Again, National Electricity Grid Supply Suffers Disruption

●Minister condemns attack on Ikeja Disco ●Discos want errant officers punished

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja, **Dike Onwuamaze** and **Peter Uzoho** in Lagos

Again, many parts of Nigeria were left in darkness yesterday, as the national grid abruptly lost over 2,000 megawatts, resulting in about the second supply disturbance for the year 2025.

This occurred same day the federal government condemned Thursday's attack by the personnel of the Nigerian Air Force on the headquarters and facilities of the Ikeja Electric Distribution Company (IKEDC), a development that left several persons injured and equipment vandalised.

Also, yesterday, the Association of Nigerian Electricity Distributors (ANED), the umbrella body of Discos, asked the Nigerian Air Force, the military, and the presidency to fish out officers and men of the Sam Ethnan Air Force Base, Ikeja, that attacked staff and journalists at Ikeja Disco.

The Director General of Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA), Mr. Adewale-Smatt Oyerinde, urged the federal government to offset all outstanding electricity supply debts of military bases across the country.

The collapse of the grid which took place around 2pm yesterday, saw generation to the national grid

Continued on page 5

Tinubu, Jonathan, Obi, Abiodun, Ikimi, LP, Defunct NRC, Mourn Doyin Okupe... Page 5

THISDAY

TRUTH & REASON

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IWD 2025: Female CEOs, CSOs Share Insights on Challenges Hindering Women's Progress... Page 23

Rumbling in PDP Deepens as Party Sets Up South-south Zonal Caretaker Committee

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

The National Working Committee (NWC) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has set up a caretaker committee for the party's south-south zone.

This was disclosed in a statement by the National Publicity Secretary, Debo Ologunagba yesterday.

A faction of the party loyal to the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Mr. Nyesom Wike, had reelected Dan Orbih as chairman of the zone.

The congress held in Calabar.

The party's national leadership had last week cancelled the zonal congress, explaining that the reelected zonal chairman was still under suspension.

Wike and former governor of Cross River State, Donald Duke and several allies of the FCT minister had attended the zonal congress that is now cancelled

This was despite a letter by the embattled National Secretary, Samuel Anyanwu, that he was authorised

Continued on page 5

Minister Seeks Lifting of Akpoti-Uduaghan's Suspension, Pledges FG's Intervention

●PDP, ActionAid Nigeria, Atiku kick ●Insist Akpabio must submit self for open, independent investigation

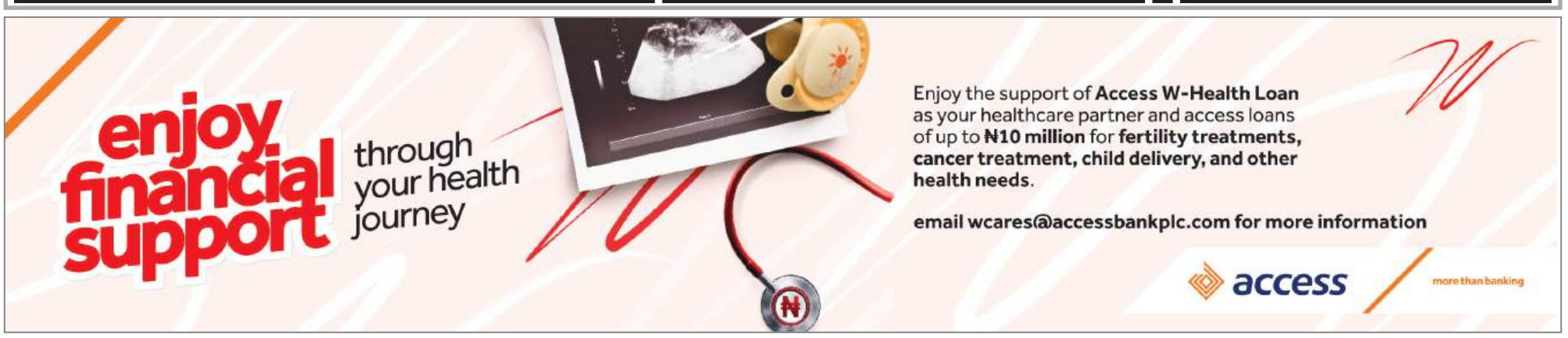
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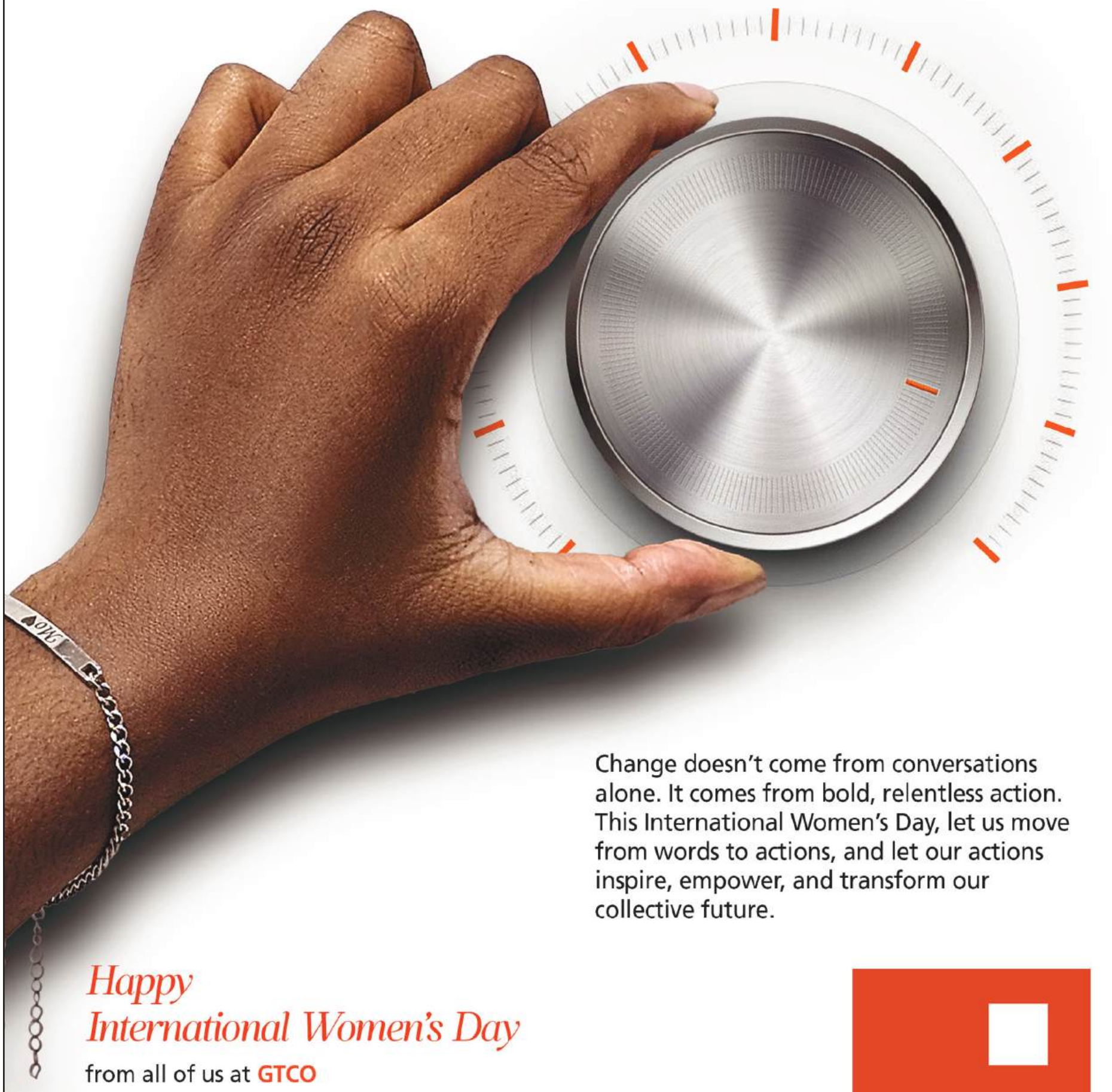
CELEBRATING WOMEN...

L – R: Senior Gender & Economic Inclusion Advisor, Africa, IFC, Adaorie Udechukwu; Chief Talent Officer, Coronation Group Ltd, Pai Gamde; Senior Special Assistant to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on Entrepreneurship Development in Communication, Innovation, and Digital Economy, Chalya Shagaya; Joke Silva; CEO, NGX, Jude Chiemeka; GCEO, NGX Group, Temi Popoola; Minister for Arts, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy, Hannatu Musa Musawa; Vice Chancellor, University of Lagos, Prof. Folasade Ogunsola; Group Chairman, NGX Group, Alhaji Umaru Kwairanga; Director-General, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Dr. Emomotimi Agama; Group CEO, Future View, Elizabeth Ebi; Director, NGX Group, Ojinika Olaghere and Divisional Head, Business Services and Client Experience, CSCS Plc, Onome Komolafe, during the IWD celebration at the Exchange in Lagos…yesterday

Fubara to Rivers People: I Can Feel Your Support... Page 8



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the Action



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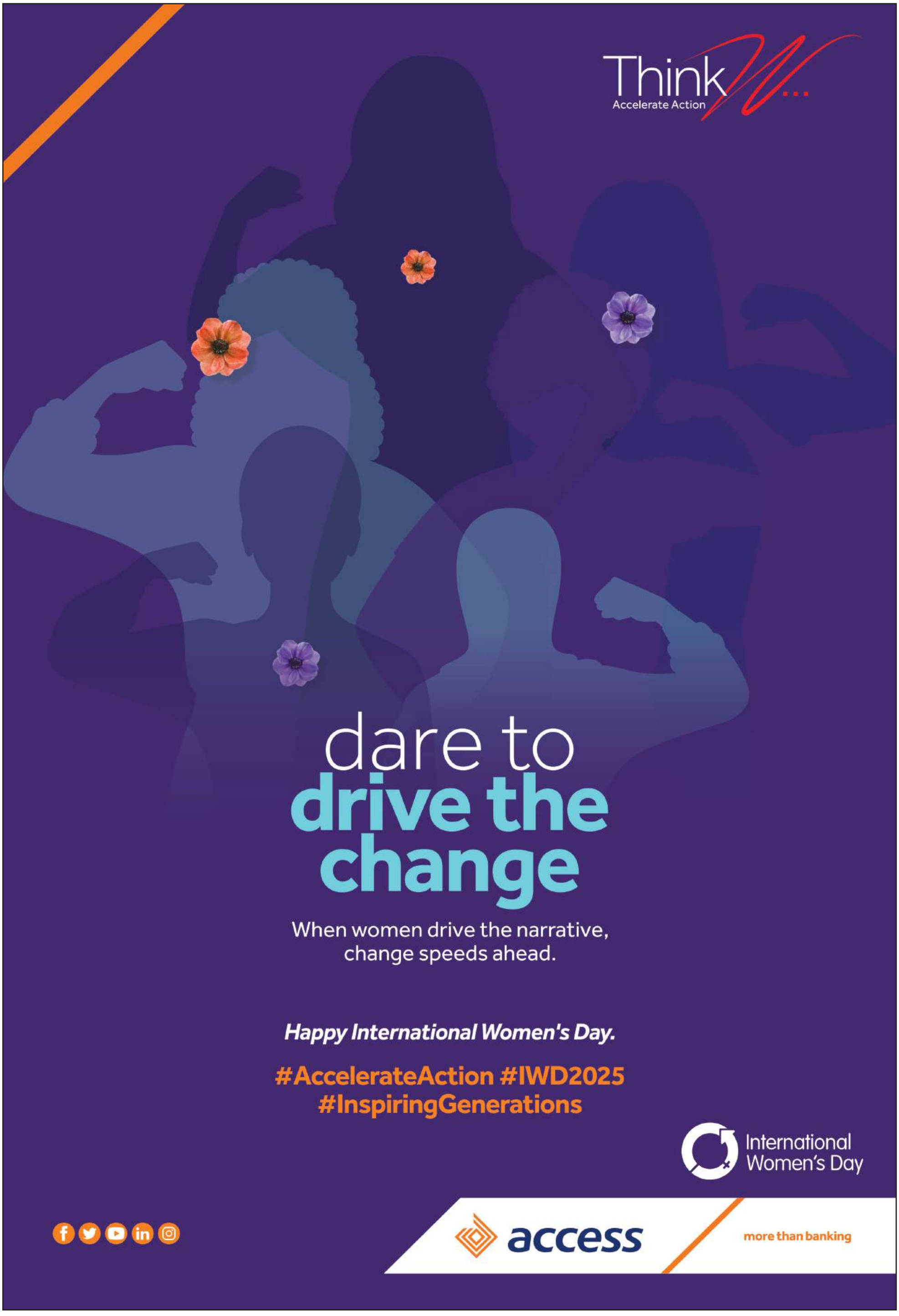


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PAGE FIVE

Tinubu, Jonathan, Obi, Abiodun, Ikimi, LP, Defunct NRC, Mourn Doyin Okupe

Deji Elumoye, Chuks Okocha in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu, former President Goodluck Jonathan, Governor Dapo Abiodun of Ogun State, presidential candidate of Labour Party in the 2023 election, Mr. Peter Obi as well as the Labour Party, yesterday mourned former spokesperson to ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo, Dr. Doyin Okupe.

In the same vein, the National Chairman of the erstwhile National Republican Convention (NRC), Chief Tom Ikimi, and members his then Working Committee, described the deceased as a man whose life exemplified integrity and compassion. Okupe died yesterday morning at 72 years, losing the battle to an illness he had confronted for over a decade but suffered a relapse recently.

Okupe, a medical doctor and politician, was presidential spokesman to Obansajo and Jonathan.

He also served as the Director General of the Peter Obi Campaign Organisation in the 2023 presidential election.

In the aborted Third Republic, Okupe was the National Publicity Secretary of the defunct NRC.

Tinubu in a statement by his Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, extended his heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and associates of Okupe, a medical doctor, politician, communicator and strategist who played a significant role in Nigeria's political landscape.

Tinubu recalled Okupe as a bold and articulate advocate for national development, expressing deep sorrow over his passing at a time when his wealth of experience and insight were still invaluable to the nation.

The President also commiserated with the government and people of Ogun State, particularly the Iperu-Remo community, who have lost an esteemed son and leader.

Also, Jonathan expressed sorrow over Okupe's demise, describing him as a courageous and dedicated public servant.

In a letter of condolence to the Okupe family, Jonathan noted that the late politician made considerable contributions to the growth and development of the country.

The former President also affirmed that during the time that Okupe worked with him, the former presidential aide demonstrated unwavering commitment, exceptional diligence, and a profound sense of duty.

He added: "Dr. Okupe's passing is a great loss to our nation, and his absence will be deeply felt by all who knew him. As we mourn his departure, we take solace in the fact that he lived a life of purpose and left behind a legacy of service and dedication."

In a statement signed by the then NRC National Chairman, Chief Tom Ikimi; National Deputy Chairman, Chief Stephen Lawani; National Treasurer, Chris Adighije, and National Organising Officer, Officer, Alhaji Idi Faruk, and Ex Officio, Kabiru Yahaya, stated that, "Chief Okupe was not only a devoted Christian but also a passionate patriot who dedicated his life to the service of Nigeria. As a foundational member of the NRC, his unwavering commitment to democracy and good governance was evident in every endeavor he undertook. His loyalty, selflessness, and dedication to duty were hallmarks of his character, and his contributions to the party and the nation were invaluable.

"Throughout his life, Chief Okupe exemplified integrity and compassion, inspiring those around him to strive for a better Nigeria. His absence will be profoundly felt by all who had the privilege of knowing him, as he touched countless lives with his kindness and wisdom.

"Our paths first crossed during the vibrant political era of the National Republican Convention (NRC), where he served with exceptional dedication as our publicity secretary. His brilliance in strategic communication and unwavering loyalty set him apart as an invaluable asset to our political endeavors.

AGAIN, NATIONAL ELECTRICITY GRID SUPPLY SUFFERS DISRUPTION

fall from circa 3,366mw to 1,517mw.

In a statement made available on X, formerly Twitter, Ikeja Electric Distribution Company (IKEDC) alerted its customers to the situation, stressing that the relevant authorities were doing everything to restore supply.

"Please be informed that we experienced a system outage today 07/03/2025 @ 14:00hrs, affecting supply within our network. Restoration of supply is ongoing in collaboration with our critical stakeholders," it stated.

On its part, Eko Disco blamed a reduction in supply from the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), stressing that it led to unavoidable load shedding across its network.

"This is to kindly inform you that the current power situation is as a result of reduced power allocation from our TCN partners aimed at maintaining grid stability. The situation has resulted in unavoidable load shedding across our network.

"Rest assured that we are taking all necessary steps to address the situation as we work closely with TCN and other partners to resolve the issue speedily and ensure a more stable power supply soonest," it said.

However, the Disco stated that at about 5.30pm the TCN had begun to gradually restore supply to its feeders.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Power, Chief Adebayo Adelabu, in a statement in Abuja by his Special Adviser, Strategic Communications, Bolaji Tunji, said the attack on Ikeja Disco called for concern in view of its grave overall ramifications.

Adelabu added that the current democratic practice has appropriate channels for conflict resolution, rather than a brutal resort to self help.

"The attack on the facilities of Ikeja Electric, one of our nation's critical power distribution companies by the Nigerian Airforce is unfortunate and a matter of grave concern to our nation, which stands totally condemned.

"This unfortunate incident has also raised serious questions about the need for restraint, dialogue, and the use of appropriate democratic channels in resolving conflicts," the minister added.

The minister noted that the power sector remains the lifeblood of the nation's economy and a cornerstone of national development, arguing that any attack on Nigeria's infrastructure is an attack on the progress and wellbeing of the people.

"The facilities of Ikeja Electric, which serve millions of Nigerians, were designed to ensure the efficient distribution of electricity to homes, hospitals, schools, and industries including military installations.

"This incident has set back our efforts to achieve stable and uninterrupted power supply, and it is a blow to the collective aspirations of our nation," the minister said.

Adelabu emphasised that no grievance, no matter how legitimate, justifies the destruction of public infrastructure, noting that such actions are counterproductive and only serve to exacerbate the challenges Nigerians face as a nation," he added.

The minister urged the Nigerian Air Force to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and to ensure that its operations are conducted with utmost regard for the welfare of civilians and public infrastructure.

Adelabu commended the staff and management of Ikeja electricity distribution company for their resilience in the face of provocation, stressing that their comportment in the face of adversity was a testament to their dedication to serving the Nigerian people.

"The federal ministry of power stands ready to support you in any way possible to ensure that normalcy is restored as quickly as possible," he pointed out.

Also, for ANED, in an interview on TVC yesterday, the Executive Director, Research and Advocacy, Association of Nigerian Electricity Distributors, Sunday Oduntan, said the association would not relent in seeking redress until justice is done.

He said: "I want to believe that we're in a sane country. I still want to believe that we're better than we were in 1978 when Fela's house was invaded. So, we want to see what will happen. We have to see what the presidency will do, and the military authorities too, because normally, heads must roll; not should roll, heads must roll.

"For people to leave Ikeja Air Force Base fully armed in trucks, to go somewhere and start beating civilians; they made them lie down on the floor of the Air Force base, more than a hundred people, and beat them repeatedly, someone must pay for this."

Oduntan said the invasion of the IKEDC could be likened to a coup against all the Discos, describing it as a very traumatic experience.

Also weighing in on the matter, the Director General of NECA, Oyerinde, urged the federal government to offset all outstanding electricity supply debts of military bases across the country.

Speaking on the attack, Oyerinde frowned at the development noting that such action is unlawful and capable of diminishing the headways made in democratic governance in the country over the years.

According to him, "The federal government, through the Federal Ministry of Finance and Federal Ministry of Defense, should swiftly intervene in this graceless attack on IKEDC such that the amount owed to the company will be paid to them, while electricity supply is restored to the base.

"The IKEDC operates in a capital intensive space and that operation has been grossly affected by the prevailing operating environment.

"Therefore, the government should leverage this attack to set up a committee to carry out a holistic appraisal of electricity supply debt profiles of other military bases across the country.

"Where such debt is found, arrangements should be made to swiftly defray them to adequately preclude a repeat of the attack on the DisCos anywhere in the country going forward."

Oyerinde observed that such an intimidation and attack on a company of the calibre of IKEDC showed a high level of impunity and is a bad omen for the future of the economy.

According to him, the attack was a wrong signal for prospective domestic and foreign investors as no rational investor would invest money in a country where his investments and personnel are compromised with such impunity as displayed by the NAF personnel from Ikeja Airforce Base.

MINISTER SEEKS LIFTING OF AKPOTI-UDUAGHAN'S SUSPENSION, PLEDGES FG'S INTERVENTION

Deji Elumoye, Chuks Okocha, Michael Olugbode in Abuja and **Sunday Ehigiator** in Lagos

The spat between the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio and Senator Natasha Akpoti-Udiaghan has continued to generate reactions as Women Affairs and Social Welfare Minister, Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim yesterday pledged to promptly engage with the leadership of the Senate to facilitate amicable reconciliation and resolution of the issues that led to the suspension of the Kogi Central Senator.

The Minister also expressed concern over sexual harassment allegation in the Senate, describing it an "unfortunate" incident.

According to her, such incident ought not to occur in the National Assembly, pledging to promptly engage with the Senate to facilitate amicable reconciliation and resolution of the issues involved.

This comes as the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) condemned in strong terms the suspension of Akpoti-Uduaghan by the Senate.

Also lending his voice on the matter, former Vice President and standard bearer of PDP in the last presidential election, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar while condemning the suspension as an attempt to silence women in leadership, regretted the action as "unfortunate example of undermining the spirit of fair hearing."

Still drawing flaks on the suspension, ActionAid Nigeria called the "speedy suspension" questionable and advocated for an independent inquiry into the sexual harassment allegations.

Suliaman-Ibrahim spoke at a news briefing at the State House in Abuja to herald the International Women's Day.

Answering question on why her ministry had not commented on the Senate sexual harassment incident, said: "It's an unfortunate incident that should not happen. Just like you rightly said, in the last assembly, we had nine senators, that are women. This Assembly we have four.

"We don't want to be losing any member in the senate or House of Representatives. We want to increase the numbers. It is unfortunate.

"We're going to be brokering peace. We will engage all the stakeholders to ensure that they temper justice with mercy.

"I was at the National Assembly yesterday (Thursday) at the Senate, where they marked International Women's Day, and the last thing the President of the senate said was that 'we're open to broker peace.' So, we're going to be intermediary between the two parties to see that we broker for peace to reign and we will continue to also sensitise so that we will like to work better together as women and men."

The Minister also highlighted the importance of educating women in politics and fostering greater cooperation between female and male lawmakers.

She stressed that Nigeria must accelerate efforts to increase women's representation in governance and ensure they have a seat at the table.

