the gay movement; I beg your pardon! People who are deemed to be men or women in the traditional sense at birth and who also have no problem seeing themselves as such, like you and I, are said to be cisgender men and women. Cisgender is the opposite of transgender, ecosexual and all the others.

Jasmine: I see. That is good to know, before one is surreptitiously smuggled into some strange classification, or association. Now what is the ecosexual one you just mentioned?

Celeste: These are people who are sexually attracted to the earth, nature or the ecosystem.

Jasmine: People who are sexually attracted to the earth, nature or the ecosystem?

Celeste: Yes! They may use sex toys and materials inspired by nature. They could also have sex with the earth, in the belief that they are helping to heal it of natural disasters and diseases. There are also even some people who believe that they are animals imprisoned, or incarnated, in human bodies.

Jasmine: Now, that is silly!

Celeste: But they are perfectly serious about it. And they are different from the Intersex, and ‘hermaphrodite’ have male and feminine characteristics combined into an ambiguous form.

Jasmine: Male and female characteristics combined?

Celeste: Yes. This may be due to birth defects caused by mutation, inappropriate medication or other causes. Some of such cases can be corrected by surgery; usually with the dominant sexual characteristics retained.

Jasmine: Well, that is good to know.

Celeste: But some promoters of the LGTBQI+

agenda are against such surgery, insisting that such people should be identified as intersex and allowed their ‘rights’.

Jasmine: But what could possibly be the cause of all this? I mean both the strange conditions and the mindset of those who promote them.

Celeste: First there is the simple matter of medical impropriety and natural birth defects; which must also invariably have their roots in the karma and spiritual history of the people concerned. But that is a matter for another day.

Jasmine: Well, I suppose so. But, for now, let us continue with the various sexual orientations of what I consider a depraved world.

Celeste: Yes, let us continue. Did I mention cases of people who feel that they are of a different sex, even though they are born as another?

Jasmine: No, you did not.

Celeste: Oh, there are such people and they are referred to as cases of Androgyny. They are different from the Gender-fluid, who do not identify themselves as having a permanent and fixed gender.

Jasmine: Quite frankly, this has really gotten out of hand!

Celeste: The terms Non-binary and Genderqueer are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to people who prefer, or appear, not to be exclusively masculine or feminine at any time. They are also different from the Transspecies, who claim preference for anything whatsoever that catches their fancy.

Jasmine: Some people want anything, not just any person, that catches their fancy?

Celeste: Yes. Then you have those called the Transaging, who claim to feel younger/older than their actual age and wish to be recognized and associated with their age of choice.

Jasmine: Wow!

Celeste: The transaging are also different from the Transracials, who wish to be associated with, and be recognized as belonging to, a race other than the one into which they were born. These are still different, yet again, from the Transable, who are physically able people that choose to be associated with any particular disability they are attracted to.

Jasmine: But this is outright insanity making the rounds! What could possibly be responsible for all of this, I still wonder? What do the people pushing for a reclassification of human beings really want? Why are they pushing back on everything we know and causing what, to me, is unmitigated confusion everywhere?

Celeste: The right question, perhaps, is: what are the hidden forces behind these people and what do we see them doing? Is it all part of the events of the Last Judgment, or not? Are these things the manifestations of many spiritual issues that the people trying to deal with them do not understand?

Jasmine: The forces behind them? What forces? These people are just low-grade social nuisances that should not be taken seriously.

Celeste: I am not so sure about that, Jasmine. You can see that there is an upsurge of evil

everywhere. There is also confusion about right and wrong, all over the world. So, the global sexual orientation crisis and gender crisis is only just one dimension of the avalanche of strange ideas confronting human beings everywhere.

Jasmine: It is?

Celeste: Yes, it is!

Jasmine: But the entire thing seems so well mapped out, well planned, well- funded and is being pursued with great singleness of purpose.

Celeste: Yes. All resources are flowing to those operating on the fringes of normalcy. Look, Jasmine, the spiritual foundations of our current problems, as well as their implications for our future here on earth, should be the most important concern of everyone now.

Jasmine: Is there a specific meaning, or special significance, to all that is going on? I mean, what does the Last Judgment got to do with it?

Celeste: It seems to me that the pressures of the Last Judgment is forcing many things out from their hiding places to face the Ray of Judgment.

Jasmine: I just don’t know what to say right now, Celeste. Please continue, I would like you to recap on how this whole thing is presumed to be leading all human beings astray.

Celeste: When people are made to redefine what makes them human, what makes them male, what makes them female, they are already on the path to something they do not know yet. But one of the things that will follow is that they will turn all values on their heads.

Jasmine: Oh yes, that is a very likely consequence.

Celeste: Once that happens, the difference between right and wrong will also become nebulous. Anyone who does not know right from wrong, and who does whatever he likes in the belief that he has every right to do so, is clearly operating in the realm of official insanity; but without knowing it. Such a person is also, thereby, replacing the Will of God, who created everything to function in a certain way, with his own human will.

Jasmine: Indeed! But, sorry to still take you back to the sexual orientation issue, how do people hope to achieve such a no-mean feat of making us all to accept their aberrant doctrines?

Celeste: The matter is an intricate one. In fact, we can describe it as a ‘project’ that is designed and structured to succeed on a grand scale, as a global agenda. Let us make this, as well as other spiritual dangers of this period of the Last Judgment, the subject of a fresh discussion.

Jasmine: Are you sure?

Celeste: Trust me, Jasmine, there is a lot more to it than meets the eye. So, do we defer the discussion to another day, when we shall have enough time to really dig into it?

The above dialogue, prefaced with the raging Olympic controversy, is taken from my coming book in The Dialogue Series titled; ‘Signs of the Last Judgment’.