Suliaman-Ibrahim underscored the critical role of mentorship and economic empowerment in advancing women's political participation in Nigeria.

"When it comes to women empowerment, especially in political participation and leadership, it's very important that we start from the mentoring level," she stated, emphasising that aspiring leaders must first recognise their qualifications and actively pursue their goals.

Using herself as an example, she recalled her late father's advice: "When you are sure you qualify, you indicate your interest. When you indicate your interest, you pray about it and actively work towards it."

The Minister firmly believed that, "it is not an entitlement" for women to receive political opportunities simply because of their gender. Rather, she advocated for a competitive spirit among women, urging them to strive for equal footing in the political arena.

She said in her discussions with the First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, she gave a crucial directive: "Go and put money in women's hands", explaining that economic empowerment is vital for women to engage effectively in politics.

"When women are economically empowered, they can contest and engage with stakeholders; they can serve their communities," she noted.

Suliaman-Ibrahim pointed out that without resources, it becomes challenging for women to contribute meaningfully to society.

On the financial barriers often faced by women in politics, the Minister acknowledged that "political efforts generally are very costly" and that many women find themselves at a disadvantage.

To combat this, her ministry is collaborating with partners to establish mentorship programmes with female politicians aimed at empowering more women to take on leadership roles.

She also emphasised the need for a more collaborative and responsible approach to achieving gender equality in Nigeria. Referencing the 30 year-old Beijing Declaration's 35% affirmative action goal, Suliaman-Ibrahim stressed that "we'll continue to lobby and engage relevant stakeholders so that we achieve it. But times have gone where you bully people to give things."

Highlighting the shift in strategy, she explained, "The last time we took the gender bills to the National Assembly, we blocked the gate. There are three entrances to the National Assembly; if you block one, they will use the other two. So this time around, we're going to do it differently. We'll do it in a very responsible manner."

The Minister also stressed the importance of mentoring women to ensure they are equipped to serve effectively once in leadership positions.

"We will mentor women so that when they get there, they also are able to serve, and you open doors for more women to come into the space," she said.

Under her leadership, the Ministry of Women Affairs is committed to bridging the gender gap through education, vocational training, and professional development.

"We must start motivating women to see themselves as leaders and get involved in political activities", she further stated.

The PDP in a statement by its National Publicity Secretary, Hon. Debo Ologunagba, asserted that the action of the Akpabio-led Senate leadership against Akpoti-Uduaghan showed a desperate move to cover up.

The party observed that the hasty suspension of Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan without an open investigation into the weighty allegation of sexual harassment against the Senate President not only negates the principle of fair hearing especially in parliamentary convention but also portrays the Senate as an institution that endorses, condones and offers protection to reprobacy.

"Also, the excessively harsh, six months suspension on Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan translates to denying the people of Kogi Central Senatorial Zone their Constitutional right of being represented in the Senate.

"It is scandalous, and amounts to gross abuse of office and violation of the fundamentals of justice and fair hearing for Senator Akpabio to sit as a judge in a matter in which he is the accused; a situation which validates public apprehension of a desperation by the embattled Senate President to suppress open legislative probe into the allegation of sexual harassment leveled against him.

"The PDP recalls that this would not be the first time Senator Akpabio is accused of sexual harassment. The current episode in the Senate reminds Nigerians of the allegation of sexual harassment leveled against Senator Akpabio by the former acting Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Dr. Joi Nunieh.

"If Senator Akpabio has nothing to hide, what Nigerians expected of him was to clear his name by stepping aside in line with established parliamentary practice, allow and submit to an open and unbiased investigation into the allegation of sexual harassment by Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan.

"It is indeed a national embarrassment that the person of the Senate President and Chairman of the National Assembly is being mentioned in a case of sexual harassment which has now tarred the image and integrity of the highest lawmaking body in Nigeria. Ordinarily under this situation the Senate President needs no prodding to step aside for an independent investigation to clear his name," the statement posted on X added.

It pointed out that more distressing was the fact that since Senator Akpabio assumed office as the Senate President, the leadership of the Senate had been largely unfocused and constantly embroiled in scandals including allegations of financial impropriety as well as negligence and abdication of its constitutional duty of checks and balances to the excesses of the Executive Arm to the detriment of millions of Nigerians.

RUMBLING IN PDP DEEPENS AS PARTY SETS UP SOUTH-SOUTH ZONAL CARETAKER COMMITTEE

to write a letter to Dan Orbih that his suspension was lifted since October 2024

However, Ologunagba stated that, "pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of the PDP (as amended in 2017) approved the composition of the South South Zonal Caretaker Committee to manage the affairs of the Party in the Zone from Monday, March 10, 2025."

According to Ologunagba, "The decision of the NWC is predicated on the need to avoid any vacuum and ensure the smooth running of the affairs of the Party in the South South Zone at the expiration of the tenure of the current Zonal Executive on Sunday, March 9, 2025."

He disclosed that members of the South South Zonal Caretaker Committee are: Emma Ogidi as Chairman; Hon. Nicholas Ayuwa, Godwin Akpan Udonta, Mrs. Bekewei Ashanti, Idehen Ebomoyi, Dame Vivia and Ahanmise as members, while Chief Damiete Herbert-Mille would serve as Secretary.

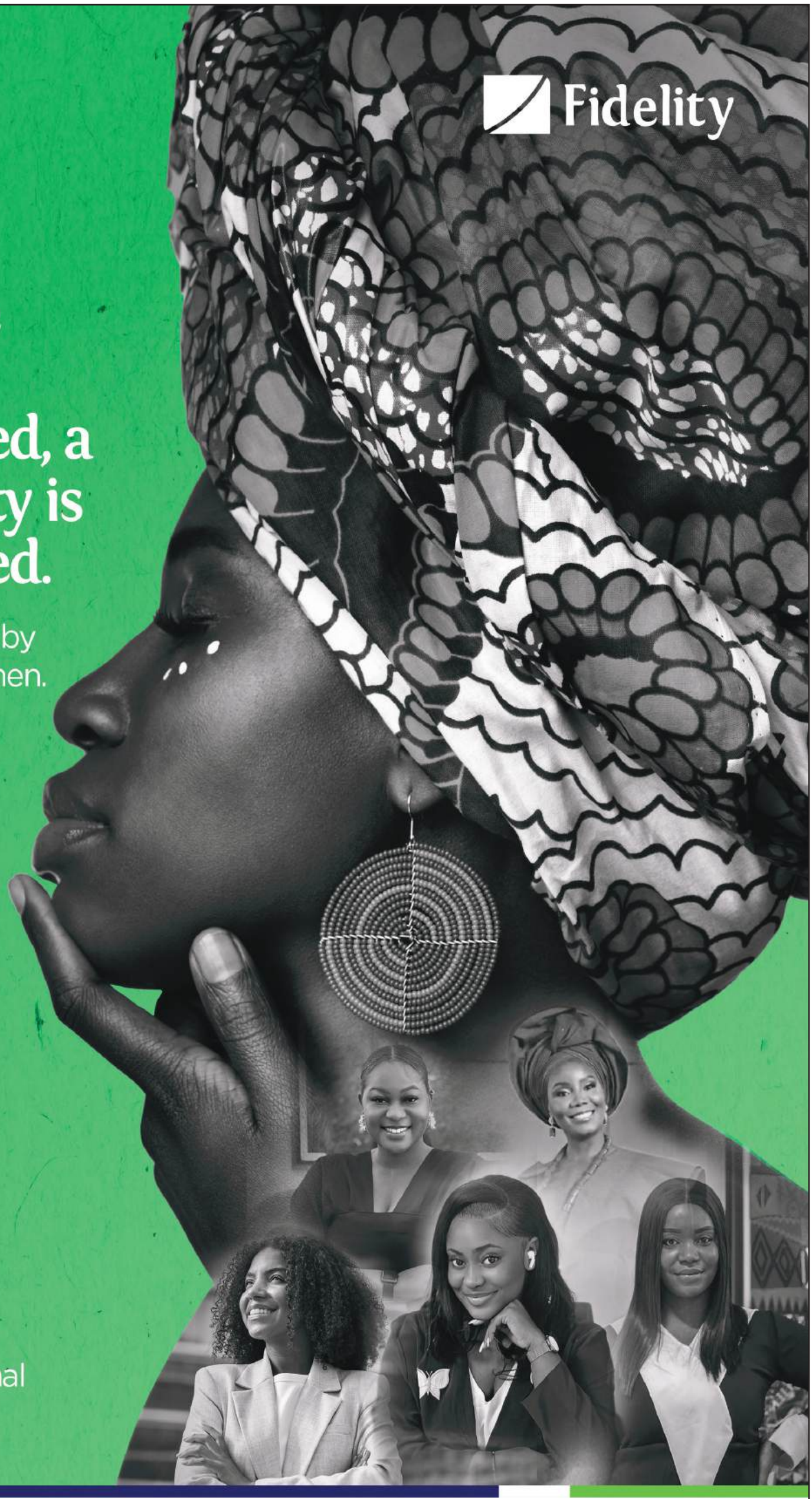
Assigning duties to the caretaker committee, Ologunagba said, "The South South Zonal Caretaker Committee is to oversee the activities of the party in the zone for a period of three months until when a new zonal executive is elected in accordance with the provisions of the constitution of the PDP."

He stated that the NWC enjoined all party leaders, critical stakeholders and members of the party in the south-south zone to be "guided by this and continue to work together in the overall interest of the party in the zone."

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NEWS

News Editor: **Charles Ajunwa**
09157401421 (sms only) Email charles.ajunwa@thisdaylive.com



LAGOS HOSTS MOVE AFRIKA CONCERT...

L-R: Founder & CEO of Alara, Reni Folawiyo; Chairman of Coronation Group and Access Holdings, Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede; Michelle Balogun of Chapelhill Denham; a distinguished guest; Award-winning artiste and producer, John Legend; Co-Chair of the Global Citizen Global Board, Francine Katsoudas; Co-Founder and CEO of the Global Citizen, Hugh Evans, and Chairman of Coronation Merchant Bank and Chair of the Global Citizen Africa Board, Babatunde Folawiyo, at the *Move Afrika* concert in Lagos... recently

Fubara to Rivers People: I Can Feel Your Support

Urges them to keep standing on side of truth

Blessing Ibunge in Port Harcourt

Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, yesterday appreciated the people of the state for standing by him in times of crisis, declaring that he could feel their support.

He also called on the people of the state, especially his supporters, to keep standing firm on the side of the truth following the ongoing political crisis in the state.

The Supreme Court had reinstated the Martins Amaewhule-led members of the Rivers State House of Assembly, who had been at loggerheads with the governor, and also sacked all elected local government chairmen in the state.

However, the governor assured that his administration would continue to do what was right and thanked God for the opportunity given to him to continue in the effort of providing services to the people.

Fubara, who said this during the inauguration of the rehabilitated Fire Service Station at Rumuodomanya, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, insisted that those supporting his administration were doing the right thing.

He said, "I want to appreciate the people of Obio/Akpor for their support, I can feel it here. I want to appreciate the support of the good people of Rivers State, believing in us knowing that your trust is the right thing and that you are standing on the side of truth."

The governor said the fire station was remodelled, rehabilitated and equipped to show that the interest of the people remained most important to his administration.

He explained that the essence of the project was to safeguard the lives of the people and the property of every citizen of Rivers State.

Inaugurating the project, Chief Hanny Woko, called for an end to the ongoing political crisis in Rivers State, saying that it was giving the state a bad name.

Woko who was a former ally of the Minister of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, asked Rivers people to emulate Lagos State, where he said politicians quarrelled but immediately found a solution to their problems.

He said, "I want to use this opportunity to call on every reasonable Rivers son and daughter that there should be an end to every conflict. Rivers State has always been in the news for negative purposes and we condemn that.

"We should borrow a leaf from our sister states. The governors are governing their people without any friction anywhere.

"Yes in human relations there may be room for frictions but what is important is to put the state first. No personal interest should override the collective interest of the state. I urge everyone using this opportunity to borrow a leaf from Lagos State.

"They quarrelled but they came to a round table to sort out their problem and the state moved on. Rivers State should emulate Lagos. Right now our state is in a turmoil but we thank God that God will continue to give His Excellency the wisdom to manage this crisis and I am absolutely sure that he will come out unscathed and he will serve out his two tenures as statutorily provided in our constitution."

Woko commended the governor for his laudable projects and for touching the lives of Rivers people despite the ongoing distractions.

According to him, "It is important to know that at the heat of this time you are still going about commissioning projects. There are projects already lined up for two weeks. You have come to serve Rivers State and be assured that Rivers people will protect this democracy and you.

"There is no pretence about it, the love is organic and we will make sure that we will continue to support you. As an Ikwerre man this state gave us the privilege and honour to serve for 16 years and some months without any disruptions. Equity and fair play demand that we allow our Ijaw ethnic group to serve out their tenure."

Tinubu Appoints Five New Chief Medical Directors for Federal Hospitals

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu has appointed five new Chief Medical Directors (CMDs) for federal government-owned hospitals in Akure, Azare, Lafiya, Maiduguri, and Kafanchan.

He also reappointed the CMD of Federal Teaching Hospital, Gombe for a final four-year tenure .

Presidential spokesperson, Bayo Onanuga, in a statement issued yesterday listed the new and reappointed Chief Medical Directors to include: Prof. Olusegun Sylvester Ojo is the new Chief Medical Director of the Federal Teaching Hospital, Akure, Ondo State. A seasoned medical professional, Prof. Ojo previously served as the pioneer Chief Medical Director of the Ondo State Specialist Hospital.

Prof. Yusuf Mohammed Abdullahi has been reappointed as the Chief Medical Director of the Federal Teaching Hospital, Gombe, following an outstanding performance during his first term. His reappointment underscores his exceptional leadership and contributions to the hospital's growth. His second and final term as CMD commenced on September 5, 2024.

As Dr. Dauda Abubakar Katagum, the Acting Chief Medical Director of the Federal Teaching Hospital, Azare, Bauchi State, has been confirmed as the substantive CMD with effect from December 6, 2024.

Dr. Ikrama Hassan is the Chief Medical Director of the newly upgraded Federal Teaching Hospital in Lafiya, Nasarawa State. A consultant physician, Dr. Hassan previously served as the Medical Director of the Dalhatu Ibrahim Arab Specialist Hospital before its elevation to a teaching hospital.

Dr. Ali Mohammed Ramat, a renowned Consultant Orthopaedic and Spine Surgeon, has been appointed Chief Medical Director of the newly established National Orthopedic Hospital in Maiduguri, Borno State.

Dr. Haruna Abubakar Shehu, a Consultant Family Physician, has been appointed Chief Medical Director of the newly established Federal Medical Centre, Kafanchan, Kaduna State.

All appointments are for four years, effective from the respective dates of assumption of office.

President Tinubu congratulated the newly appointed and reappointed Chief Medical Directors, urging them to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, accountability, and service delivery in their respective roles. He also reiterated his administration's commitment to improving healthcare infrastructure and ensuring all Nigerians have access to quality medical services.

Rewane: Nigeria's Official Statistics' Rosy Picture Not Aligned to Citizens' Everyday Struggles

Dike Onwuamaeze

The Managing Director of Financial Derivatives Limited, Mr. Bismarck Rewane, has declared that Nigeria's "official statistics paint a rosy picture that does not align with everyday struggles."

Rewane said that "the disparity between anecdotal evidence and official data exacerbates concerns about the credibility of Nigeria's official statistics."

He made this statement on March 5, 2025, in his presentation at the LBS Breakfast Session that was titled 'Nigerians Question the Data integrity: Is the Economic Recovery for Real or Is it Just Smoke & Mirror' in which he stated that the final outcome of the recent rebasing of the consumer price index (CPI) is "seen by many as a magician's sleight of hand."

He also compared Nigeria's and South Africa's CPI rebasing exercises and declared that the same process yielded different outcomes for the two countries.

Rewane asserted that "Nigeria's opacity in data revision fuels distrust and uncertainty in economic data."

According to him, Nigeria's "rebasing led to 11 per cent fall in inflation" while South Africa's "rebasing led to increase in inflation to 3.2 per cent from 3.0 per cent."

He attributed these disparities in the two countries' rebasing exercises to the fact that "Nigeria had a 15-year gap in updating its base year while South Africa's data revision cycle is less than five years."

He further noted that Nigeria did not release full information on its data revamp while South Africa published the computational detail of its new methodology, concluding that "South Africa maintained credibility through open communication and clear documentation."

He also said that "aligning Nigeria's unemployment definition with supposed international benchmarks now makes the data too good to be used.

He said that going by the current computation in Nigeria "if you work one hour, you are employed. So, unemployment rate revised sharply to 4.0 per cent from 33 per cent and each Nigerian produced goods worth $800 in 2024."

But in South Africa, "if you work less than 20 hours, you are unemployed. So, unemployment is currently at 31 per cent but output per head in South Africa in 2024 was $6,600."

Rewane stated that inflation could be tamed either by employing painful economic adjustments or outright rewriting of statistics and pointed out that the old and new methodologies in computing inflation offered Nigeria different inflation rates, which were 33.4 per cent and 24.5 per cent respectively in January 2025.

Oil Prices Rise as Russia Hints at Output Plan Reversal

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

Oil prices extended gains yesterday buoyed by the suggestion by the Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Alexander Novak, that the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies could reverse its output increase after April.

However, prices were still on track for a more than 3 per cent weekly decline on concerns over US tariff policies.

Brent crude, Nigeria's price benchmark, rose 99 cents, or 1.4 per cent, to $70.45 a barrel in the afternoon yesterday, as US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) futures were up 93 cents, also 1.4 per cent, at $67.29.

The marginal rise in the price of crude oil portends mixed signals for Nigeria. While rising prices could mean higher revenues for the country, it also means that Nigerians could pay more at the pumps for petrol, a major need for many families and businesses in the country.

However, falling international oil prices imply that Nigerians will buy petrol and other products at lower prices, but overall revenue to the federal and state governments will likely reduce.

But yesterday, Brent jumped to as much as $70.76 during the session and WTI hit $67.68 after Russia's Novak told reporters that the OPEC+ producer group will go ahead with its April increase but may then consider other steps.

"When examining the global oil balance OPEC+ must have deemed in its assessment that it was sufficiently constructive that the oil market could absorb extra barrels without undue negative influence on the price ... so far it seems the price action has proved them wrong," Novak said.

Brent was down 3.8 per cent over the week, set for its biggest weekly decline since the week of November 11. WTI was also set to finish 3.6 per cent down for its biggest weekly drop since the week of January 21.

"The caution expressed by Novak is simply another way of reiterating OPEC+'s conditionality clause relative to 'market conditions'. These conditions will dictate whether or not they keep to the plan of incrementally winding down their voluntary cuts," a Reuters report said.

Brent prices fell to their lowest since December 2021 on Wednesday after US crude inventories rose and OPEC+ announced its decision to increase output quotas.

The market may have overreacted to OPEC+ members increasing output, but Novak clarified that additions will only happen if they can be absorbed to maintain market balance.

The group had said it intended to proceed with a planned April output increase, adding 138,000 barrels per day to the market.

Also, comments from Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent indicated that the US aim is to reduce Iranian crude exports to a trickle.

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NEWS



BREAKING OF FAST…

L-R: Wife of the Speaker House of Representatives, Hajia Fatima Tajudeen Abass; Wife of the Vice President of Nigeria, Hajia Nana Shettima; First Lady of Nigeria, Senator Oluremi Tinubu and Former First Lady of Nigeria, Mrs. Patience Jonathan, at the Iftar (Breaking of Fast) by Mrs. Tinubu at the State House, Abuja…recently

NNPC/FIRST E&P JV Discovers Huge Hydrocarbon Volume in OML 85, Songhai Field

NGML/NIPCO UJV signs 20-year gas supply deal with Ssonic Petroleum

Peter Uzoho

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC)) and FIRST Exploration & Petroleum Development Company Limited (FIRST E&P) Joint Venture (JV) have confirmed a significant hydrocarbon discovery in the Songhai Field, located in oil mining lease (OML) 85.

The well was spudded on November 18, 2024, as part of efforts to increase and sustain the JV's oil production over the next five years. It was successfully drilled to a total depth of 8,883 feet Measured Depth (MD) in 30 meters of water.

The well encountered hydrocarbons across eight reservoirs, logging over 1,000 feet of hydrocarbon-bearing sands, most of which exhibit excellent reservoir properties. Preliminary analysis indicates substantial oil and gas volumes, reinforcing the field's commercial potential. Further evaluations, including formation testing and well data integration, will be conducted to refine resource estimates and optimise field development plans.

Speaking on the discovery, General Manager, Exploration and Development at FIRST E&P, Segun Owolabi, described it as a major milestone in the JV's efforts to maximise the potential of its assets.

"This discovery marks a major milestone in our efforts to unlock the full potential of our assets. The success at Songhai Field underscores the effectiveness of our exploration strategy and our commitment to delivering sustainable value to all stakeholders," Owolabi stated.

NNPCL as the majority partner in the JV, also emphasised the strategic importance of the discovery in supporting Nigeria's production growth and cost optimization targets.

Chief Upstream Investment Officer of NUIMS, Seyi Omotowa, noted that the success at Songhai Field aligns with NNPCL's broader upstream objectives.

"This aligns with NNPC Limited's mandate to drive production growth and cost optimization. The success at Songhai Field reflects our commitment to strategic partnerships, advanced technology, and efficient operations to maximise Nigeria's hydrocarbon potential sustainably," he said.

The discovery also highlights the role of strategic collaboration in expanding Nigeria's hydrocarbon reserves.

Commenting on this, NNPCL's Group Chief Executive Officer, Mallam Mele Kyari, reaffirmed the company's commitment to efficiency and long-term value creation.

"This discovery reaffirms the potential of Nigeria's offshore assets and the importance of collaboration in boosting reserves and production. NNPC Limited remains committed to driving efficiency and long-term value creation for the nation," Kyari stated.

Currently, the JV maintains a steady daily production of approximately 57,000 barrels of oil per day (bopd) from its OML 83 and 85 assets. The new discovery in Songhai Field is expected to further enhance production and contribute to Nigeria's energy security.

Furthermore, the NNPC/FIRST E&P JV remains committed to operational excellence, guided by rigorous safety standards, technical expertise, and efficient project execution. With over 9 million man-hours of LTI-free operations, the JV continues to lead in safe and responsible hydrocarbon development.

This milestone strengthens Nigeria's oil and gas sector, reinforcing the JV's role in supporting the federal government's goal of increasing national hydrocarbon production and reserves while ensuring sustainable energy growth.

Meanwhile, NNPC Gas Marketing Ltd (NGML), a subsidiary of the NNPC Ltd, and its Unincorporated Joint Venture partner, NIPCO Gas Ltd, have executed a Gas Sale and Purchase Agreement (GSPA) with Ssonic Petroleum Ltd to supply natural gas to the company's proposed Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plant in Lekki Free Trade Zone, Lagos State.

Experts Prescribe Measures to Make 2025 Budget Effective

Oluchi Chibuzo

Experts from the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), Ibadan and Nigeria Economic Society (NES) have said that the 2025 budget can positively impact businesses and the nation's economy if some concerns over its implementation are well addressed.

This was the submission of the experts at a seminar titled, 'Impact of the 2025 Budget on the Business and Economic Sector' held at The Chartered Institute, Victoria Island, Lagos, recently.

The Guest Speaker/Chief Executive Officer, Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprises (CPPE), Dr. Muda Yusuf, submitted that "fixing structural challenges through infrastructure spending in the budget can impact positively on the economy and private sector."

He added that "businesses could benefit from the contracting and procurement activities as service providers or suppliers once spending commences."

Yusuf further explained that while "high government borrowing may hurt the private sector because of the crowding out effect in the credit market by government, it offers attractive low risk investment in government securities to investors in financial instruments."

He also said "government spending priorities for security is good for the investment environment and it typically has higher impact in social sector spending – education, health, environment."

Despite the optimism expressed over the 2025 budget, concerns were raised regarding implementation of the budget.

According to the speaker, "As of the first quarter of 2024, implementation of the 2023 capital budget was still ongoing, while that of 2024 was yet to commence according to the budget implementation report of the Budget and National Planning Ministry. Inevitably, the 2025 budget will also be rolled over to 2026.

Apart from the concerns over implementation, Yusuf further submitted that "we need to separate infrastructure spending from the capital budget to enable a better assessment of government commitment to infrastructure development, which is a major desire of the private sector."

Speaking earlier, the Director-General of NISER, Prof. Antonia Simbine said, "that the Nigerian economy is in transition triggered by the set of policies initiated a little less than two years ago and that the needle has moved in certain areas and the economy may have been profoundly reshaped."

In spite of the optimism she expressed, the erudite scholar pointed out that "The 2025 Nigeria federal budget is the biggest ever in local currency terms amounting to N54.99 trillion to be funded through Debt (69 per cent), Loans (28 per cent) and Asset sales (2 per cent) with priorities on Defence and Security, Infrastructure, Education, and Health."

This, according to her, "will normally generate conversations that border on late passage of the budget, the realism or (lack of) the underlying parameters especially the 15 per cent inflation target, the large fiscal deficits, the dependence on debt-finance, others."

The discussants which included Professors Salamatu Isah from Ahmadu Bello University, Risikatu Dauda from University of Lagos, Bongo Adi from Pan-Africa University, and Dr. Patrick Ejumedia, agreed that timely implementation of 2025 budget could be a game-changer for businesses and the nation's economy.

In his closing remarks, the NES President, Prof. Adeola Adenikinju, called for fiscal discipline, efficiency in public expenditure and innovative approaches to revenue mobilisation, including leveraging technology and broadening the tax base while ensuring that tax policies do not stifle productivity and business growth.

Tinubu Names Jega Coordinator Presidential Livestock Reform

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu has appointed former chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission(INEC), Prof. Attahiru Muhammadu Jega as Special Adviser and Coordinator of the Presidential Livestock Reform.

The President, in a statement issued by his Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, announced the appointment yesterday, hoping to drive meaningful progress in the livestock sector and further strengthen national development efforts.

Jega, former vice chancellor of Bayero University, Kano, co-chaired the Presidential Livestock Committee with Tinubu.

The committee delivered comprehensive recommendations that underscored sustainable livestock reforms. One recommendation was the creation of the Livestock Ministry, which now has a minister.

Jega's appointment as special adviser to Tinubu would reinforce the gains of the presidential committee and ensure the continued momentum of the reforms already in motion.

Jega, 68, is a member of the International Elections Advisory Council and the pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council of Sa'adatu Rimi University of Education in Kano State.

He served as the chairman of INEC between 2010 and 2015.

Anambra 2025: APC Screens Okonkwo, Chukwuma, Ozigbo, Others

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

The committee set up by the All Progressives Congress (APC) to screen the seven governorship aspirants ahead of the April 5, 2025, primary election commenced its exercise yesterday in Abuja.

The seven aspirants who have purchased the nomination forms ahead of the November 8 governorship election in Anambra State are: Hon. Chukwuma Michael Umeoji, Prof. Obiora Francis Okonkwo, Nicholas Ukachukwu, Paul Chukwuma, Onunkwo Obinna, Valentine Ozigbo and Edozie Madu.

The screening committee headed by the former governor of Katsina State, Ibrahim Shema, commenced the exercise yesterday evening shortly after its inauguration by the party's National Chairman, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje.

Ganduje, while speaking at the inauguration urged the Shema-led screening panel to be fair and prevent litigation.

According to him, "We have confidence in you to do justice in what you are assigned to do. Ensure that you don't leave some gaps to make us face some litigation either within the party or outside the party."

Addressing journalists after his screening, one of the aspirants and former APC National Auditor, Chukwuma said he was happy with the process which he said is a routine to ensure that only qualified aspirants were selected to fly the party's flag in the election.

He stated, "I came prepared for the screening and I am happy it went well. I am ready for the primary and also hopeful to be elected. I'm also convinced that the APC will win the Anambra election".

Chukwuma added that he was happy with the decision of the party to adopt the indirect mode of primary.

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NEWS



GLAD TO MEET YOU...

L-R: Chairman, South East Development Commission (SEDC), Chief Emeka Wogu; Governor of Anambra State, Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, and MD/CEO, SEDC, Mr. Mark Okoye II, during a courtesy visit to the Governor in Awka…recently

Yemi Osinbajo: Virile Civil Service Crucial for National Development

Aig-Imoukhuede: Our goal is to inspire 3,000 senior public servants

James Emejo in Abuja

Former Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, has said a virile civil service sector remained key to the country's success and national development.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the 2024 AIG Public Leaders Programme, in Abuja, Osinbajo said the civil service has a legal and accepted vehicle by the government to make life bearable for Nigerians.

The former vice president particularly commended the various initiatives by the Aig-Imoukhuede (AIG) Foundation, partnering the government towards restoring the civil service to its former glory.

He pointed out that the service had driven national progress in the past, having been credited for facilitating the establishment of refineries and managing major policy interventions with several successes recorded.

He said it was difficult today to compare the same civil service of the 1980s with the current crop of workers, warning that when public service delivery breaks down, there's often catastrophic consequences.

Osinbajo said there's no real possibility of progress for a nation or government if it's civil service - the real infrastructure for delivering public goods is weak and inefficient.

He said, "This is why the public service is so crucial and so important. And I think that this public leaders programme, the AIG public leaders programme, is a very important demonstration of that fact.

"And what we've seen, especially from the projects that were done as part of the course, is that you need to be able to hand over to public servants the capacity to innovate, the capacity to plan, the capacity to implement many of their thoughts and ideas.

"And I think that this is what the public service has always been, you know, not just the policy thinking, but also policy implementation and also innovation. Today, of course, innovation has become key."

He added, "And I'm so proud and excited about what I've heard and seen today, especially from many of those participants in this course.

"They've shown that they understand what the requirements of public service are in a volatile, uncertain, and complex global environment. So it's exciting what we're seeing today is exciting."

The ceremony witnessed the presentation of awards to 68 course participants as well as special recognition for those who initiated projects with impact.

The former VP said, "The AIG Public Leaders Programme has become far more than a contribution to the development of Nigeria and Africa's public service.

"It has emerged as a game-changing initiative for building capacity within the civil service, both locally and across the continent."

In her remarks, Head of the Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack, said the programme was key to achieving success in the Federal Civil Service Strategy Implementation Plan 2021- 2025.

She also commended the foundation for the result-oriented interventions which had started to witness positive outcomes in the nation's civil service.

Walson-Jack said, "One of the key pillars of reform in that plan is capability building and talent management.

"And so, we at the office of Head of the Civil Service of the Federation are committed to building the capabilities of the civil servants. And this we are doing in so many different ways."

She further said, "Of course, this particular public leaders programme is a programme that is speaking to leadership. And we know that the skills that the participants have gained throughout the duration of the programme would cause them to definitely impact on the federal public service.

"And we do believe that the more this training goes on, the greater impact the participants would have on the federal public service."

On his part, Chairman, AIG Foundation, Mr. Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, said the purpose of the Public Leaders Programme was to inspire each public servant to attain high potential to truly make an impact in the country they serve.

Idris: FG to Showcase Gains of Reforms at France Business Forum in Paris

Olawale Ajimotokan in Abuja

Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, has disclosed that the federal government will use the France Business Forum slated for April 10, 2025 in Paris, to highlight the significant economic progress achieved under the administration of President Bola Tinubu.

He stated this yesterday in Abuja when he received the invitation to the forum by the French Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Marc Fonbaustier, during a courtesy visit to his office.

The minister said the Tinubu reform agenda was delivering tangible results, citing the reduction in food prices and the stabilisation of the Naira as clear indicators of the administration's economic progress.

"We will use the platform of the France-Nigeria Business Forum to take the message of consolidation that the President is desirous to give us this year. This year, 2025, is the year of economic and social consolidation of the Nigerian nation as promised by Mr. President. As you have heard severally, the economy is beginning to turn the corner. Food prices that were hitherto higher are beginning to come down.

"The exchange rate is beginning to show signs of stability and all the reform agenda of Mr. President that he has embarked upon are beginning to show signs that they are really getting the desired attention and that by God's grace, we will reach our destination," Idris said.

He added that while socio-economic reforms often come with initial challenges, President Tinubu's steadfast commitment has significantly shortened this difficult period, leading to the emergence of tangible economic successes.

"Every country that has embarked on any kind of social and economic reform will go through some turbulence and I think that our own incubation period has been shortened by the kind of pragmatism, the focus, determination and conviction that President Bola Tinubu has that this reform will indeed take Nigeria on the path of sustainable prosperity," he said.

Idris described France as a key ally of Nigeria and urged the French government to support President Tinubu's ongoing reform efforts to further strengthen economic and bilateral relations.

Plateau State's IGR Surpasses N30bn

Seriki Adinoyi in Jos

Chairman of Plateau State Internal Revenue Service, Mr. Wayas Jim Pam, yesterday said that the state has recorded significant growth in revenue generation under Governor Caleb Mutfwang administration, adding that the state recorded significant growth in revenue, surpassing N30 billion for the first time in its history.

Addressing journalists in Jos, Pam said, "When this administration started in 2023, I joined halfway through the year, and a lot has happened since then. In 2022, the total revenue generated was N15.9 billion. By the end of 2023, we were able to increase it to N25.8 billion. However, as of the close of business last year, we recorded N31.14 billion in revenue.

"This is the first time Plateau State is exceeding the N30 billion benchmark in revenue generation."

He added that looking ahead, the state government has set a total revenue target of N52 billion for 2025. "We began 2025 on solid footing and in January, we collected about N3.3 billion, one of the highest amounts ever collected in a single month compared to last year when we generated about N1.6 billion in January, this represents a significant improvement in revenue generation."

Pam noted that federal allocations to the state have declined due to debts incurred in previous years, many of which were taken when the exchange rate was much lower.

He said, "Federal allocation to the state has been declining, mainly due to debts incurred in previous years. We are now exploring our Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) potential, and I must commend Governor Caleb Mutfwang for taking bold steps to do things differently. The entire revenue system is undergoing transformation, and we are identifying untapped revenue sources."

General Laka: Drugs, Substance Abuse Fuels Terrorism, Violent Extremism

Linus Aleke in Abuja

The National Coordinator of the National Counter Terrorism Centre, Office of the National Security Adviser (NCTC-ONSA), Major General Adamu Laka, said that drug usage and substance abuse have been identified as factors fuelling terrorism, banditry, and violent extremism.

General Laka also stated that available records show that most violent-related cases were induced by drug abuse.

The National Coordinator made this disclosure while receiving Africa's Beacon of Hope Award from officials of the ECOWAS Youth Alliance at the NCTC complex in Abuja.

A statement by the Head of Strategic Communication, Office of the National Security Adviser, Michael Abu, said the award is a recognition of General Laka's commitment to counter-terrorism efforts and his sterling leadership qualities.

Speaking during the brief but colourful award ceremony in Abuja, the National Coordinator applauded the campaigns embarked upon by various youth groups against the use of drugs and substance abuse, especially among young people.

He said the effects of drugs and substance abuse have been counterproductive.

Stressing that the nexus between drug abuse and crime is obvious, General Laka urged various youth groups and organisations to pursue aggressive campaigns against drug abuse, especially among young people in Nigeria, other West African states, and the Sahel region.

The counter-terrorism boss also called on youth organisations in the region to work towards ensuring the return of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger to the ECOWAS fold, pointing out that Africans are one, irrespective of geographic boundaries.

Pharmacists Debunk Report of Complicity in Fake Drugs Distribution

The Pharmacy Council of Nigeria (PCN) has debunked media reports alleging complicity in the sale and distribution of fake drugs in the country, describing it as false and malicious.

Reacting to news broadcast by a television station with the headline 'NAFDAC Implicates Pharmacy Council Of Nigeria in fake medicines', PCN Registrar, Ibrahim Babashehu Ahmed, said the story was gross misrepresentation of the information in the statement made by the Director General of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration (NAFDAC), Prof. Mojisola Adeyeye, during a media interview.

"Every attentive listener with a proper understanding of the communication by the DG will realise that the broadcast station has erred. This unfortunate action contradicts the Nigeria Broadcasting Code (6th Edition, 2016), specifically Section 5.0, subsection 5.1.2," he said.

Ahmed expressed disappointment at the display of unprofessionalism by the TV station in the misrepresentation of facts, saying the Council expects the media station to immediately retract the story and tender a public apology for the misdemeanor, accusing the station of violating broadcasting codes and damaging the council's reputation.

According to him, the DG did not in any way indict the PCN in the interview; instead, she appreciated the complementary efforts of the Council in the fight against the sale and distribution of counterfeit drugs in the country.



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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.

Closure of Schools During Ramadan Violates Rights to FORB and Education

Humanists are deeply concerned by the directive to shut down schools during the month of Ramadan in Muslim-majority states because it violates rights to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FORB)and education. Bauchi and Katsina have issued directives against the operation of schools during Ramadan. In separate press statements, authorities urged public and private schools to vacate during the Muslim fasting period. In Bauchi, the Ministry of Education changed the academic calendar and made February 26, 2025, the official closing date for all nursery, primary, and secondary schools in the state. All schools were directed to be on holiday from March 1st to April 5, 2025. The Ministry of Education also warned schools against defying this order. In Katsina, the Sharia police, known as Hisbah, asked schools to close for Ramadan. They warned against conducting extra lessons during this period. Official and unofficial closure of schools will apply in other Muslim-dominated and sharia implementing states in the country.

Sharia was imposed on Muslim-dominated states in Northern Nigeria in early 2000, and proponents stated that Sharia implementation was only for Muslims. But this development and others belie this claim. Sharia is not only for Muslims. Sharia law is enforced on all persons. Sharia provides a pretext for Islamists and jihadists to impose political Islam on all Nigerians despite their beliefs or nonbeliefs. Measures must be taken to address this unfortunate development before it is too late.

The directive to close all schools during Ramadan exemplifies Islamic tyranny. It violates the right of students and teachers to freedom of religion or belief. All Nigerians are not Muslims. Not everyone in Bauchi and Katsina states professes Islam. Christians, and adherents of other faiths and none exist in these places and have the right to practice their faith or belief. Some Muslims who voiced support for this directive claimed that this closure would help students and teachers to observe Ramadan. But if there is no compulsion in religion as stated in the Quran, why should Islamic state authorities compel students and teachers to stay at home during this fasting period?

Again constitutionally, Nigeria is a secular state and has no state religion. Section 10 of the constitution prohibits state support or promotion of a religion. It states that no part of the federation or state should adopt a religion as a state religion. However, this directive makes Islam the state religion in Bauchi and Katsina. It discriminates against non-muslims and demonstrates state bias and support for Islam. These states do not extend the same facility to Christians during the fasting period, do they?

Humanists urge the Nigerian government to rescind this order to close all schools during the month of Ramadan and guarantee the rights of all Nigerians to freedom of religion or belief and education.

No Nigerian child should be forced to choose between fasting and going to school. Ramadan should not be observed at the expense of education for all.

Leo Igwe is a board member of the Humanists Association of Nigeria and Humanists International, UK.

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Get Out and Let Them Solve it

There are many ways to finish a war with the best being to stop it starting but that rarely happens despite the obvious horrible consequences of wars.

The causes of conflict and then wars are many and varied, often based on centuries of memories that should have faded away.

Most of the world is concerned about the two main current wars, in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip, both of which were to be solved by President Trump on the first day in the job but then reality struck.

Initial negotiations have led to some positive outcomes but there are still people being killed and houses being destroyed. The AI video of Trump Gaza implied surrender, the destruction and rebuilding of the Gaza and Netanyahu being there. Abject surrender.

The latest approach is a simple one, give up or get destroyed immediately. With Trump's "I am sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job", a negotiated solution may be off the board.

The solution is difficult to find given the number of people with the best of intentions and an actual understanding of the history of this conflict who have tried and failed.

The first step should now be to remove the US, their President, their weapons and all of their negotiations based on the US's priorities of surrender so that President Trump can claim success. The next step would be to rebuild Gaza in its own image, not the farcical one in the Trump video.

Find a real solution not a Trump publicity stunt.

Dennis Fitzgerald, Melbourne, Australia

In Official Visit to UK, Tuggar Discusses Nigeria's Evolving Foreign Policy, Global Aspirations

Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amb. Yusuf Maitama Tuggar on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, delivered a speech on Nigeria's Evolving Foreign Policy and Global Aspirations, at Chatham House, London. Likewise, the Minister during the trip also had engagements and interviews at the BBC Africa, The Economist, Bloomberg and also had high-level roundtable on tech and trade; Bilateral Meeting with UK Home Secretary; a grand dinner hosted by Lord Simon Woolley; a meeting with British International Investment (BII) and one of Nigeria's leading fintech companies, Moniepoint. At Chatham House, Tuggar pointed out that Nigeria, just like every other country puts the interest of its citizen first. He highlighted efforts by the President Bola Tinubu's administration to ensure peace in West Africa and Africa in general, while explaining the rationale and benefits of most of the foreign and economic policies introduced by the administration since it assumed office. Here are some photographs from the Minister's London engagements



Minister of Foreign Affairs engaged with BBC Africa to discuss Nigeria's foreign policy priorities. He reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to regional security and stability, particularly in West Africa and the Sahel, while highlighting the country's strategic role in global diplomacy



In an interview with Lena Schipper of The Economist, Tuggar, highlighted Nigeria's strategic role in regional and global affairs. He underscored why businesses should view Nigeria not just as a market, but as a dynamic hub for innovation, investment, and sustainable long-term growth



Tuggar, participated in a high-level dialogue on technology and trade, hosted by the newly appointed UK Trade Envoy to Nigeria, Rt. Hon. Florence Eshalomi. The discussions centered on deepening technological collaboration and expanding trade opportunities between Nigeria and the UK. Bringing together key stakeholders—including government officials, business leaders, and industry experts—the roundtable explored strategies to drive investment, foster innovation, and strengthen economic ties in the tech sector.



Tuggar, engaged with the Nigerian diaspora at The Africa Centre—London's historic hub for African arts, culture, and intellectual exchange. During the visit, he emphasised the crucial role the global Nigerian community plays in driving cultural and economic progress. This engagement aligns with Nigeria's 4D Foreign Policy Strategy—Diaspora, Development, Demography, and Democracy—which underscores the importance of leveraging diaspora contributions for national growth.





Tuggar, participated in a breakfast interview with Bloomberg, where he discussed key areas of Nigeria-UK cooperation, including: Security collaboration to enhance stability and counter shared threats; strategic partnerships across various sectors to drive mutual economic growth; opportunities in the digital economy, IT, and the startup ecosystem as catalysts for innovation and investment; business process outsourcing (BPO) as a viable solution to address irregular migration, and challenges in visa issuance for Nigerian students and the need for streamlined processes to support educational mobility.

IMAGES







Tuggar, presented a compelling vision for Nigeria's foreign policy, emphasising strategic autonomy, economic diplomacy, and democratic governance as the pillars of its global engagement. As the world undergoes rapid transformation, so too does Nigeria's role with it. The interconnected nature of security in West Africa underscores Nigeria's commitment to regional stability, balancing non-interference with proactive engagement in governance and security. With shifting global power dynamics, Nigeria is asserting itself as a strategic actor, not merely a recipient of policies shaped elsewhere. A forward-looking foreign policy—proactive, adaptive, and firmly rooted in national interest—is essential to shaping Nigeria's future on the global stage.
On migration and economic growth, the Minister said: "Irregular migration poses a significant challenge for Europe, yet some countries are hemorrhaging talent. We must develop trade and investment-driven policies that create opportunities at home, encouraging skilled individuals to stay. Failed states are a cancer—we cannot afford to fail. Nigeria has the potential to be a larger, more influential market."



Tuggar, held a bilateral meeting with the UK Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, to strengthen cooperation between Nigeria and the United Kingdom. Their discussions focused on key areas under the Nigeria-UK Migration, Justice, and Home Affairs Dialogue—a crucial platform for advancing shared priorities in legal migration, security, and justice reform.

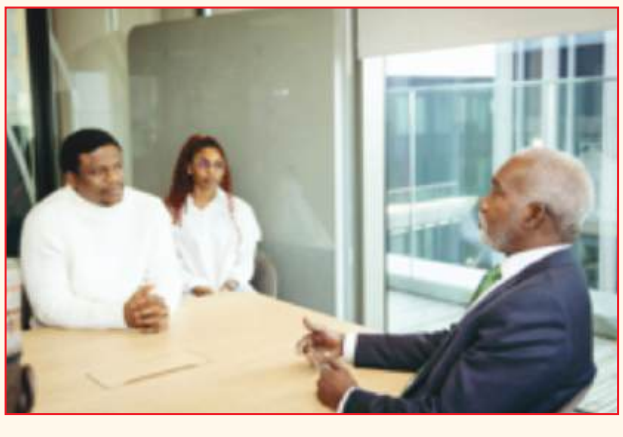


Tuggar, and the Nigerian delegation were honored at an intimate dinner hosted by Lord Simon Woolley. The evening fostered meaningful discussions on strengthening Nigerian-British collaborations and the importance of ensuring Black Africans hold key positions that enable them to drive impactful change. During the engagement at Cambridge, Lord Woolley informed HMFA of the decision to return 113 Benin Bronzes currently in their possession. In response, HMFA expressed deep appreciation for this significant gesture, recognising it as an important step in restoring Nigeria's cultural heritage.





Tuggar held a high-level meeting with Mr. Leslie Maasdorp, CEO of British International Investment (BII), to enhance investment opportunities for Nigeria's private sector.
With over 75 years of investment in Nigeria, BII remains a key UK partner. In 2024 alone, the institution committed $230 million to Nigeria, bringing its total portfolio in the country to nearly $700 million. These investments have played a crucial role in supporting over 62,000 jobs across vital sectors, reinforcing BII's long-standing commitment to Nigeria's economic growth.







Tuggar also visited the Moniepoint team at their London office during his inaugural official trip to the UK. This visit underscored the Nigerian government's commitment to bolstering the local business community, aligning with President Bola Tinubu's foreign policy agenda aimed at supporting business growth. The visit primarily focused on engaging with the media, academia and business community. The aim of the visit was to identify opportunities for governmental support to enhance investment and expand Nigerian enterprises both across Africa and globally. Ambassador Tuggar expressed pride in Moniepoint's achievements, highlighting their status as the fastest-growing fintech company in Africa and worldwide, a recognition acknowledged by the Financial Times.

NEWS



AFRICA SUMMIT…

L-R: Project Evaluation Manager, Julius Berger-Abumet, Werner Willegger; Country Representative, Benin, Christopher Fierens; Director, Corporate Development, Lochend Stolle and Sales Consultant, Julius Berger-AFP, at the Africa Summit in Cotonou, Benin Republic…recently

Ganduje, Barau Receive Atiku's Support Groups in 19 Northern States to APC

Sunday Aborisade in Abuja

The National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Dr Abdullahi Umar Ganduje and the Deputy President of the Senate, Senator Jibrin Barau, yesterday, received members of the support groups of the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2023 election, Atiku Abubakar, from the 19 northern states to the APC.

The support groups operated under the aegis of the Coalition of Atiku Support Groups in the 19 Northern States in the 2023 general elections.

The support groups announced their defection from the PDP to the APC at the A-Class Event Centre, Abuja.

Five representatives of the group from each of the 19 northern states and the FCT attended the event.

They pledged to work for the success of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu during the 2027 general election across the nooks and crannies of the North.

The groups said they decided to join the APC and decided to support Tinubu following Senator Barau's encouragement.

The Coordinator of the Coalition, Hon Abubakar Malami, said, " Our groups comprise various strata of society—women, youths, students, traders, academics, and farmers—representing diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds."

Malami added, "In the 2023 general elections build-up, we mobilised our members across the nooks and crannies of the 19 borthern states and the FCT to campaign for former Vice President Atiku Abubakar.

"To the glory of God, Alhaji Atiku and the people around him acknowledged and appreciated the support of our groups. We played a key role in the votes the former vice president polled in the last presidential election.

"We supported Alhaji Atiku in our quest to address the challenges facing our region, especially the terrorist activities of bandits, which are clogging our people's wheel to economic activities.

"Farming, the mainstay of our people, was a no-go area. Our farmlands were turned into kidnappers' dens.

"However, to the glory of Almighty God, 22 months into President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's tenure, a fresh air of peace and hope permeates the 19 northern states. The crashing prices of food items cannot be divorced from the relative peace enjoyed in our region.

"To tackle the challenges facing our region, the President has established the North West Development Commission (NWDC) following a bill sponsored by the Deputy President of the Senate, Senator Barau I Jibrin.

"This is the game changer. Mr President has also established the North Central Development Commission (NCDC).

" Another thing that has endeared the President Tinubu-led APC government to us is the Barau Initiative for Agricultural Revolution in North West (BIARN), a brainchild of the Deputy President of the Senate.

"We read in the national dailies that over 500 young farmers millionaires will be created under this initiative in the North West."

Following the success being recorded by President Tinubu, he said they have decided to team up with President Tinubu to lead the country to the next level of economic prosperity.

Malami said, "In 2027, we will work for the continuation of President Tinubu's administration."

Four Drug Kingpins Bag 95 Years in Jail, Forfeit Jeeps, Others

Marwa hails conviction

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

Three drug kingpins: Ogbuji Christian Ifeanyi; Iloduba Augustine Chinonye; Shuaibu Nuhu Isa (a.k.a Don) and Zidon Zurga have been convicted and sentenced to a total of 85 years in prison by the Federal High Court in Lagos and Yola, Adamawa states over trafficking of cocaine and skunk worth over N4.6 billion.

Ogbuji was intercepted by operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, MMIA Ikeja Lagos, on Wednesday 18th September 2024, during an inward clearance of Ethiopian Airlines flight passengers from Addis Ababa to Lagos for importing 817 wraps of cocaine weighing 19.40 kilograms with an estimated street value of N4,656,000,000.00.

That was barely 16 months after the 48-year-old businessman was arrested and convicted for ingesting 93 pellets of cocaine.

He was first arrested at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, NAIA, Abuja, on Wednesday 10th May 2023 upon arrival from Uganda via Addis Ababa, onboard Ethiopian Airlines flight ET 951 for ingesting 93 pellets of cocaine with a gross weight of 1.986kg.

He was subsequently arraigned before Federal High Court 12 Abuja presided over by Hon. Justice Mobolaji Olajuwon in charge no: FHC/ABJ/CR/192/2023 and convicted on 13th July 2023.

Ogbuji was sentenced to two years imprisonment with an option of paying a fine of N3,000,000.00, which he paid and was set free.

Not done with crime, Ogbuji was again arrested at the Lagos airport with the large consignment of cocaine on 18th September 2024, after which he was arraigned before Justice Yellim Bogoro of the Federal High Court Lagos in charge number: FHC/L/845C on 16th January 2025. He was eventually sentenced on 28th February to five years imprisonment on count one with an option of N7,000,000 and 10 years imprisonment on count two without an option of fine. In the event that he failed to pay the N7 million fine, the judge ruled that the convict will serve a total of 15 years in jail consecutively. The court ordered the forfeiture of monetary exhibits and other items found on him at the time of his arrest.

Livestock Devt Ministry, SPRiNG Strengthen Conflict Resolution Strategies to End Farmer-Herder Conflicts

Charles Ajunwa

The Federal Ministry of Livestock Development (FMLD), in partnership with the Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria (SPRiNG), a programme funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office - FCDO, has taken a bold step toward ending farmer-herder conflicts by convening a high-level workshop to refine its Five-Year Strategic Plan.

The workshop which brought together key stakeholders to develop inclusive, conflict-sensitive solutions for a more stable and productive livestock sector, provided a collaborative platform for representatives from government ministries, peace commissions, civil society, academia, and international development partners to enhance mediation mechanisms, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), and grievance management in livestock and agricultural systems.

Minister of Livestock Development, Alhaji Idi Mukhtar Maiha, opened the event, stressing the urgent need for structured conflict resolution frameworks to address insecurity in the livestock sector.

According to him, "This sector of the economy faces conflicts and insecurity, which have contributed to restricted access to key lands, water, and grassland resources across the country."

He also reaffirmed the ministry's dedication to improving security.

"For this reason, some of the pillars of the ministry's five-year strategic plan are peace, security, and social cohesion," Maiha said.

Reaffirming the UK's long-standing commitment to Nigeria's stability, Head of Governance and Stability at the British High Commission, Abuja, Magdalene Lagu, emphasised the importance of continued collaboration under the UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnerships.

The workshop featured robust discussions to refine FMLD's Peacebuilding, Security, and Social Cohesion Pillar, ensuring its initiatives are practical, conflict-sensitive, and aligned with local realities.

Participants identified key strategies to enhance dispute resolution, improve coordination of livestock migration, and strengthen trust between farming and pastoral communities.

Team Leader of SPRiNG, Dr. Ukoha Ukiwo, highlighted the significance of this engagement.

Julius Berger Strengthens Regional Presence at Choiseul Africa Summit

Julius Berger Nigeria Plc is reinforcing its regional expansion strategy, aiming to solidify its presence across West Africa's construction sector.

Speaking at the Choiseul Africa Summit in Cotonou, Benin Republic, the company's Director of Corporate Development, Jochen Stolle, expressed confidence in Julius Berger's growing footprint in the region.

"I see Julius Berger as one of the big players coming out of this region in the future," he said.

At the Sofitel Marina Hotel & Spa in Cotonou, where West Africa's movers and shakers gathered under the coastal sun, conversations weren't just exchanged—they carried weight with more than 350 economic minds, government leaders, and industry decision-makers meeting for the Choiseul Africa Summit convened by the Choiseul Institute. It was a space to build partnerships, shape new economic strategies, and set the pace for regional growth. With the Government of Benin actively supporting the event, Julius Berger co-sponsored the summit, positioning itself at the heart of discussions on the region's infrastructure and economic future.

Speaking to journalists on the sidelines, Stolle underscored the importance of Julius Berger's presence at the summit.

"The sponsorship for Julius Berger is very important. We attended this conference last year, and now it is coming to Benin Republic. It is a story that we have to pick up. Let us interact with other agencies, let us interact with other government bodies in all the West African countries that are in the focus of Julius Berger. Let us do the first step here, introduce us to the people, and develop anything that is coming out of it."

Harini Logan to Grace Spellingbee Competition in Nigeria

The much-anticipated Spelling Bee in Nigeria (SpIN) National Finals is set to take place on Friday, March 14, 2025, at the U.S. Consul General's Residence in Lagos.

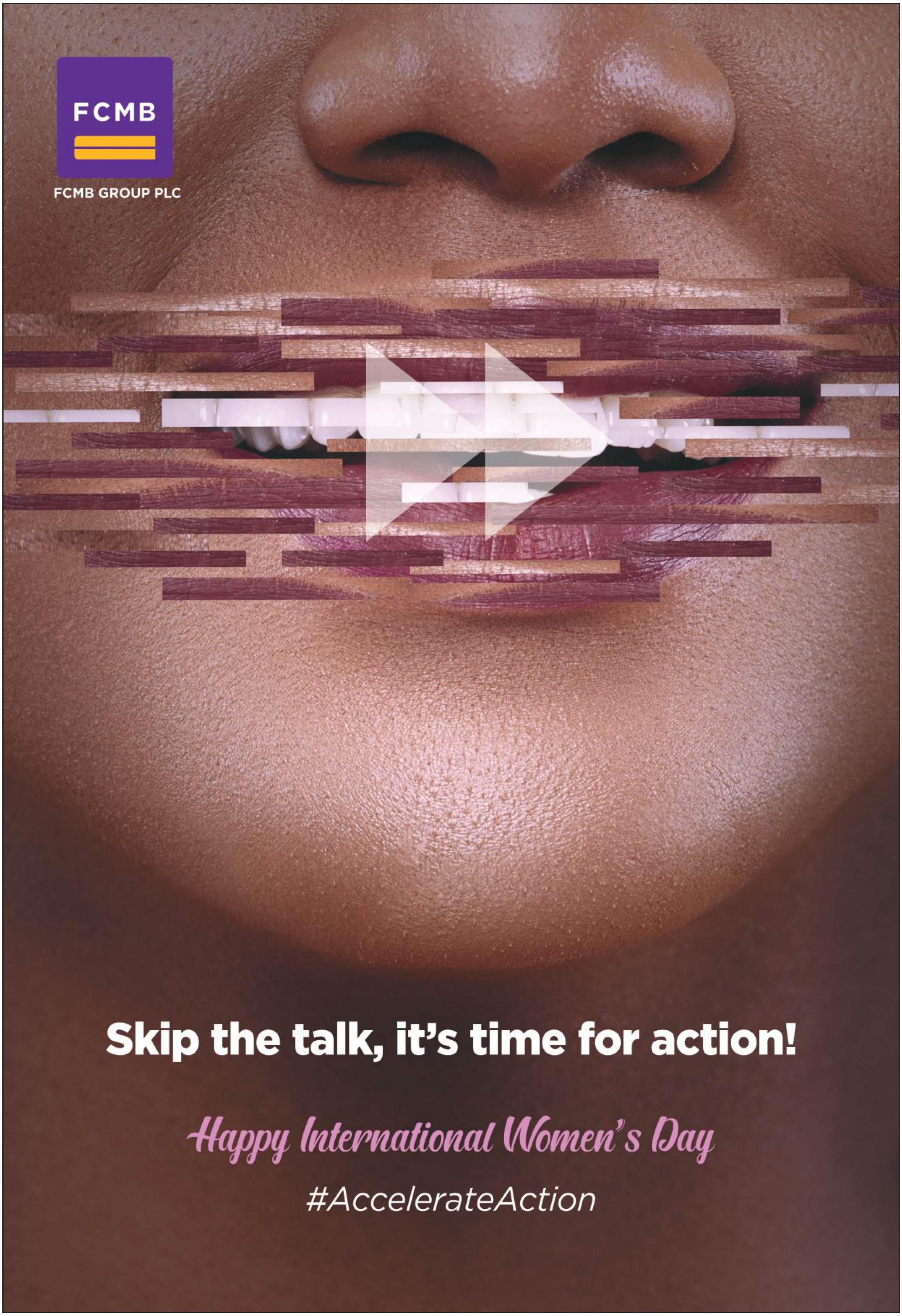
Originally scheduled for February, the event was postponed due to a conflicting Lagos State event, but is now primed to deliver an unforgettable experience for Nigeria's brightest young spellers.

In a thrilling development, Harini Logan, 2022 Scripps National Spelling Bee Champion, will make her first-ever visit to Nigeria to serve as Guest Pronouncer at the SpIN National Finals, according to a statement.

Harini, renowned for her historic spell-off victory, is not just a decorated champion but also an advocate for education, mentorship, and the global spelling bee community.

Reflecting on her upcoming visit, Harini shared her excitement: "I am honoured to be part of this incredible milestone for Nigeria's spelling bee journey. Spelling bees have shaped my life in so many ways, and I'm thrilled to witness firsthand the passion and dedication of Nigeria's young spellers. I can't wait to experience the culture, meet the talented contestants, and play a role in this historic event."

The SpIN National Finals would feature 64 students from across Nigeria, who have competed through rigorous semi final qualifiers for the chance to become the country's inaugural champion. The winner will represent Nigeria at the 100th edition of the Scripps National Spelling Bee in the United States, a momentous achievement for the nation's literacy and academic excellence landscape.


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Skip the talk, it's time for action!
Happy International Women's Day
#AccelerateAction

NEWS XTRA



EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT PROJECT LAUNCH...

L-R: British Deputy High Commissioner, Lagos, Mr. Jonny Baxter; Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu; Executive Secretary, Lagos State Employment Trust Fund, Feyisayo Alayande, and Chief Executive Officer, The King's Trust International, Mr. Will Straw, at the launch of the Employability Support Project in Lagos…recently

Yahaya Bello: Court Decides Whether to Admit Judgement on School Fees Payment May 8

Alex Enumah in Abuja

Justice Emeka Nwite of a Federal High Court in Abuja, would on May 8 decide whether to admit a judgement of a High Court of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), in suit number: FCT/HC/CV/2574/2023, between Mr. Ali Bello and the Incorporated Trustees of American International School, Abuja.

Justice Nwite announced the date for his ruling yesterday, shortly after parties argued for and against the admissibility of the judgement as exhibited in the trial of former Kogi State Governor, Yahaya Bello.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is prosecuting the former governor on alleged money laundering and fraud.

At the resumed trial yesterday, the PW3, Mr. Nicholas Ohehomon, was led by prosecution counsel, Prof. Kemi Pinheiro, SAN, to conclude his evidence which started the previous day.

Before commencing cross examination of the witness, Bello's counsel, Prof. Joseph Daudu, SAN, sought to tender the FCT judgement, which had decided on the issue of payment of fees or refund in the ongoing trial of the former governor.

But, in a swift reaction, EFCC objected to the tendering of the document on the grounds that the prosecution had not yet closed its case.

The senior lawyer citing Section 232 of the Evidence Act, submitted that the only kind of documents the defendant can tender during cross examination are previous statements in writing of a witness for the purpose of contradicting or challenging his current testimony.

Responding, Daudu pointed out that the admissibility of documents in criminal or civil cases is governed strictly and exclusively by the principles of relevance to the proceedings at hand.

"Once it is adjudged, we submit that the document is relevant, it becomes automatically admissible. That is what is contained in Sections 4, 5 and 6 of the Evidence Act, 2011.

"The question for your Lordship is, is this document relevant and admissible in line with the provision of the Evidence Act. The answer has been provided by my learned brother silk for the prosecution when he referred to the content of the judgement and read out a portion which says that a particular relief was refused and that the fee agreement was upheld in the same judgement."

He said the public documents they sought to tender had AISA as a party and that, as far as the defendant was concerned, the witness was the sole witness of AISA in the matter and added that, the objection of the prosecution was speculative because "he does not know what we want to do with the record yet.

"Because he (Pinhero, SAN) is not comfortable with the document does not stop its admissibility," he added.

Pinherio, however, urged the court to reject the document, arguing that the defence counsel had not demonstrated that it comes within the ambit of Section 232 of the Evidence Act.

After listening to submissions of counsel on the admissibility or otherwise of the FCT High Court judgement, the trial Judge, Justice Emeka Nwite adjourned the case to May 8 and 9, for ruling on the admissibility of the document and for continuation of trial.

Earlier, when trial resumed yesterday, Kemi Pinheiro, SAN, asked the Registrar to give the witness, Nicholas Ohehomon, Exhibit 13P1.

The witness identified the exhibit as a telex from the bank sent to the school via email by Ali Bello.

The witness was also told to identify Exhibits 13P2 to 13P4 and she confirmed that they were transfers made by Forza Oil and Gas in favour of the respective children.

He identified Exhibit 13P5, a telex by Whales Oil and Gas to American International School as well as others.

The witness told the court that the name of Yahaya Bello is not indicated as a sender in any of the fund transfers to AISA.

Southern Kaduna Christian Leaders Condemn Abduction, Murder of Catholic Priest

John Shiklam in Kaduna

The Southern Kaduna Christian Leaders Association (SKCLA) has condemned the abduction and gruesome murder of Sylvester Okechukwu, a Catholic priest in Kafanchan Diocese.

He was the pastor of St. Mary Catholic Church, Tachira, in Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

Okechukwu was reported to have been abducted by bandits at his residence on Tuesday night and killed on Wednesday morning.

In a statement yesterday, Chairman of SKCLA, Apostle Emmanuel Kure, expressed sadness over the unfortunate incident.

"The Southern Kaduna Christian Leaders Association is deeply saddened and outraged by the abduction and gruesome murder of Rev. Fr. Sylvester Okechukwu of the Catholic Diocese of Kafanchan," the statement read.

"This inhumane act is not only a painful loss to the Church but also a disturbing indication of the worsening insecurity in our land.

"On behalf of SKCLA, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the Catholic Diocese of Kafanchan, especially to the Lord Bishop, Most Rev. Julius Yakubu Kundi, the clergy, and the entire Catholic faithful.

"We stand with you in this moment of grief and pray that God grants you the strength and comfort to bear this tragic loss," Kure Said.

Kure said the unfortunate incident is part of a troubling pattern of attacks on clergymen in Southern Kaduna.

"We painfully recall the abduction and brutal killing of Rev. Fr. John Mark Cheitnum in 2022, the assassination of Pastor Musa Mairiga of ECWA Church, and the numerous cases of kidnappings and killings of Christian leaders across our communities.

"These repeated assaults on men of God raise serious concerns: Is this a deliberate and systematic attack on Christians, particularly priests and pastors?" the statement asked.

Kure called on both the federal and state security apparatus to do something drastic to check the ugly situation before it begins to carry a religious undertone that might undermine the hard earned peace in the state.

"They may be criminal but why is the church clerics the only target?

"We strongly challenge the security agencies to rise to the occasion and put an end to this wave of violence.

"It is unacceptable that those who dedicate their lives to preaching peace and serving humanity continue to be hunted down without consequences for the perpetrators.

"The government and security forces must take immediate and decisive action to prevent further bloodshed and restore confidence in the safety of our communities," the group said.

Focus on One Big Objective, Soludo Tells SEDC

Anambra nurses protest poor pay package, working conditions, allege maltreatment

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

Anambra State Governor, Chukwuma Soludo, has emphasised the importance of prioritising one key objective from their agenda to the Southeast Development Commission (SEDC).

This was as nurses in the state under the aegis of the National Association of Nigerian Nurses and Midwives (NANNM), Anambra State Chapter protested against their poor working conditions in government-owned health institutions in the state.

The nurses made the protest during an interactive forum they organised at their residential quarters known as Nurses House, located in Okpuno, within the state capital, to interact with their state leadership, who they charged to take their message to the state government.

Governor Soludo said this when he received a delegation from the South East Development Commission (SEDC), led by Chief Emeka Wogu, Chairman, and Mr. Mark Okoye II, who is the Managing Director, according to a statement from the Senior Special Adviser to the Governor on New Media, Ejimofor Opara.

During the meeting, Soludo advised the SEDC team to focus on achieving tangible results, ensuring the commission remains committed to its core development goals.

He urged them to avoid bureaucratic and politicised approaches, which can hinder progress and effectiveness.

The governor's counsel was aimed at ensuring the SEDC remains focused on driving growth and development in the Southeast region.

He noted that by prioritising one key objective, the commission could channel its resources and energy towards achieving a specific goal, rather than spreading itself too thin across multiple objectives.

The meeting also provided an opportunity for Wogu and Okoye to praise Soludo's outstanding achievements, acknowledging his significant contributions to the state's development.

The governor's efforts in improving security, infrastructure development, and economic growth were particularly commended.

Meanwhile, on the protest,the nurses complained amongst other things of poor implementation of their salary structure, which is known as CONHESS, saying that their pay remains the lowest in all the neighbouring states.

Addressing the state chairperson of NANNM, Mrs. Edith Onwuka, the nurses who took turns to speak bared their minds on the challenges they face in carrying out their duties.

They said, "We have never been paid more than 60 per cent of our salary, even with the current minimum wage increment.

"Some of us work in hospitals with over 80 patients in a ward originally meant for 20 bed space, making it so difficult for the health workers to operate in such an environment.

CDS Reiterates Call for Regional Collaboration to Counter Terrorism, Violent Extremism

Linus Aleke in Abuja

The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Christopher Musa, has reiterated his call for regional collaboration and multilateral cooperation to combat terrorism, violent extremism, and transnational organised crime in the Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel region, and West Africa.

General Musa restated this call when he received a high-level delegation from the African Economic and Security (AES) bloc, representing Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, at the Defence Headquarters (DHQ) in Abuja.

The delegation from Sahel countries is currently in Nigeria to understudy the nation's innovative non-kinetic approaches to counter-terrorism, with specific emphasis on Operation Safe Corridor and the Borno Model for the management of mass surrender of repentant low-risk terrorists.

Addressing the delegation from the Sahel region, General Musa said, "It is only by working together that we can defeat these enemies of peace. These individuals have no respect for life, borders or human rights.

"All they have in mind is to destroy, and if you observe the way they operate, you will notice that they do not mean well for us, especially within the Sahel region.

"If you look at it, we live and behave alike, whether it is Nigeria, Mali or Niger. We are one and the same people; it is only boundaries that set us apart. But if you look at our attitude, culture and behaviour, you will know that we are the same.

"I am happy you are able to come here, and I can tell you that Nigeria and the Armed Forces are happy to have you here. We will work collaboratively to defeat our common enemies.

"I visited Niger last year and I was warmly received. I am looking forward to visiting Mali and Burkina Faso too. We need to stay together."

The CDS also emphasised the need to urgently tackle the menace of illegal mining in the region, stressing that criminal syndicates in the Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel region and West Africa are funding their illicit and murderous enterprises with the proceeds of illegal mining.

NEWS XTRA



50TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION...

L-R: Pastor in Charge, RCCG Lagos Province 64, Mr. Bisi Akande; wife and celebrant, Mrs. Lolade Akande; Continental Overseer, RCCG Continent 3, Mr. Johnson Funsho Odesola; and wife, Mrs. Rachael Odesola, during the celebrant's 50th birthday celebration in Lagos...recently

FG Directs Relevant MDAs to Meet FATF's Requirements, Moves to Exit Nigeria from Grey List Second Quarter

Ndubuisi Francis in Abuja

The federal government has directed all relevant agencies to take immediate and decisive steps to meet the requirements of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to exit Nigeria from its grey list.

FATF is the global anti-money laundering and combating of terorism financing watchdog, which in February 2023 greylisted Nigeria after a 2021 Mutual Evaluation Report identified critical gaps in its financial crime prevention measures.

Since then, the country has made substantial strides under an action plan jointly developed with FATF's International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG).

Minister of State for Finance, Dr. Doris Uzoka-Anite, gave the hint on government's directive to relevant bodies when she met with top government functionaries and stakeholders, including the Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), yesterday.

The meeting was designed to harmonise strategies on efforts to pull Nigeria out of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF's) grey list in the next quarter.

A country under the gey list is subjected to increased monitoring by the FATF due to certain deficiencies in its anti-money laundering (AML) and combating the financing of terrorism (CFT) and proliferation financing (CPF) framework.

A statement issued by the Director, Information and Public Relations, Ministry of Finance, Mohammed Manga, yesterday announced that relevant Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) of the federal government met with Uzoka-Anite to discuss the country's efforts towards exiting the grey list.

The statement read: "Nigeria has taken a significant leap towards strengthening its financial integrity as it intensifies efforts to exit the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list by Q2 2025, a move that will bolster investor confidence and unlock new economic opportunities.

"The Honourable Minister of State for Finance, Dr. Doris Uzoka-Anite stated this today (Friday) in her office in Abuja when she met with the relevant Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) of the federal government to discuss the country's efforts towards exiting the grey list."

The statement added that the minister emphasised the government's commitment to ensuring Nigeria's removal from the grey list, saying: "we are working tirelessly to address the remaining deficiencies in our AML/CFT regime, and we are confident that our efforts will yield positive results."

Uzoka-Anite restated that the government had, to this end, directed all relevant agencies to take immediate and decisive action to meet the FATF's requirements.

"We recognise the importance of exiting the grey list, not only for our national interest but also for the global community's confidence in our financial systems. All hands must therefore be on deck to ensure the realisation of these objectives," the minister added.

She explained that Nigeria's efforts to strengthen its AML/CFT regime are aimed at demonstrating the country's dedication to upholding international standards.

Uzoka-Anite added: "We are committed to implementing the necessary reforms to safeguard Nigeria's financial integrity and foster global confidence in our economy."

EHA Impact Ventures Announces $2m Equity Investment in Clinics

Charles Ajunwa

A gender-lens impact investing firm, EHA Impact Ventures (EIV), has invested $2 million in EHA Clinics, a prominent network of primary care facilities in Nigeria, with the aim of expanding the clinic's services to new locations, extend its clinical service lines, and enhance its community outreach programmes to improve healthcare access in Nigeria.

The firm announced its investment at a panel session at the Sankalp Africa Summit 2025, a premier convening of impact investors, social enterprises, and development leaders, said a statement.

The announcement highlighted the importance of supporting high-impact health organisations, like EHA Clinics, with investment techniques that will offer the capital to scale operations without the immediate burden of debt repayment.

"At EHA Impact Ventures, we believe in investing in solutions that create lasting change. EHA Clinics has consistently demonstrated innovation and excellence in healthcare service delivery, and this investment reaffirms our commitment to strengthening primary health care systems for women and children in Africa," said Evelyn Castle, CEO/Co-Founder of EHA Impact Ventures.

"In return, EHA Impact Ventures secures a stake in EHA Clinics, ensuring alignment in driving both social impact and financial sustainability," she added.

EHA Clinics, known for its patient-centred care and technology-driven approach, will use the funding to expand its presence to three new locations across Nigeria and extend its community outreach programmes to reach an additional 20,000 people annually.

This expansion will bridge critical healthcare gaps, ensuring more people—notably mothers and children—receive high-quality medical care.

Adam Thompson, CEO of EHA Clinics, stated that "our partnership with EHA Impact Ventures accelerates our mission to provide accessible and innovative healthcare services. With this funding, we can scale our impact, reaching more communities that need reliable and quality medical care."

ADUN VC Controversy: Ezeoba Resigns as FG Confirms Ogbogbo

The Chairman of the Governing Council of the Admiralty University of Nigeria (ADUN), Dele Ezeoba, a retired Vice-Admiral and former Nigeria's Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) has tendered his resignation letter in protest against the federal government's confirmation of Prof. Christopher Ogbogbo as substantive Vice Chancellor of the Institution.

ADUN, a Nigeria Navy-owned university has been embroiled in controversies for couple of days now over the selection process of a substantive Vice Chancellor.

The university had in October 2024 advertised for the position of a vice-chancellor. At the deadline for application, a total of 52 applicants showed interest.

The Governing Council, therefore, tasked KPMG to screen the 52 applicants following the guidelines listed in its advertorial placed in Nigerian dailies. Reports have it that at the end of its exercise which included written tests, a total of five applicants were shortlisted and presented to the Governing Council for further screening.

The five shortlisted candidates were Lucian Chukwu, a professor of Marine Biology and current deputy vice chancellor (Management Services) at the University of Lagos; Sunny Iyuke, a professor of Chemical and Process Engineering and chief executive officer of the Petroleum Training Institute (PTI), Effurun, Delta State; Lawrence Omo-Aghoja, provost of the College of Medicine, Delta State University (DELSU), Abraka; Ifeoma Ijeh, a professor of Biochemistry and director of the Centre for Molecular Bioscience and Biotechnology at the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, and Christopher Ogbogbo, a Professor of African History at the University of Ibadan.

After a thorough examination process the five candidates score sheet was presented thus: Mrs Chukwu scored 83.41 per cent; Ogbogbo (72.5 per cent); Ijeh (69.16 per cent); Iyuke (60.83 per cent), and Omoh-Aghoja scored 59.5 per cent. Meanwhile, based on the criteria set by the selection board, the pass mark set for the interview was 70, as those who scored below 70 were deemed to have failed.

Ondo NLC Elects New Chairman After 8-month Vacuum

Fidelis David in Akure

Ondo State Council of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has elected a new Chairman, Comrade Ademola Adeniji Olapade of the Nigeria Civil Service Union (NCSU).

The bye-election followed the retirement of Comrade Victor Amoko of the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) from the public service eight months ago.

However, in a dramatic twist, Olapade was declared winner yesterday at the NLC Secretariat, Ondo Road, Akure, after his lone opponent, Comrade Akinyemi Olatunbosun of the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE), stepped down from the race.

Olatunbosun who is the state NLC Vice Chairman, said he took the decision for the overall progress of labour movement in the state and to protect the state workers

In his acceptance speech, the elected chairman appreciated the determination and doggedness of his opponent for stepping down for him.

Coronation Group Reaffirms Partnership with King's Trust International

Bennett Oghifo

Coronation Group has sponsored the official launch of a landmark initiative designed to equip over 2,000 young Lagos residents with critical skills for the job market.

The event, which was held at the British Deputy High Commissioner's Residence, marked a significant milestone in the ongoing partnership between Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF) and King's Trust International (KTI), reinforcing Coronation Group's long-standing commitment to youth empowerment and community development, according to a statement by the company.

The launch was graced by the Governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, who lauded the initiative, stating: "This partnership between Lagos State Employment Trust Fund and King's Trust International is a testament to the power of collaboration in tackling youth unemployment. By equipping our young people with the right skills, we are not only securing their future but also strengthening the economic fabric of our state. We thank all stakeholders for their unwavering support in making this project a reality."

A key highlight of the evening was a Youth Panel Discussion themed "Supporting Young People into Employment: Case Studies with Alumni", where programme beneficiaries shared firsthand experiences of how similar initiatives have transformed their career paths.

Speaking at the event, Chairman, Coronation Group, Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, who is also a member of King's Trust International's Africa Advisory Board, emphasised the urgent need to bridge the skills gap for young Africans.

In Celebration of IWD, BetKing Rebrands as BetQueen

In celebration of International Women's Day, BetKing, Nigeria's sports betting platform, is making a bold statement by temporarily rebranding as BetQueen for the day to honor and celebrate the achievements of women.

This initiative is part of the company's 'Beat the Odds' campaign, which aims to highlight and celebrate women who are breaking barriers in male-dominated industries.

With women often facing significant challenges in climbing the leadership ladder, BetKing, the best betting site is using this platform to amplify the stories of those who have defied the odds. A key highlight of the campaign is "BetQueens" documentary, featuring inspiring women who have excelled in unconventional spaces.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known and addressed as **AWOSUN JOSLINE AKOSUA,** now wish to be known and addressed as **AWOSUN BIDEMI JOSLINE.** All former documents remain valid. **NIN, FIDELITY BANK, STANBIC IBTC BANK, FINTRIBE, NOBLE MERRY** and the general public should please take note.

I formerly known and addressed as **MISS OGBU J. ANGELA** now wish to be known and addressed as **MRS JANE A. NNAJIOFOR.** All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.

I formerly known and addressed as **WILLIAMS ISHOLA RAJI** now wish to be known and addressed as **AJIKANLE OLAJIDE RAJI.** All former documents remain valid. The general public should please take note.

SHOWBIZFLAIR

Tosin Clegg 07062816737 e-mail: tosinclegg@hotmail.com

Davido Stamps Afrobeat Global Dominance with 5IVE

Stories by Tosin Clegg

His career has been nothing short of spectacular - from sold out concerts to charts-topping singles and albums, endorsements deals and more good tidings any artiste would wish for. The trajectory of his life and works has earned him a global placement as he continues to ride on his incredible discography, which has seen him awarded with major local and international awards.

For weeks now he has been pushing the anticipation of his new album, 5ive. From time to time he has dropped hints on what to expect either by showing us a video of himself dancing to one of the tracks or visuals serving us anticipation on a high note.

Recently he shared via his Instagram page stating, "001 family! Some updates for you: 'Be There Still' drops March 14th, with 5IVE coming soon after. The wait is almost over, the process is almost finished and it's all leading up to something special."

Davido is known for his keen attention to his productions, ensuring they are duly recorded, inputting every element that would make his body of work ace every other song on the charts.

Committed to pushing Afrobeats bigger and tuned to serve nothing but the best the overwhelming anticipation of 5ive shows, we should be anticipating the best of Davido yet.

Fans, friends and his community at large have trooped to his comment section on an Instagram post he shared a few days ago captioning, "I can't fvcking wait" and as usual he was dancing on a tune off the expected album. Seems we would be having another musical anthem soon as this snippet showcased elements of musical genius seasoned and spiced with sensational Afrobeats tunes.

Reminiscing on the dominance of Afrobeats, Davido was in Trinidad and Tobago a few days ago and something surely did get him on this trip judging from a comment he shared after the show. He narrated that, "TRINIDAD!!! Y'all really touched my soul with this one! The energy, the love, the way you embraced me— it felt like HOME. Our roots run deep, our rhythm connected by history, by spirit, by SOUND! From the drums to the melodies, from the way y'all move to the culture itself-I saw Africa in you, and you in me., the way you carried the music like it was your own story, reminded me that Afrobeats isn't just sound

—it's a LEGACY, a heartbeat that lives across oceans. Thank you for reminding me of that! WE ARE ONE!"

Without a doubt, Afrobeats has evolved into a global phenomenon, blending African rhythms with contemporary influences to create a sound that resonates worldwide. Davido continues to be one of the major commands of this musical genre and with his album in view we can only but anticipate infectious melodies, rich instrumentation and recallable lyrics ehich is embedded as a musical masterpiece.



Davido

How Biyi Samuel Captivates His Audience with Artistic, Soulful Style



Biyi Samuel

Unlike studio-recorded music, live performances allow the artiste to have real-time interpretation, improvisation, and audience engagement as the performer brings emotion, energy, and individuality to his audience. Highlife and Inspirational Artiste, Biyi Samuel has been able to define his career on this path earning the love and ears of his fans over the years. Whether in Africa, across Europe or the world at large, he has continued to spread his impact to thousands.

On what inspired his journey as an artiste, he disclosed that, "I would simply say that my background has a huge impact on my music. As becoming a successful artiste goes beyond technical skill because you need to know how to connect with your audience through body language, movement, and charisma. This is crucial in my kind of music where the goal is to inspire."

The growth and impact of Biyi Samuel over the years can be attributed to a lot of factors but one major aspect of this is his June 20 Crew which has been instrumental to his development and success.

He discloses, "The truth is that "Teamwork" produces greater results so I enjoy working with my band so much. In addition to that, what a talking drummer can do I can not do so bringing people together in different capacities for a common purpose makes it easier and meaningful."

Biyi's music is always a blend of rich African rhythms with soulful melodies that resonates with listeners. His compositions are drawn from traditional highlife, juju and inspirational elements to maintain cultural authenticity while appealing to a global audience. One thing that can't be taken off the prolific artiste is his lyrical mastery which is interpreted in his songs which are uplifting, seasoned with messages of hope and love.

With highlife and inspirational music gaining international recognition, Biyi Samuel and his crew remains dedicated to doing their performances with the purest of hearts, lyrical impact and a drive to stay committed.

Okachi Charity Foundation Celebrates International Women's Day

The International Women's Day being marked today is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality which has been a topic for discussion over the years.

In a world where the dedication and will to run and manage a foundation can be overwhelming, Founder of Okachi Charity Foundation, Faith Morey has been on top of the affairs of empowerment and impacting lives. Her role and contributions to the lives of many children can't be overlooked as it has brought about change and hope to children of several communities.

The impact she has been able to make is strongly aligned to women in her foundation alongside the men who have sown immensely their time, resources, experience and drive to making projects happen and achieve its goals. Their role in executing projects is profound and have been of great complement with the hardworking men at the foundation.

In celebration of the 2025's International Women's Day, Faith Morey is taking a moment to honour and celebrate all the devoted and hardworking women who are making her work at the foundation seamless. She points out that she can't thank them enough but at days likes this it offers a time to reflect and see how their contribution is valuable and impactful.

Applause as Bolanle Austen-Peters' 'Dear Kaffy' Tours South Africa

There is palpable excitement and applause from thespians and theatre goers as 'Dear Kaffi', the popular play directed by Bolanle Austen-Peters continues its tour of South Africa.

With its rich Nigerian cast, the play had opened to critical acclaim in Pretoria on February 27th.

The tour was at the invitation of the South African State Theatre, whose partnership with Bolanle Austen-Peters Productions is promoting a two-week tour of the play across several theatres in South Africa, according to a statement.

"We are using this collaboration to bridge cultural gaps," Austen-Peters who is leading the cast and crew of the outstanding play as director cum producer said.

According to the multi-talented lawyer turned theatre producer and film director, "the reception was electrifying", adding that the tour will be "two weeks of extreme excellence on stage."

It disclosed that the opening night was sold out and had dignitaries that included the Acting Nigerian Ambassador to South Africa, Temitope Ajayi; the Chief Executive Officer of the South African State Theatre, Sibongiseni Mkhize and the Artistic Director of the South African State Theatre, Aubrey Sekhat.

This was the second time that BAP Productions would tour South Africa. In 2022, Saro The Musical also toured select South African theatres.

About a dozen performances of 'Dear Kaffi' are slated to thrill the audience, with at least one show being staged per day since March 1. The tour was expected to reach a crescendo from March 6th all through the weekend, with the grand finale slated for tomorrow.

Dear Kaffy – Kike's Story is a captivating tale of a 35-year-old single woman, Kikelomo Olota, who is navigating life, love, and societal expectations in Lagos.

From her teenage years, Kike's brilliance in academics had earned her admiration, but her lack of romantic relationships set her apart.

Determined to fit in, she traded her smartness for popularity, only to find herself entangled in a series of tumultuous relationships.

From Femi, a charming but deceitful lover, to Emeka, a seemingly perfect man who turned out to be married, Kike's journey is filled with heartbreak and lessons that shape her perspective on love and self-worth.



R-L: Chief Executive Officer, South African State Theatre, Sibongiseni Mkhize; Artistic Director BAP Productions, Mrs. Bolanle Austen-Peters; Acting Nigerian Ambassador to South Africa, Temitope Ajayi and the Artistic Director of the State Theatre, Mr. Aubrey Sekhabi, at the opening night of 'Dear Kaffy' Pretoria 2025…recently

Amid growing pressure from her family, especially her father, Kike is introduced to Debo, a suitor with whom she shares an unexpected connection. However, her past returns in the form of Tamuno, an ex-boyfriend whose presence threatens her budding relationship with Debo.

As Kike struggles to reconcile her desires with societal expectations, she is forced to confront her insecurities, redefine her values, and decide what truly matters.

With humour, music, and a sharp critique of cultural norms, 'Dear Kaffy' is a vibrant exploration of love, identity, and the pursuit of authenticity in the face of overwhelming pressure.

The Nigerian cast of the play in South Africa include Uzo Osimkpa, who plays the lead role of Kike; Yewande Osamein (Tolani), Abiola Lepe (Bidemi), Sharon Onyegbula (Shalewa) and Ralph Okoro (Tamuno).

Forever in our

HEARTS



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ROBERT ADEYINKA ADEBAYO (Rtd)

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In loving memory of an officer and a gentleman,

Your life was a shining example of courage, honor, and dedication. Your memory will never fade, and your legacy will continue to inspire us.

We remember your bright smile, your infectious laughter, and your unwavering commitment to serving others. You may be gone, but your impact on our lives will never be forgotten.

We celebrate your life, your achievements, and the memories we shared with you.

May your soul rest in peace.

Otunba Niyi Adebayo CON

For the Family

PERSPECTIVE

Why Crude Oil Production Should Commence in Ogoniland

Tekena Amieyeofori

Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) extracted crude oil from Ogoniland from 1958 to 1993, raking in billions of petrodollars at the expense of indigenous oil-producing communities.

When SPDC finally pulled out of Ogoniland in 1993- at the height of the Ogoni non-violent struggle in 1993- thousands of spill incidents had occurred in various locations.

According to a recent ALJAZEERA report, more than two million barrels of spilled crude contaminated arable lands and fresh water from approximately 3,000 oil spill incidents between 1976 and 1991.

The outcome of what has been generally deplored as ecological genocide sent many to their early graves, following incidents of terminal illnesses and livelihood losses in the dark days of SPDC's operation in Ogoniland.

Many developments during the course of oil-induced conflict in Ogoniland point to the fact that SPDC had its way because it was dealing with a rentier state that was interested more in collecting royalties than the health of the environment and its citizens.

This is evident in the trumped up charges brought against the Ogoni nine (led by Ken Saro-Wiwa) and their subsequent extrajudicial execution under the military junta of the late General Sani Abacha on November 10, 1995.

Despite having devastated Ogoniland as a result of its irresponsible approach to crude oil mining, SPDC had the audacity to apply for renewal of its mining license, a request which the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) vehemently opposed on July 3, 2018.

Over the years, Ogoni oil fields have held an allure for treasure hunters like SPDC for obvious reasons. Ogoniland accounts for most of the oil fields in OML 11 which ranks among the most lucrative oil blocks in Nigeria's Niger Delta region.

The Ogoni oil fields also extend to OML 2 which is another economically vibrant oil block to be reckoned with in Nigeria's oil belt. In a 2019 report, the Guardian observed that the Ogoni oil fields were producing 130,000 barrels of crude oil daily as far back as May, 1993. The implication is that Ogoniland remains a crucial factor in Nigeria's economic survival.

One thinks, if truth be told, the Ogoni people's resolution to shut in oil fields domiciled in their communities was the right course of action taken to save lives at the time. However, it is now out of place to continue to resist resumption of oil and gas production in the wake of SPDC's ouster in 1993. As a matter of fact, the outright rejection of every other operator suggests that there are no responsible corporate citizens in the petroleum industry, whether local or international. Moreover, the obstinate resistance to the reopening of the Ogoni oil fields is akin to biting one's nose to spite one's face. For all its vast endowments in human and natural resources, Ogoniland remains largely backward in virtually all indices of development.

Without a shadow of doubt, recommencement of oil and gas production will do Ogoni people more good than harm in the current political dispensation. Firstly, resumption of oil



Oil production

production will generate more revenues both for the central government and subnational governments that directly interface with the people.

The immediate benefit of increased revenues will be improved infrastructure to drive sustainable development. For instance, additional revenues could be used to fund projects like roads, bridges, schools and hospitals that are in acute short supply in Ogoniland. Secondly, resumption of oil production will generate employment for the growing army of jobless youths, most of whom are currently operating in illegal economic spaces to eke out a living.

Naturally, employment generation would reduce poverty, as the income earning population is expected to increase and fend not only for themselves, but also their dependents.

Perhaps one should add that the fixation of a tiny band of Ogonis with a perpetual closure of the Ogoni oil fields offends the sensibilities of other oil-producing communities in the Niger Delta, who despite been visited with same ill fate of environmental pollution, have kept their oil fields open for production, providing economic resources from which the Ogoni people have benefited over the years.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the Ogoni Question has received, by far, more attention than the collective misery of their neighbours in the Niger Delta, both locally and internationally.

Fortunately, this attention has resulted in the establishment of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) which has the mandate to oversee the Ogoni cleanup project and restore lost livelihoods in communities. Whether or not HYPREP is living up to expectation is another kettle of fish; its presence alone gives the Ogoni people a sense of restorative justice that the rest of the Niger Delta anticipates.

One would have expected the naysayers to demonstrate a spirit of solidarity with their kith and kin in Ogoniland and their neighbours in the Niger Delta to critically examine the pros and cons of resumed oil and gas production and make an informed decision that benefits all stakeholders.

From all indications, the few minority opposed to resumed oil and gas production in Ogoniland are living in the past, thinking that it is still business as usual in the petroleum industry whose operations have undergone significant reforms with the enactment of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021.

Unlike in the past when there was paucity of legislations to drive good corporate governance in the petroleum industry, the PIA has unbundled the behemoth previously known as the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), creating a new regulatory framework for the upstream, midstream and downstream sectors to function efficiently with a view to making the industry more attractive to investors.

In the upstream sector, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), in its 2024 oil licensing round, insists that successful bidders must demonstrate capacity for compliance with environmental sustainability and development of host communities as a prerequisite to qualify for award of an oil block.

Ordinarily, this development should give opponents of crude oil and gas production in Ogoniland cause to shift from their rather obstinate position that is completely at variance with the wish of the generality of Ogoni people.

Since Nigeria's transition to democratic governance in 1999, successive governments have made unsuccessful attempts to convince Ogoni people to accept proposals for recommencement of oil and gas production in their land. Fortunately, a positive outcome of negotiations with the people has been implementation of the Ogoni cleanup project which President Bola Tinubu inherited when he came to power in May 2023.

But unlike previous governments that proposed the building of military barracks, correctional centre and cemetery, in Ogoniland, the government of President Tinubu has approved the establishment of a University of Environment and Technology to be sited in one of the world's most ecologically devastated communities.

Hopefully, the proposed university will provide the much-needed support for the cleanup project when it finally comes on stream. Moreover, it will complement the socioeconomic benefits of resumed oil production highlighted above, and open up the entire Ogoniland for rapid development.

Feeling the pulse of the Ogoni people, most of them are in support of resumed crude oil and gas production under the administration of President Tinubu, a disposition that is attributable to Mr. President's demonstration of openness and honesty in his engagements with the people.

It goes without saying that prospects for an enduring reconciliation and resumption of crude oil and gas production in Ogoniland are quite bright. As a precondition for lasting peace, however, the teeming supporters of President Tinubu and his laudable plan for the transformation of Ogoniland demand exoneration for the Ogoni nine who were brutally murdered for demanding their rights.

Amieyeofori, Journalist and Conflict Scholar, can be reached via tekena4real@gmail.com

Read full article online - www.thisdaylive.com

Apapa Club 1930: Spreading Love and Kindness Through Philanthropy

Adedayo Adejobi

In an inspiring demonstration of community spirit, the Apapa Club 1930, under the leadership of Mr. Chuks Nwana has once again shown the profound impact of philanthropy. With a heartwarming outreach initiative, the club's gesture of love and kindness reached out to orphanages, hospitals, and the less privileged within the Apapa community. This initiative showcased the club's generosity and reinforced its belief in the power of community and togetherness.

The Apapa Club's outreach was a touching reminder that love extends beyond the confines of individual relationships and can transcend to uplift the wider community. The day saw the club make significant contributions to Ijora Orphanage Home, the General Hospital in Apapa, and the less privileged members of the community. Among the donations were N300,000, bags of rice, essential medical supplies, and a variety of refreshments. These acts of kindness were aimed at alleviating the burdens faced by these institutions and individuals while bringing a sense of joy to their lives.

On the day of the event, Apapa Club's outreach brought together a number of prominent figures, all of whom played vital roles in ensuring the success of the initiative. Among the dignitaries were the Executive Local Government Chairman, Hon. Idowu Adejumoke Senbanjo, Charlie Boy, and the billionaire businessman Oscar Ibru. Their presence not only added prestige to the event but also highlighted the importance of community support in charitable causes.

Nwana spoke about the significance of the event. "This outreach is a testament to our club's motto: One Big Happy Family," he said.

"We believe that everyone deserves a little love and kindness. By giving back to our community, we're strengthening the bonds that unite us as one big happy family."

This sentiment encapsulates the philosophy of the Apapa Club: that every act of giving, no matter how big or small, helps to forge a stronger, more compassionate community.

Nwana's leadership continues to inspire members of the club and the wider Apapa community as they work together to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those in need.

Hon. Benjamin Mokwunye, the club's vice president, also reflected on the importance of the outreach.

"Today's outreach is a shining example of our club's commitment to spreading love and kindness," he remarked. "We're not just donating to those in need; we're showing them that they're part of our community, our family." His words underscored the inclusive nature of the initiative—it was not just about charity but about making everyone feel seen, valued, and loved.

It's clear that the Apapa Club's philanthropic efforts go beyond one-off events. The club has long been committed to fostering a sense of unity and togetherness, not only within its own membership but also in the broader Apapa community. Last month's Valentine's outreach is just one example of the club's ongoing dedication to uplifting the less fortunate, and it's clear that this initiative was just the latest in a series of charitable actions that the club has taken.

For Mr. Uche Aninye, the Entertainment Secretary of the club, the outreach was not only an opportunity to give back but also a chance to reflect on the progress that the Apapa Club has made.

"I'm proud to be part of a club that's resilient, progressive, and dedicated to making a positive impact," he shared.

Aninye's statement encapsulates the vision of the Apapa Club 1930 – one that is forward-thinking, focused on positive change, and determined to create lasting impact. The club's members understand the power of community and the importance of working together to improve the lives of those around them. It's not just about charity; it's about building a future where everyone has a chance to thrive.

According to Nwana, "The Apapa Club's outreach is a timely reminder that love and kindness should be extended to all, especially those who may feel forgotten or neglected. For the children at the Ijora Orphanage Home, the patients at the General Hospital, and the less privileged residents of Waterside, the Apapa Club's donations brought much-needed relief and hope."

But perhaps more importantly, the event served as a powerful symbol of the club's belief in the collective strength of community. By coming together to support one another, the club is not only improving lives but also



Nwana

creating a ripple effect of kindness that extends far beyond the immediate beneficiaries of the outreach.

In the words of Nwana, "By giving back to our community, we're strengthening the bonds that unite us as one big happy family."

The Apapa Club's commitment to making a difference is a shining example of what can be achieved when people come together with love and a shared sense of purpose.

As we reflect on the club's actions, it is clear that their generosity is not just a seasonal gesture but a testament to the power of philanthropy, kindness, and unity. Through their actions, the Apapa Club 1930 is not just spreading love but is demonstrating a commitment to building a compassionate community year-round.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025...

L-R: Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, Mr. Bayo Onanuga; Minister of Women Affairs, Hon. Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, and Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs Dr. Maryam Ismaila Keshinro, during the Meet with Press Programme at the Presidential Villa, Abuja… yesterday PHOTO: GODWIN OMOIGUI

IWD 2025: Female CEOs, CSOs Share Insights on Challenges Hindering Women's Progress

Sunday Ehigiator

In commemoration of the 2025 (IWD) themed 'Accelerate Action', top female Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Heads of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), spoke to THISDAY on some of the challenges that impede women's growth in the country.

International Women's Day 2025, celebrated globally on March 8, adopted the campaign theme 'Accelerate Action', highlighting the pressing need to expedite progress towards gender equality.

The theme serves as a rallying cry, urging individuals, organisations, and governments to intensify their efforts in promoting women's empowerment and bridging the gender gap.

The urgency of this issue is underscored by the World Economic Forum's projection that, at the current rate of progress, achieving full gender parity may take until 2158.

This staggering statistic translates to approximately five generations from now, emphasising the need for swift and collective action to address the systemic inequalities and barriers that hinder women's advancement.

Speaking on some of these challenges and how they could be mitigated, the Head of Brands and Marketing Communications, Wema Bank, Mabel Adeteye, said, "So this year's women's day celebration is different.

"It's different because we are not just talking. We've had International Women's Day where a lot of conversations were without impact.

"This year there are not a lot of conferences everywhere because we've gone beyond just talking. We are moving beyond talking into action because now we understand our power and our role in business, in driving the economy, family and what we should be doing in terms of action.

"And so for me the International Women's Day celebration this year is about action to see the result that we want in every woman because it is until we understand the power that we have that we would begin to see this change.

"You see people say that I am a woman, I stand for this. Are you practicing them? Are you truly doing them? Until we begin to do that that is when we can have a change. I think we have seen a lot of changes in that.

"For me impact is when we help people nurture talents. When I help nurture that younger one and that's the path that I see because I want a better version of me. When I see that person who can do better beyond what they're presently doing, I am invested in it.

"I tell people that are not invested in something, I tell them they are not ready. My threshold is very long so I would journey with you.

"All the people that I have worked with and that have worked with me because it might be that the environment is not helping you to tap into the potential that you have."

Chief Engagement and Experience Officer at Boucles Africa, Mojisola Saka, noted that it has been 30 years since the adoption of the 35 per cent Affirmative Action for Women in Beijing, and while progress has been made, there is still work to do.

"In Nigeria, I see this day as more than just a celebration—it's a chance to honour the women who have shattered barriers, defied stereotypes, and paved the way for others. These women are not just succeeding in their fields; they are reaching back to uplift others, ensuring that progress is both personal and collective," Saka said.

More Nigerian Women to Benefit from China-Nigeria Relationship, Says Envoy

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

More Nigerian women are expected to benefit from China-Nigeria high quality cooperation under the Belt and Road initiative, Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, Yu Dunhai, said yesterday.

The envoy made the disclosure at the 2025 International Women's Day in Abuja, with the theme: 'Her Story and Future', aligning with this year's United Nations IWD theme, 'For All Women and Girls: Rights, Equality, Empowerment', which also commemorates the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

He noted that gender should not be a barrier for human exploit, stressing that when women have equal access to education and resources, they can shape history.

He said, "Over the years, practical cooperation between China and Nigeria has deepened across various fields, providing many Nigerian women with better medical resources, more agricultural skills, and increased business and entrepreneurial opportunities. Last year, President Tinubu successfully visited China and attended the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, elevating China-Nigeria relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

"The positive development of China-Nigeria relations is inseparable from the direct participation and active promotion of women from both countries in various sectors. China will work with Nigeria to better implement the consensus reached by our leaders, carry out the Ten Partnership Action Plans, including promoting women's exchanges, and jointly build a high-level China-Nigeria community with a shared future.

"I believe more women will benefit from the high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road initiative, realising their dreams, and creating an even more splendid future.

"Over the past 30 years, we have witnessed remarkable achievements by women in political, economic, technological, and cultural fields across the world, as they have written a glorious chapter in Herstory.

WACOL Advocates Collaboration to End Violence Against Women

Gideon Arinze in Enugu

Non-governmental organisation (NGO), Women's Aid Collective, WACOL has called for collaborative efforts between the Nigerian government, civil society organisations and individuals to end all forms of violence against women in the country.

Founder and Executive Director of WACOL, Joy Ezeilo, made this known yesterday, while addressing newsmen as part of activities marking the 2025 International Women's Day.

In her address, Ezeilo said that this year's theme, 'For All Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment', resonates deeply in Nigeria, where women continue to face significant challenges in their pursuit of equality and empowerment.

She regretted that several factors including traditional/cultural practices, poverty, ignorance, poor implementation of relevant laws/policies and corruption, have continued to exacerbate existing Impunity and inequality.

"Daily, we handle approximately 20 cases of violence against women and girls which come in the form of physical, psychological, socio-economic and sexual violence, including harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health rights," she explained.

She however noted that despite the challenges faced over the years, women have achieved significant victories and reached important milestones in their quest to take charge of their lives and maximise their potential.

She maintained that there is the need for Increased representation of women in power and leadership, economic empowerment, increased access to education and legal reforms, especially the urgent domestication of the United Nations Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

"There is no better time than now to end all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Nigeria and ensure their empowerment as adumbrated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"We must collaborate to create a society where women have equal access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making power," she said.

ActionAid Nigeria Calls for Urgent Investment in Women, Gender Equality

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

ActionAid Nigeria (AAN) has called for the urgent investment in women and accelerated progress towards gender equality.

This was the message of the organisation to commemorate the 2025 International Women's Day with the theme, 'Investing in Women, Accelerating Progress', is not just a call to action, it is a non-negotiable requirement for sustainable development, justice, and equity."

AAN, in a statement yesterday explained that: "Women are the backbone of our economy, democracy, and communities. They lead, innovate, and build. Yet, in Nigeria, we continue to witness systemic efforts to stifle women's participation, particularly in male-dominated spaces. From governance to corporate leadership and civil society, women who challenge the status quo often face intimidation, harassment, and exclusion."

It therefore noted that the resignation of Mojisola Meranda in Lagos House of Assembly and the sexual harassment allegations raised by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan are stark reminders of the challenges women encounter in leadership.

The statement signed by the Country Director, AAN, Andrew Mamedu, read: "These incidents raise urgent questions: Where is the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)? What role is the Code of Conduct Bureau playing in ensuring accountability and justice? If we are serious about accelerating progress, institutions must work effectively to protect women in leadership from intimidation and harassment.

First Lady Celebrates Women, Girls' Strength, Resilience, Achievements

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

Wife of the President, Senator Oluremi Tinubu has celebrated the resilience, strength and achievements of women and girls across the globe.

In a message issued by her yesterday, to mark the 2025 International Women's Day, Mrs Tinubu said: "Today, on the International Women's Day, we celebrate the strength, resilience, and achievements of all women and girls across Nigeria and the world.

"The theme this year, "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment." serves as a powerful reminder of the need to reaffirm our commitment to building a society where every woman and girl can thrive, free from discrimination and limitations. I believe it is time for women to make this happen."

"Let us all endeavor to lift each other up, one woman at a time.

Happy International Women's Day! "

FEATURES

Onwumere: How We Took Empowerment Industry By Storm

Bennett Oghifo

From the heart of Imo State an illustrious son is making waves, not just in business but also in empowering the lives of countless individuals. Dr. Augustine Onwumere, founder of PWAN (Property World Africa Network) and Chairman of PWAN MAX Group, has turned a modest investment into a ground-breaking real estate empire, changing the landscape of homeownership in Nigeria.

Born in Umukabia, Orsu, Imo State, and raised in Lagos, Onwumere's entrepreneurial spirit was nurtured from the age of eight while working in his father's shop, Tonyson Pharmacy.

There, he learnt the trade and customer relations fundamentals—skills that would later fuel his business success. A graduate of the University of Lagos with a degree in Biochemistry, his passion for business became a reality at 31 when he and his wife, Dr. Jayne Onwumere, founded PWAN—a real estate network marketing company.

The Birth of PWAN

Their journey into real estate began unexpectedly. This was at a time of extreme financial hardship—homeless and struggling to raise N300,000 for rent— Onwumere stumbled upon a real estate flyer during a Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship meeting. With just N25,000 in startup capital, he and his wife set up their first office—a simple table and chair in the corner of a friend's restaurant. While Dr. Onwumere distributed flyers around Lekki and Lagos Island, his wife handled calls from interested prospects.

Having squatted with strangers in 13 different locations over two and a half years, their experience of homelessness inspired the company's mission: to make homeownership a reality for all. Determined to bridge the gap, they identified and marketed affordable lands in emerging areas with high appreciation potential, making property ownership accessible to everyday Nigerians.

What started as a humble effort has now grown into a real estate powerhouse. Today, PWAN operates in over 28 states in Nigeria and continues to expand. With over 300 premium residential estates across major cities and international offices in Ireland, the USA, Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda, PWAN has redefined the real estate industry—creating opportunities and changing lives, one home at a time.

Real Estate Operations Before the Advent of PWAN

Before PWAN was established on March 12, 2012, real estate transactions in Nigeria operated within a rigid and often chaotic system. Traditional marketing strategies dominated the industry, with property agents frequently clashing over commissions—sometimes leading to prolonged disputes and even legal battles. Transparency was minimal, and opportunities for new entrants were scarce, leaving many aspiring realtors struggling to break into the business.

Recognising these challenges, the founders of PWAN introduced an innovative network marketing model that revolutionised commission structures. Under this system, every participant in a property transaction was guaranteed a seamless payout through a well-structured compensation plan. This ground-breaking approach eliminated conflicts over commissions, created an atmosphere of collaboration,



Onwumere

and provided a clear path for individuals to thrive in the industry.

This model, now widely imitated by competitors, was the driving force behind a new class of real estate professionals—known as Independent Business Development Executives (IBDEs), now widely recognized as PWAN Consultants and Partners. Today, through the PWAN Business Owners (PBO) system, individuals are not just selling real estate but also securing long-term wealth for themselves and future generations.

Transforming Lives Through The PBO System

At the core of PWAN's success is its unwavering commitment to empowerment. Unlike conventional real estate business models, which focus solely on profit, PWAN was built on a different principle: helping others succeed is the key to true success. Driven by this philosophy, Onwumere and his team developed a revolutionary platform that allows anyone—regardless of background, education, or experience—to achieve financial independence through real estate.

A major turning point was the creation of the PBO system, which resolved long-standing commission-sharing issues by organizing independent property agents within a structured business framework. This system allows agents to retain their independence while benefiting from PWAN's resources, training and mentorship. Unlike the traditional real estate model, which often left marketers struggling to earn commissions, PBOs now enjoy a seamless and transparent earnings process, ensuring they get paid without hassle.

One of the hallmarks of the PBO system is its commitment to continuous education and skill-building. Every week, PWAN organizes free seminars and training sessions across its centers nationwide, equipping PBOs with the latest property sales strategies, negotiation techniques, and digital marketing skills. These sessions, held three times a week, empower thousands of individuals to maximize their potential in real estate—without the burden of costly training fees.

By offering free access to cutting-edge industry knowledge, PWAN has built an unprecedented sales force that extends beyond Nigeria to international markets. PWAN Business Owners (PBOs) leverage modern marketing tools to promote the company's diverse real estate portfolio across the globe, earning attractive commissions while helping more people achieve homeownership.

Empowering a New Generation of Entrepreneurs

The impact of PWAN's business model has been life-changing. Many individuals who once struggled to find employment have now built successful careers as real estate professionals, earning substantial incomes and transforming their financial destinies.

Through the PBO system, thousands who might have remained unemployed have found a viable path to financial stability—earning enough to support their families, pay bills comfortably, and even enjoy a luxurious lifestyle. Many ordinary Nigerians who embraced PWAN's business platform have risen to millionaire and billionaire status, solely by selling real estate products and services.

Beyond wealth creation, the PWAN movement has sparked a ripple effect of financial freedom across Nigeria and beyond. Thousands of people who once faced financial uncertainty are now self-sufficient entrepreneurs, actively contributing to the country's economic growth. Many have excelled in the industry, redefining property marketing and investment strategies despite lacking real estate experience.

Onwumere's vision has gone beyond building a real estate empire—it has birthed a thriving community of empowered entrepreneurs. These individuals, bound by a shared mission of financial empowerment and wealth creation, are not just selling properties; they are reshaping Nigeria's real estate landscape.

Today, the PWAN model stands as a beacon of transformation—a testament to the power of innovation, resilience, and the belief that when people are empowered, they can achieve greatness.

Building Legacies and Creating Wealth

One of the most remarkable aspects of PWAN's empowerment model is its commitment to wealth distribution and business ownership. Those who have demonstrated outstanding performance within the organization are not just rewarded with commissions—they are elevated to leadership positions and offered part ownership in the company. Today, more than 70 Managing Directors of PWAN's affiliated companies each own 50 percent of their respective subsidiaries while also sitting on the Board of the PWAN conglomerate. Every one of these MDs is at least a millionaire, with several having ascended to billionaire status through their work in real estate.

Read full article online - www.thisdaylive.com

Tackling Insecurity in Edo State: The Obaseki Model

Kingsley Uwagbale

The principal purpose of any government, whether at the national or State level, is to secure and protect the lives and properties of its citizens. Since December 2024, Edo State has been seemingly grappling with a resurgence of crime and insecurity and this has left many residents wondering how the State, which was repositioned as one of Nigeria's safest places to live and do business during the Godwin Obaseki-led administration has now become so unsafe.

The strategic and unique location of Edo State as a nodal State requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses immediate threats, strengthens institutions, and tackles root causes of crime and insecurity.

The security challenges facing Edo State today are not new, however, between 2016 and 2024, the Obaseki-led administration deployed very novel and effective policies and steps to curtail the menace of criminals and provide an atmosphere of safety which encouraged and spurred economic growth.

Core to tackling insecurity during the Obaseki era was the strong leadership provided by the governor through effective coordination and collaboration between federal security agencies (police, military, DSS) and state agencies (Edo Security Network) to contain kidnapping, farmer/herders' clashes, armed robbery, and cultism, among others.

Regular security council meetings facilitated coordination between the police, DSS, NSCDC, and other security agencies. These meetings, chaired by the governor, ensured timely intelligence sharing and a unified response to security threats.

Obaseki invested in refurbishing the Nigeria Police Training School in Benin City and trained over 15,000 Vigilantes from communities across the 18 local government areas in the State. These operatives who have very good knowledge of their communities were vetted and rigorously trained by federal security agencies.

The second plank of the Security Plan was the use of technology. The Edo State Security Management System Software was developed to document every reported security incident in the State.



Obaseki

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Charles Ajunwa
•08064268968 • ajunwacharles@gmail.com

Mafimidiwo: Digital Identity Mgt, Staff Training Key to Safeguarding Hospitality Businesses

Ololade Mafimidiwo, is a seasoned Technical Product Manager specialising in Digital Identity and Access Management for the travel and hospitality industry. She explains to **Funmi Ogundare** why it is imperative for hospitality business owners to prioritise digital identity management, staff training, and proactive threat detection

What are those things hospitality business owners must do to protect their guests from fraud?

The hospitality industry is incredibly vulnerable to cyber-attacks, and there are several reasons for this. First, hotels and travel companies handle a vast amount of sensitive personal and financial data; names, addresses, passport information, credit card details, and even travel itineraries. For cybercriminals, this is a goldmine. The second reason is the industry's heavy reliance on digital platforms for reservations, payments, and guest management systems. Unfortunately, as these systems become more integrated and convenient, they also create more points of vulnerability. On top of that, hotels and resorts often have large, transient staff populations, and not all employees are trained in cybersecurity best practices. This combination of valuable data, digital infrastructure, and human factors makes hospitality businesses prime targets for fraud.

So, what are some of the most common types of fraud targeting hotels and their guests?

There are quite a few. One of the most common is payment card fraud, where hackers steal credit card information through compromised booking systems, POS terminals, or even fake hotel websites. Another big one is phishing, where cybercriminals send emails that appear to be from the hotel, asking guests to 'confirm' their booking details, only to steal their personal information. There's also account takeover fraud, where hackers gain access to a guest's loyalty programme account to redeem points or steal personal information. More recently, we've seen social engineering attacks, where criminals manipulate hotel staff into disclosing sensitive information, often by posing as senior



Mafimidiwo

management or IT support. And let's not forget ransomware attacks—cybercriminals lock up a hotel's reservation or management systems and demand payment to restore access. When you're running a 500-room hotel, you simply can't afford that kind of downtime, which is why some businesses pay up—unfortunately, this only encourages more attacks.

Given these threats, what are the most important steps hospitality business owners can take to protect their guests from fraud?

The first and most important step is adopting a 'security-first' mindset; cybersecurity can't be an afterthought. It must be embedded into daily operations. Let me break it down into a few key areas. First, secure the booking process. This is often the first point of contact with a guest, so it's critical to ensure it's secure. Use SSL encryption for all online bookings and implement Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) wherever possible—this adds a critical layer of protection, even if login credentials are compromised. Also, regularly scan your website for vulnerabilities and ensure your payment systems are PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) compliant. Secondly, you need to train your staff. Staff training is often overlooked, but it's one of the most effective defenses against fraud. Train your employees to recognise phishing attempts, social engineering scams, and suspicious payment activities. They should know what to do if they encounter something suspicious and understand the importance of safeguarding guest information. Thirdly, you need to perform regular penetration testing and vulnerability assessments to identify and address weak points before hackers exploit them. Implement an AI-powered fraud detection system that monitors guest interactions and transactions in real time, flagging anything that looks abnormal. Protecting Wi-Fi networks is also very important. Hotels typically offer free Wi-Fi to guests, which is great for convenience but a nightmare for security if not properly configured. Use separate networks for guests and internal operations, enable WPA3 encryption, and implement firewalls to block unauthorised access. Only collect and store the data you absolutely need. The less information you keep, the smaller the target you present to cybercriminals. Make sure sensitive information such as passport numbers or payment details, is encrypted both in transit and at rest.

Some hospitality business owners worry that stronger security protocols could make things inconvenient for their guests. What's the experience like for your guests?

That's a valid concern, and striking the right balance is essential. The key is to integrate security seamlessly into the guest experience. For example, instead of asking guests to repeatedly enter passwords, hotels can use biometric authentication like fingerprint or facial recognition to provide a secure yet frictionless check-in experience. Another option is to use tokenisation for payment information, which allows guests to make secure purchases without entering their credit card details each time. In fact, most guests today expect some form of digital security, when done right, it can enhance trust and satisfaction.

Are there any recent technologies you think the hospitality industry should be adopting to stay ahead of fraudsters?

Absolutely. One technology that's making a big difference is Artificial Intelligence (AI) for fraud detection. AI models can analyse patterns of behavior, such as booking frequency, payment methods, and device locations, to flag suspicious activity in real time. Another game-changer is blockchain technology, especially for payment processing and identity verification. Blockchain creates an immutable record of transactions, making it much harder for cybercriminals to alter booking information or initiate fraudulent charges. Digital Identity Verification is also gaining traction. Hotels can use this to verify the identity of guests during the booking process, using facial recognition or government-issued IDs, to prevent fake bookings and identity theft.

Let's talk about crisis management. If a hospitality business falls victim to a cyber-attack, what's the best way for them to respond?

Speed and transparency are critical. First, have a cyber-incident response plan in place—don't wait until an attack happens to figure it out. This plan should outline how to isolate affected systems, secure data backups, and communicate with both staff and guests. If guest information is compromised, inform them as soon as possible. Provide clear instructions on what steps they should take—such as changing passwords or monitoring their accounts for unusual activity. Being transparent helps maintain trust, even in the face of a security breach. Lastly, conduct a post-incident review to identify how the attack happened and what can be done to prevent a recurrence. Cybersecurity isn't static—threats evolve, and so should your defenses.

Capturing Niger Delta's Beauty, Despoliation on Canvas

Stories by Charles Ajunwa

West Towers of The Wings Office Complex, a twin 15-storey architectural masterpiece, on the busy Ozumba Mbadiwe Street, Victoria Island, Lagos, Wednesday attracted arts enthusiasts from all walks of life.

An exhibition themed, 'Intersecting The Worlds of Climate Change, The Mangrove And Art', organised by the National Gallery of Art (NGA) in collaboration with the National Council on Climate Change and Alzarin Crimson, held at the magnificent building located along the beautiful shoreline of Victoria Island.

The exhibition which showcased master paintings, drawings and watercolour of quintessential artist, Dr. John Ed DeBebs and curated by renowned Oriz U. Onumaje, ends on March 18.

Before guests started arriving for the exhibition, DeBebs and Onumaje took journalists around in the morning to inspect different paintings and photographs of the mangroves in Niger Delta depicted on canvas, and carefully arranged in a large room on the 11th floor.

Big and small sets mounted round the hall showed videos of the Niger Delta mangrove ecosystem which spans nine States in Southern Nigeria of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, and Rivers.

Three core states, Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta house the largest concentration of mangroves. The Niger Delta has the most extensive mangroves in Africa.

Inside the hall, nobody was allowed to record or take pictures of the private art works.

DeBebs, who was emotional, said his participation in the exhibition came after 26 years that he left arts to answer the call of his Creator.

"For many years, I've not held any public exhibition following what happened to me some years ago when I was in Lagos practicing. In 1995, I was shot. That time, I was functioning fully as an artist.

"That encounter eventually led to me encountering the Lord Jesus Christ through death. Because I was confirmed clinically dead at Tejusho hospital. God intervened and I was raised back to life.

"I got a call into ministry directly from the Lord Jesus. I was not a Christian up till that time, but that experience I saw myself being taken by angels in spirit and flown to heaven and I saw Jesus Christ himself. That turned my life around completely."

He added: "I gave up my art work. I lay down everything and focused on the work of ministry. Eventually, I planted a church there and continued in it and growing and understanding my call.



It wasn't until three years ago when I began to pick up the brush again.

"I had established my ministry. And it was when my friend Oriz, came with a few commissions on portraits and all of that.

"And eventually, we started talking. I mean, it coincided with the time that I finished building my studio because I always knew I would come back to the studio.

"If I spent so many years attending a PhD, becoming a professor in arts. Then I needed to take time to understand this new experience and call. So after that, I got unsettled. Of course, again, you will need permission from the One who has called you to know whether to go out to pick up that or not. And then when the door started opening, I said, 'okay, this is it'. That's when this project really started," DeBebs enthused.

DeBebs, who had known Oriz from Auchi Polytechnic, said some of his works were developed from photographs he (Oriz) took in the creeks. He pointed out that the paintings are his direct works. "Some others I did when I went to the creeks myself, developed and then finished in the studio."

Continental Hotels Group Commits to Gender Equality

Continental Hotels Group, a budding Nigerian hospitality company, has reiterated its commitment to fostering gender equality in workplace.

The group, which operates the Abuja Continental Hotel and Lagos Continental Hotel has given growth opportunities to its workforce, especially the female folks, a development that has seen many women taking up leadership positions in the group.

Speaking on the week-long celebrations, Director, Rooms Division, Lagos Continental, Cuthberga Onuoha, noted that the group is now a reference point for gender equality in the Nigerian hospitality industry, considering the fair opportunities given to every staff member.

In recognition of the the contributions, Onuoha said "In Lagos Continental Hotel for example, in the executive group, head of departments, we are about 60-40 for females, and that means the females are more.

"That means Lagos Continental has already started giving females opportunities. If we as a hotel are doing that, other hotels are seeing it and will follow. We are now like a reference point for other is in gender equality in workplace."



Onuoha

INTERVIEW

Nwaukor: e-Auction Market's Potential Remains Largely Untapped in Nigeria

Hillary Nwaukor is the Chairman of the Certified Institute of Auctioneers in Nigeria Lagos chapter, and Chief Auctioneer at I-Naira Integrated Resources Limited, otherwise known in trading as I-naira.com, an e-auction platform in the country. The alumnus of the University of East London, United Kingdom, tells **Sunday Okobi** that Nigeria's e-auction market holds immense potential, yet remains largely untapped, presenting a significant opportunity for growth and innovation in the country's digital economy.

How did you get involved in the auction industry?

My interest in the auction business was ignited during my MBA programme at the University of East London between 2007 and 2008. In the course of my study, I was able to buy used books for my studies on eBay, an auction platform, for less than ten percent of the going market value for similar brand new books at the time. For instance, books with going market rate of £100 at the time could be bought on eBay for £5 to £10 pounds because the sellers do not have needs for them anymore and simply want to get rid of the books. So that is where the idea started and I said to myself that when I'm done with my MBA, it's something that I should activate. Upon completion of my studies, I returned to Nigeria in early 2009 and immediately gained employment with Nextzon Business Services, a management consulting firm. There, I met colleagues who shared my vision of operationalizing such systems in Nigeria. Sadly, one of them, Mr. Olukunle Makinde, passed on two years ago; he headed the IT unit before his passing. Indeed, we put our heads together and started working on this project as a side project. After a year and a half, I left Nextzon to set up a consulting firm that would later lead me to work for the NNPC as a consultant. So, while working at the NNPC, we worked on the I-Naira project. We kept working on it and nurturing it until when we knew the system was stable enough to go live and we went live in 2016.

How does the I-naira.com platform work?

I-naira.com is an e-auction platform in Nigeria. We pioneered e-auction in Nigeria in 2016. We act as a middleman for clients who need things to be sold most transparently. This is where a reputable auction platform such as i-Naira.com or any other platform comes in. Our auction project is broken down into three phases: pre-auction activities, auction day activities and post-auction activities. During the pre-auction activities, we carry out a current position assessment of those assets to ascertain if what the seller (corporate client) has given us on paper is the same as what we found on the ground and based on that, we will now make a recommendation. If the client, for instance, tells us that the Net Book Value (NBV) for a particular item is N100, based on our assessment, we can recommend that they may be able to earn more or less than the NBV of that asset. This will inform the final reserve price for the assigned asset for auction. Subsequently, we are required to inform the public of upcoming scheduled sales by way of newspaper adverts, emails and social media marketing. The auction will be held at least a week after the public notice.

How do you ensure the authenticity and quality of items listed on your platform?

As I mentioned earlier, when a mandate is received, after we have signed a contract, we go for assessment. And sometimes when required by the client, we will value the assets and then recommend the assets and tell the customers exactly the state of the items. If it's a car, for example, we will state what is working and what's not working. This will guide the buyers to make an informed decision. That is how we carry on the business of auction online and over time, build trust with over 25,000 users on our platform. Most of what we do is entirely based on trust and it comes from both the seller and the buyer. We have built a very transparent brand over time that when people hear I-naira.com is putting up a bottle of water for auction, they don't doubt the quality.



Nwaukor

So how do you get paid?

It is commission-based. Our commission ranges from three to 15 percent depending on the type of items we are selling. And for the cost of managing our platform, the buyer pays the buyer's premium. It's just like a real estate person, you get paid from both sides. We are sales people using e-auction systems as a tool.

How do you ensure that the described e-Auction process cannot be compromised?

The interesting thing about auction being a form of sales is that it's not just the act of doing business. For you to be able to practice auctioneering, you must have a certain level of integrity. You see this thing we're doing; the buyer has their record on our platform. The seller, which is our client, has their backend login on our platform and we have our backend login as well. Therefore, everybody sees what's going on. That way, we are checkmating ourselves because as human beings, the only thing that keeps us in line are laydown guiding principles and laws that we all have to follow otherwise, it will be a chaotic kind of society. Thus, we are accountable to our clients and buyers.

What advantage do e-auctions have over traditional physical auctions?

The benefits are overwhelming. When you're running an e-auction, you have a pervasive reach to more people who will potentially take the chance to win the item you're trying to sell, unlike when you're conducting traditional live auctions. I'm sure you remember two years ago, the last traditional live auction conducted by the EFCC, and how chaotic it was, which explains why the commission says the resources required to manage such a crowd are enormous. Secondly, they need to monitor what is going on through this process that I just explained to you, which is members of the commission or a client of ours, will sit in the comfort of their home or office and see exactly what's going on, in real-time. Hence e-auction reduces the cost to both the sellers and the buyers. The buyer sits in the comfort of his office or home without transporting themselves to a physical location and bids with the excitement of possibly winning. Since the bidders are competing remotely, the possibility of collaboration among the bidders is eliminated. Moreover, the seller, which is my client, will tend to gain more in terms of the amount of money people are going to bid for the items. E-auctions leave audit trails as well. For instance, our clients can always come back to ask for the record of the last sales we did for them and all we need to do is go to our system, download their sales history and send it to them. Traditional live auction has its own benefits especially when disposing of items of value (collector's items) but for greater reach and higher revenue generation, the organised private sector tends to embrace services of e-auction companies such as ours.

What are some of the challenges you have faced, especially in establishing and growing I-Naira?

The first challenge is capital. We realised that technology is not cheap. We have to speak to family and friends for initial resources to put the platform together. Again, being able to manage the platform and have people across Nigeria, that even if we get a mandate in Maiduguri, we have somebody there who can do the documentation. Therefore, we have ad hoc staff across the country and all of these things require resources to manage them. However, the major challenge we have comes from customers who are a bit malicious.

Anichukwu writes from Enugu

Read full article online - www.thisdaylive.com

Eha-Amufu Against Eha-Amufu: Another Side of the Story

Ogenyi Izunna Mark

Eha-Amufu, one of the urban centers in old Eastern Nigeria, has a rich history. Located many kilometers away from the capital city, its railway station and position as the gateway to Northern Nigeria made the town a hub of activities.

Many people from different parts of the old Eastern Region lived and operated businesses in Eha-Amufu. The presence of a College of Education, established by the federal government, accelerated the urbanisation of the area. However, with the decline of the Nigerian Railway Corporation, especially the Eastern axis, business activities and the large influx of people reduced.

Eha-Amufu, an agrarian area blessed with large, fertile expanses of land capable of producing food for 6 million people, is now a shadow of its former self due to the selfish interests of some political stakeholders.

An outsider might attribute the current crisis to the balkanisation of the town into several autonomous communities, but the reality is more complex. Unfortunately, the activities of some con artists masquerading as opinion molders, politicians, and church leaders have turned the once peaceful town into a ghost of its former self.

It is not as if the Fulani herdsmen had not been moving around the border area between Eha-Amufu and Benue State without any skirmishes until some persons from Eha-Amufu started sinister meetings with the herdsmen, aimed at enriching themselves through cow gifts and other items. These individuals emboldened the herdsmen, who began acting as co-owners of the farm settlements.

Furthermore, the colonisation of the communal timber forest by these con artists for their selfish aggrandisement instigated social and political squabbles that balkanised Eha-Amufu into camps.

Today, there are separate town unions, women's groups, and even church groups. The last herders/farmers crisis, which took a more volatile dimension in 2022, is an outcrop of the buildup of crisis that started in Eha-Ohuala communities about 15 years ago.

The Executive Governor of Enugu State has been implementing strategies to ensure peace and security in Eha-Amufu, but opposition elements who lost in the last general election are bent on thwarting the Governor's efforts.

Similarly, these opposition elements in Eha-Amufu, angry with the current Council Chairman of Isi-Uzo Local Government Area for supporting the current Governor instead of the Labour party candidate, are determined to make the Council Chairman's administration ungovernable. The recent protest in Eha-Amufu and Ikem was part of the grand plan to unleash terror in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area. Surprisingly, the protesters demanded that security personnel (army and police) vacate Eha-Amufu land, accusing the government and security agencies of being the instigators of killings in Eha-Amufu to grab their land.

These accusations and disgruntled attitudes are fueled by opposition elements who have secretly set up their own local security outfit to facilitate their illegal timber business and colonisation of the area. It is not surprising to hear some women protesters shouting that the road being constructed by the current administration in Enugu State at Eha-Amufu is a ploy to take over their land and that the People's Democratic Party should not campaign in Eha-Amufu anymore.

What is also astonishing is that despite the current chairman of Isi-Uzo Local Government



Mbah

Area executing major projects in Eha-Amufu, the opposition is determined to make the current government in Isi-Uzo ungovernable. It is imperative for security agencies to identify and apprehend those instigating crisis in Eha-Amufu and disrupting governance in Isi-Uzo and Enugu State.

AUTO WORLD

Bennett Oghifo
07052343083 Email:bennett.oghifo@thisdaylive.com

CFAO MD, Martin Presents Future Plans Transiting From Motors To Mobility

The Managing Director of CFAO Mobility, Mr. Denis Martin, explains to **Bennett Oghifo** the recent name change of the company from CFAO Motors to CFAO Mobility, and the diverse products and service offerings in the Nigerian market and how the company is driving innovation and excellence in the automotive industry

What prompted the decision to change the company's name from CFAO Motors to CFAO Mobility? How does the new name, CFAO Mobility, better represent the company's current and future direction?

The decision to change our name to CFAO Mobility reflects our Group's aim to accelerate the development of new mobility solutions in Africa. This new name better represents our comprehensive offerings across the automotive value chain. Our operations in Nigeria cover assembly, sales, service, distribution, and marketing through various subsidiaries, allowing us to provide end-to-end solutions that meet the diverse needs of our customers.§

Can you highlight some of the key brands and products that CFAO Mobility offers?

In the passenger car, SUV, and light commercial vehicle segment, we proudly offer renowned brands such as Toyota, Mitsubishi, and Suzuki. For more specialized solutions for our B2B customers, we provide robust options including Fuso trucks, King Long buses, Toyota forklifts, Howo trucks, Techking tyres, and a variety of construction equipment. Additionally, we offer Yamaha motorcycles and outboard engines, which are highly regarded for their performance and reliability. Our services are designed to enhance the overall customer experience. Under the LOXEA brand, we offer corporate leasing, providing flexible and efficient leasing solutions for businesses. Through our Winpart brand, we supply aftermarket multi-brand spare parts, ensuring our customers have access to quality parts for their vehicles at the right prices. Some of our brands include Denso, Bosch, and KYB, among others. Our quick service franchise, Autofast, ensures that vehicle maintenance is convenient and reliable. Additionally, our growing network of service outlets in Total filling stations in Lagos and Abuja makes these services easily accessible.

What sets CFAO Mobility apart from its competitors?

CFAO Mobility stands out in several key ways, with a strong emphasis on customer satisfaction. As a subsidiary of the CFAO group, part of Toyota Tsusho Corporation, we benefit from a robust foundation and extensive resources. The



Martin

group has the largest distribution network in Africa, covering four business domains: Mobility, healthcare, green infrastructure, and consumer goods. It is present in 38 African countries and six French overseas departments. Furthermore, CFAO group is the distributor of Toyota cars in 38 African countries. In Nigeria, we celebrated our 120 years of operation in 2023, highlighting our long-standing commitment to serving our customers. At CFAO Mobility Nigeria, our facilities are designed to meet manufacturer standards, and we hold ISO certifications in Quality Management and Safety Systems for most of our subsidiaries, reflecting our dedication to excellence. We embrace the ANZEN safety-first culture, prioritizing the well-being of our employees and customers. Our customers are at the heart of everything we do. We strive to provide exceptional service and support. Our commitment to customer satisfaction is demonstrated through the various awards and recognitions we have received, which highlight our reputation for quality and reliability. We continuously seek to understand and meet the evolving needs of our customers, making us a trusted partner in their mobility journey.

What can customers expect with the transition to CFAO Mobility?

Customers can expect several positive changes with the transition to CFAO Mobility. We are committed to providing best-in-class service and maintaining our customer-centric approach. Our customers will benefit from a wider range of products and services designed to meet their diverse needs. We improve our customer relationship management by conducting regular satisfaction surveys, allowing us to continuously refine our services based on customer feedback. Additionally, we are expanding our network to ensure sustained quality of service across Nigeria.

As a key player in the Nigerian automotive sector, can you share some of the key CSR initiatives that CFAO Mobility is involved in? How is CFAO contributing to society?

CFAO Mobility is deeply committed to corporate social responsibility and contributing positively to society. We care for our employees, as evidenced by the 2024 NECA Employee Excellence Award we won. For example, we provide scholarships for some of our employees' children, based on specific criteria, ensuring they have access to quality education. One of our notable initiatives is the Suzuki Empower Her project, which focuses on training women with technical skills and integrating them into workshops. This project empowers women and supports gender equality in the automotive industry. Some of our subsidiaries, such as Massilia Motors, have been involved in tree planting initiatives, contributing to environmental sustainability and the fight against climate change. Additionally, the CFAO Yamaha Motor subsidiary provided a grant to the Irede Foundation to provide prosthetic limbs for child amputees, helping them lead more fulfilling lives.

What steps is CFAO Mobility taking to reduce the carbon footprint in Nigeria?

CFAO Mobility is actively taking steps to reduce the carbon footprint in Nigeria. We are launching a renowned electric car brand, BYD, which will provide eco-friendly transportation options. Additionally, we have introduced Sinotruk Howo CNG trucks and King Long CNG buses, which are designed to be more environmentally friendly.

What are CFAO Mobility's plans for the future, especially in terms of new product launches and market expansion?

CFAO Mobility has set ambitious goals for the future. We are focused on broadening our product range and enhancing our market presence to better serve our customers. This includes introducing new and innovative mobility solutions that address the evolving needs of our market. Sustainability is also a key priority for us, as we strive to ensure our products and operations positively impact the environment. Customer satisfaction remains at the core of our strategy, and we are committed to delivering exceptional service and value. Additionally, we are expanding our network with the upcoming BYD showroom on Akin Adesola, Victoria Island, a new Toyota showroom and service center on Kofo Abayomi, Victoria Island, and a new Mitsubishi showroom and service center on Bishop Oluwole Street, Victoria Island.

You recently assumed the role of Managing Director at CFAO Mobility Nigeria. What are the key expectations for you in this role?

The primary expectations for me in this role include increasing our market share and building a sustainable, profitable company. This involves taking care of our employees, stakeholders, and the environment. One of our key initiatives is the launch of our new electric vehicle (EV) brand, which aligns with our commitment to sustainability and innovation. By focusing on these areas, we aim to strengthen our position in the market and deliver exceptional value to our customers.

What is your view about the Nigeria Mobility sector?

The Nigeria Mobility sector is currently navigating a volatile economic environment, which presents both challenges and opportunities. Changes in legislation have also had a significant impact on the industry, requiring companies to adapt quickly to new regulations. Additionally, the automotive market has experienced a decline since the introduction of the auto policy, which has affected overall market dynamics. Despite these challenges, there is potential for growth and innovation, particularly with the right strategies and investments.

Carloha Unveils New Showroom in Kano, Expanding Chery's Northern Nigeria Presence

Carloha Nigeria, the authorised dealer of Chery vehicles in Nigeria, has unveiled its state-of-the-art showroom in Kano.

According to a statement by the company, the showroom's unveiling reinforces Carloha's "commitment to providing high-quality, innovative, and reliable automobiles to customers in the northern region."

The unveiling ceremony, which took place on February 24, 2025, brought together esteemed dignitaries, business leaders, and stakeholders in the Nigerian automotive industry.

The event was graced by the presence of notable personalities, including Dr. Mustapha Inuwa, former Secretary to the Government of Katsina State; Mr. Khalil Musulmani, the Honorable Counsellor of the Republic of Lebanon; and Alhaji S. Sufaye, Chairman of Sufaye Investment. Also in attendance were representatives of Honorable Ussani Usem from the Ministry of Commerce, a representative from the Managing Director of Kano Urban Planning and Development Authority (KNUPDA), and Mr. Yang of Bazi Agro Ltd. Their presence underscored the strategic importance of Carloha's expansion in Kano, a key commercial hub in Nigeria.

Speaking at the event, the Managing Director of Carloha Nigeria, Mr. Sola Adigun, expressed enthusiasm about the company's growth and its role in driving the adoption of Chery vehicles across Nigeria.

He emphasised that the new showroom in Kano is designed to offer a premium experience, with a wide range of Chery models tailored to meet the needs of customers seeking durability, comfort, and advanced technology in their vehicles.

Dr. Mustapha Inuwa commended Carloha for its commitment to enhancing automobile accessibility in the region, stating that the establishment of the showroom would provide customers with more vehicle options while creating employment opportunities for Kano residents.

Similarly, Mr. Khalil Musulmani lauded the strategic expansion, highlighting its potential to foster stronger business ties between Nigeria and international investors, particularly in the automotive sector.

In his remarks, Alhaji S. Sufaye noted that the arrival of Chery's showroom in Kano aligns with the city's growing demand for high-quality vehicles, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, commerce, and transportation.

Suzuki By CFAO Announces Exciting Price Slash on Vehicles

Suzuki by CFAO, one of the fastest-growing automobile dealerships, has launched a nationwide promotional campaign offering customers an incredible opportunity to own a durable, fuel-efficient, and stylish Suzuki vehicle at a discounted price. This limited-time offer also comes with added benefits designed to maximize customer value and return on investment.

Three models are featured in this exciting promotion: the Suzuki Grand Vitara GL, Grand Vitara GLX, and the Suzuki Eeco Van. These models now come with significant price reductions, along with exclusive incentives such as one-year free service and free registration - available for a limited period.

According to Madam Aissatou Diouf, General Manager of Suzuki by CFAO, "The Suzuki brand under CFAO remains committed to delivering affordability, innovation, and reliability to its customers. We encourage potential buyers to take advantage of this offer before it ends. Customer feedback continues to reinforce Suzuki's reputation for quality, fuel efficiency, and overall satisfaction."

Under the promotional offer, customers can now drive home the Suzuki Grand Vitara GL for N46 million, down from N48 million, while the Grand Vitara GLX is currently available at N53 million, down from 55 million, and the Suzuki EECO Van for N19.5 million, down from N23 million.

Why Invest in the Suzuki Grand Vitara GLX, GL, or Eeco Van?

The Suzuki Grand Vitara GLX is a feature-packed SUV with a robust design, sophisticated styling, and cutting-edge technology. It comes equipped with:

1.5L, 2WD automatic transmission (FS);
Panoramic sunroof;
Power door mirrors;
16-inch alloy wheels;
9-inch touchscreen audio system;
360-degree camera;
Outstanding fuel efficiency of just 4-5 liters per 100 kilometers.

The Grand Vitara GL variant features a 1.5L engine, 2WD automatic transmission (FS), power door mirrors, alloy wheels, and fabric seats while maintaining the same remarkable fuel efficiency as the GLX.

For businesses and entrepreneurs seeking affordability and efficiency, the Suzuki Eeco Van is a perfect choice.

EXPRESSION

'Felicitate With' Wrong



MEDIAGAFFES BY EBERE WABARA
ewabara@yahoo.com, 08055001948

YOU are welcome to the first edition in this month of grammatical perfection: "Customs deputy comptroller slumps, dies at Reps (Reps') investigative hearing"

"We (a comma) the members of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), (otiose comma) caucus of the House of Representatives (now another comma) felicitate with our…." Delete 'with' for the umpteenth time! Simply felicitate the fellow without lexical padding by the sub-literate inclusion of 'with'. This way: I felicitate Dr. Ray Echebiri on his latest book.

"…on his emergence as the vice chairman of the Southern Nigeria Governors (Governors') Forum."

"…speak volume (volumes) of your capabilities." This error-ridden advertorial was signed by five lawmakers!

"…despite the fact that our party performed creditably well." Delete 'well'—it is an overkill. You either use 'creditably' or 'well' as both cannot co-function.

"…the financial institutions, especially those listed on the Nigerian Exchange Limited (another comma) are positioning to…."

"This emerged as the SEC yesterday, released its framework to…." Either a comma before 'yesterday' or none at all to avoid a disruption of the subject and the verb—there must be a joint relationship.

"…as listed commercial banks give investors opportunity (an opportunity or opportunities) to own a…."

"…is renowned for her electric music genre, comprising of soul…." Electrocute 'of'!

DAILY INDEPENDENT online of February 28 signs off the month: "There are times necessity breed (breeds) invention…."

"…uncontrolled contract awards and flagrant disobedience to (of) financial regulations…."

Lastly from the above edition: "Proffer solution to Boko Haram menance first" Spell-check: menace.

Vanguard of February 26 indulged in malapropism: "Gbagi itches (inches) closer to becoming first African in Rotary's Arch Klumph Society"

"We wish to announce the sudden death of our friend…which sad event took place on… in a ghastly motor accident." (THE GUARDIAN, February 23) When an accident results in death, it is fatal (not ghastly).

A recurrent blunder: "4 arrested over 62-yr-old man's death" (Vanguard, June 23) No tiresomeness from error regularity: 'arrest' takes 'for' (not 'over').

"Why we're promoting artistes of yesteryears" Nigeria's weekly magazine: yesteryear. The same thing applies to 'heyday'.

"Our grouse against NHIS, by community pharmacists" (THE GUARDIAN, February 10) My grouse about (not against) media language abuse….

"Before it used to be between 40 to 60." (THE GUARDIAN, February 17) Even The Flagship? Either from 40 to 60 or between 40 and 60. No muddle, gentlemen.

"Explosions in the African continent" Conscience, Nurtured by Truth: Explosions on the African continent.

"In the presidential polls (a comma) President…failed to score the mandatory 50 per cent of the vote to be declared outrightly elected" 'Outrightly' is perverse American English. The standard version is 'outright' which functions both as an adverb and an adjective. We cannot continue agonizing over semantics.

"On December 29, the governor added another feather to his cap when…." (Daily Trust, June 15) Stock expression: added (no need for another) a feather in (not to) one's (his) cap.

"Solutions that create more social trauma and dislocations than is (are) currently the case will not be preferred over (to) solutions that minimize the same." I prefer compere to (not over) master of ceremonies.

"The three parties that demanded for the restructuring of the electoral body are…." (Daily Independent, February 16) As a verb, 'demand' does not take 'for' except in a noun form.

"Given the robust profiles of majority (a majority) of the INEC commissioners, there is every hope that the commission may get its acts together in the next elections." A review: a majority of…and the fixed expression: get its act (not acts) together.

The following blunders are from Leadership of February16: "Hong Kong, as a colony, is made up of the harbour that is reputed to be one of the busiest in the world comprising of some outlying settlements, ceded to Britain by China in 1842." This can't be a challenge: 'comprising' does not require 'of'.

"I feel the permanent solution is not in importing fuel from abroad…." (Vanguard, June 16) The importation couldn't have been from within these shores!

"Their roles and participation in the furtherance of dictatorship has (have) seriously…." (Source: as above)

"Issues bothering on meeting employers' obligations to employees in form of salary…." There is a sharp distinction between 'bothering' and 'bordering', which applies here.

"While contesting the alleged sale of the bakery and its ultra-modern equipments…." 'Equipment' is uncountable.

"The frequency with which administrations are changed at the grassroot level makes it difficult for any sustainable development to be accomplished." Immutable: grassroots makes.

"Given the robust profiles of majority of the INEC commissioners, there is every hope that the commission may get its acts together in the April elections." A review: a majority of… and the fixed expression: get its act (not acts) together.

"The impression seems to have gained ground that the voter registration was just another white elephant project, a wasteful jamboree." Get it right: just white elephant. All the trash about 'project, a wasteful jamboree' is simply pleonastic.

"Just imagine if all the money which was sunken into the Ajaokuta steel project…." Tense mix-up: yank away 'sunken' for 'sunk'.

"I escaped death by a hair's breath" No lexical mayhem: a hair's breadth.

"I detest the idea of somebody being nun talk less of my own daughter." 'Talk less' is Nigerian English employed in place of 'not to talk of' or 'let alone' which are standard entries.

Feedback

Media Gaffes, February 15, made an interesting reading. But, the rule that says present tense verb becomes past when changing from direct to indirect speech does not always apply, does it? I said there was no more monolithic north against an 'is' sounds different in meaning. 'The geography teacher said the sun ROSE in the east' will not be a right reported speech version of 'The sun rises in the east', says the geography teacher'. Will it? (08072246519)

…Response

There are no exceptions to the reported speech rule. The example you gave does not change anything. Thanks for your contribution. Next time, include your name, please.

Akpabio vs Natasha: Senate or Soap Opera?



COUNTERPOINT
FEMI AKINTUNDE-JOHNSON
fajalive1@gmail.com
08033622806- (SMS Only)

In a period when Nigeria's Senate is expected to focus on pressing national concerns - economic turmoil, security crises, and policy reforms - it is instead embroiled in a scandal that seems to belong more to a television drama than the chambers of legislative authority. At the center of this latest controversy is Senate President Godswill Akpabio, a man never far from political intrigue, and Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, whose accusations have not only sparked public outrage but have also deepened the credibility crisis of Nigeria's political elite.

What began as a routine political clash over seating arrangements in the Senate chamber has escalated into allegations of sexual harassment, power plays, and institutional victimization.

Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan's claims against Akpabio, made during an interview with Arise News, have added a deeply personal and unsettling dimension to the ongoing political standoff. She alleges that Akpabio made inappropriate advances toward her in his residence in Akwa Ibom, suggesting that their shared birthdays were an opportunity for "quality moments."

She narrated thus: "It all started the day before his birthday and my birthday because we are birthday mates. We were all in Akwa Ibom. At first, we were in his house at Ikot Ekpene. Then we all went to his house in Uyo, then he held my hands, walking around from room to room, he showed me the beautiful interiors. He got to this particular sitting room and asked me if I liked his house. I said of course, Sir, every room is beautiful, Quality taste. He said, Now you are a senator, I am going to create time for us to come create quality moments here. You will enjoy it.' At that point, I just pulled away because I didn't understand what he meant."

Her discomfort with his remarks and subsequent rejection of his alleged overtures, she claims, led to a pattern of professional victimization.

The Kogi Central senator insists that her motion to investigate corruption in Ajaokuta Steel Company was deliberately stalled by Akpabio. According to her, the motion was listed five times, only to be dismissed on grounds as flimsy as the "mood of the Senate." It was only on the sixth attempt that she managed to get it approved - a delay that raises legitimate questions about the undue influence wielded by the Senate President over legislative proceedings.

Furthermore, Akpoti-Uduaghan claims that Akpabio's retaliation extended to her seat reassignment in the chamber. Her refusal to move to a new seat - assigned following the defection of two opposition senators to the ruling party - led to an explosive confrontation, culminating in her near-forcible removal from the chamber. This incident, while seemingly procedural, carries undertones of a political power play designed to humiliate and silence her.

Predictably, the Senate leadership has pushed back against the allegations. Senate Deputy Chief Whip, Onyekachi Peter Nwebonyi, has dismissed the accusations as "personal, unsubstantiated, and conveniently timed."

Nwebonyi threw a counter-accusation, alleging serial and similar "reckless and false allegations" against other prominent individuals like Reno Omokri, Dino Melaye, and Yahaya Bello. He added: "If she truly believed she was being victimised because of an alleged sexual harassment incident, the proper forum to raise such a grievance would have been the Senate itself, not a television interview. The Senate is moved by reason and laws, not sentiments and drama…."

He had more in his pouch: "If she had truly been a victim, why would the Senate leadership, under the same Akpabio, assign her such a critical leadership role? …The Senate and Nigerians should not fall for this diversionary tactic. The Senate must stay focused, maintain order, and refuse to be blackmailed into legitimizing what is clearly an opportunistic falsehood."

The framing of Akpoti-Uduaghan's allegations as a mere distraction from disciplinary proceedings is a classic political maneuver - one that shifts the conversation away from the substantive claims she has made. By painting her as a lawmaker seeking to avoid accountability, the Senate leadership appears intent on neutralizing her allegations without addressing them directly.

The controversy took an unexpected turn when Chief Emmanuel Uduaghan, the Alema of Warri Kingdom and husband of Akpoti-Uduaghan, broke his silence. While he refrained from commenting on the legal dimensions of the case, his statement was both a defense of his wife's character and an indictment of the political establishment's treatment of her.

His published statement: "I personally met with the senate president and respectfully urged him to extend the courtesy and respect my wife deserves, while also honouring the friendship between us. We reached an understanding and agreed to resolve the issue amicably… However, despite this agreement, my wife continues to express concerns about the harassment she has endured from the senate president."

Chief Uduaghan's revelation that he had privately met with Akpabio in an attempt to resolve the matter amicably complicates the Senate President's position. If, as he claims, Akpabio had previously agreed to treat Akpoti-Uduaghan with respect but has since continued to target her, it lends credibility to the senator's allegations of ongoing harassment. His intervention also frames the issue not just as a political dispute but as a matter of personal dignity and gendered power dynamics in Nigeria's corridors of power.

At its core, this scandal highlights the broader issue of power and gender in Nigerian politics. The pattern is familiar: a woman in public office raises serious allegations against a powerful male counterpart, only to face an orchestrated campaign to discredit her. It is a cycle that thrives in an environment where institutional protections for women are weak and where whistleblowing is often met with swift and brutal retaliation.

While Akpoti-Uduaghan's claims require legal and procedural scrutiny, the dismissive response from Senate leadership suggests an unwillingness to engage with the matter in good faith. Instead of launching an independent inquiry into the allegations, the default reaction has been to frame her as a troublemaker.

The Nigerian public, already weary of political theatrics, has reason to be skeptical of both sides. If Akpabio is innocent of these charges, why not call for an independent investigation rather than dismiss them outright? And if Akpoti-Uduaghan's claims are indeed politically motivated, what does that say about the internal rot within the Senate that allows such allegations to be weaponized in the first place?

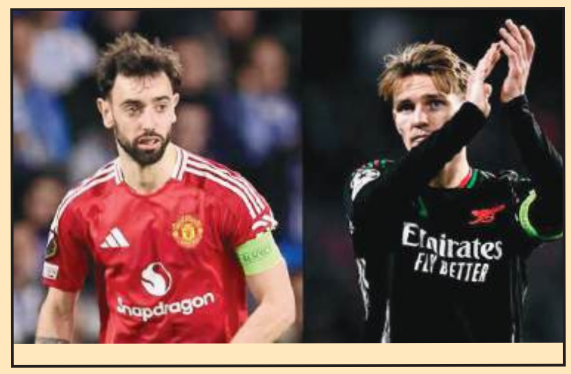
A Senate in Disarray: Beyond the personal drama, this episode is a damning indictment of the Nigerian Senate's priorities. At a time when inflation is crippling households, insecurity remains a daily threat, and governance is in dire need of reform, the nation's legislative body is mired in yet another scandal that does nothing to address the real concerns of Nigerians.

Whether Akpoti-Uduaghan's allegations prove true or not, one thing is certain: the Nigerian Senate, once again, has demonstrated that self-preservation and power games take precedence over national service. And in this relentless cycle of political machinations, the people they claim to represent are the ultimate losers.

GLOBAL SOCCER

A THISDAY WEEKLY PULL-OUT

8.3.2025

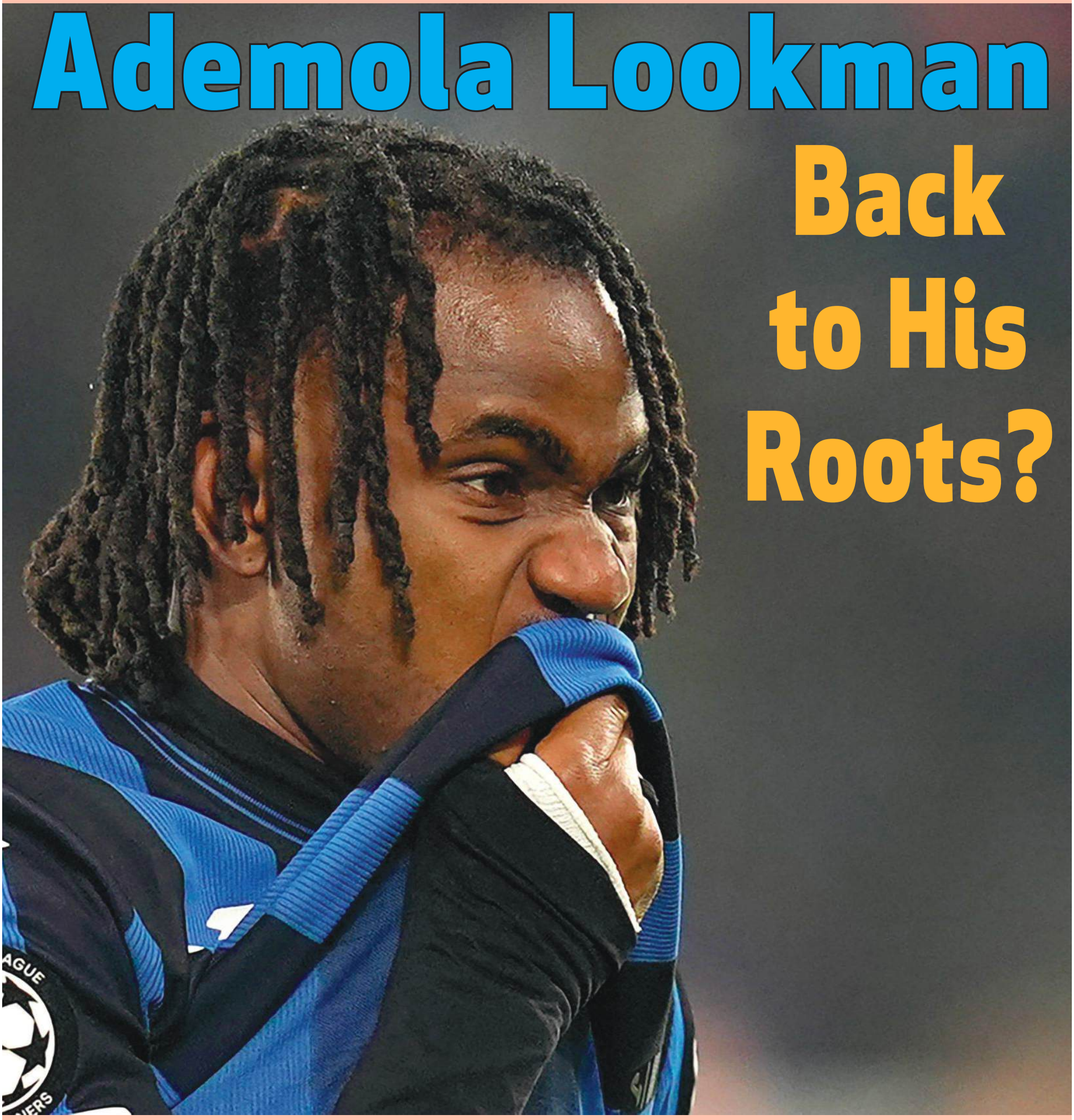


ARSENAL TEST UNITED RESOLVE

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Ademola Lookman

Back to His Roots?



GLOBAL SOCCER

Ademola Lookman

Back to His Roots?

As his romance with Atalanta is set to end in the summer, after the brouhaha with Manager Gian Piero Gasperini over missed penalty comment, Super Eagles winger, Ademola Lookman may be set for England return, a league where he is not only too familiar with but had stints with four of its clubs. Though, Juventus and Inter Milan were the initial front runners for the signature of the Nigerian, but with the Bergamo-based side not ready to sell to direct rivals, a return to base looks imminent, as the trio of Liverpool, Tottenham and Chelsea are ready to cash in on the U21 World Cup winner's situation

English Premier League clubs have been handed a significant boost in the race to sign Super Eagles forward, Ademola Lookman, with

Atalanta BC more willing to sell the Nigerian international to an overseas club rather than Italian League rivals.

Lookman has been one of Atalanta's most influential players since joining from RB Leipzig in 2022. His performances, including a hat-trick in last season's Europa League final, have put him on the radar of several top European clubs. It has earlier been reported that Juventus and Inter Milan have shown interest in signing the Nigerian international, but recent reports indicate that the Bergamo-based club would prefer to negotiate with clubs outside Italy.

Meanwhile, this gives Premier League teams a crucial advantage, with Chelsea, Liverpool, and Tottenham Hotspur, among the sides monitoring the 27-year-old forward.

Lookman is no stranger to English football, having previously played for Everton, Leicester City, and Fulham. A return to the Premier League could be an attractive prospect, particularly as Atalanta's preference for an overseas sale increases his chances of securing a move back to England.

However, the competition is not limited to England, as Paris Saint-Germain have also been linked with a potential move for the Nigerian star.

The Super Eagles attacker found himself at the center of criticism following a missed penalty during Atalanta's UEFA Champions League clash against Club Brugge. This has further sparked speculations over his exit from the club.

Chelsea, Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur are expected to have a common objective in the summer – landing a goal-scoring winger. The Premier League trio have been heavily reliant on just one player to deliver the goods for much of the campaign and need a bit of variety in terms of scoring options next season.

Spanish source, Fichajes has reported that Chelsea, Liverpool and Tottenham are all keeping tabs on Lookman's situation at Atalanta. Though his recent fallout with Gian Piero Gasperini has been settled, the forward is expected to pursue a new challenge during the summer after spending a memorable few years in Bergamo.

Lookman has scored 17 goals and provided seven assists in all competitions, so he comfortably fits the bill for what the English giants are looking for in a winger. His game has improved a great deal in the recent past at Atalanta, thus putting a few flopped months at Fulham behind him and reigniting hopes for the 27-year-old playing in his birth city.

Lookman is about to enter the final 12 months of his contract at Atalanta and will be available for a reasonable transfer fee in the summer. The Premier League trio are set to be alert to any developments regarding his future, though it is hard to look past Stamford Bridge as the forward's next destination.



Atalanta manager, Gasperini descibed Ademola Lookman as the worst penalty taker after his kick was saved by Club Brugge's goalkeeper, Simon Mignolet

For Liverpool to sign a left winger, they would first have to wait on a decision from Luis Diaz on his future. The Colombian international has been linked with departing Anfield but has yet to have a concrete suitor for his services. With Coach Arne Slot likely to prioritise rebuilding other areas of the squad unless Diaz leaves, the former Porto star must first be sold for a new man to join.

Tottenham, on the other hand, might mean a step down for Lookman. Atalanta have been playing in the Champions League for the better part of the last few years, whereas they were also Europa League victors in 2024 with the African hitman bagging a hat-trick in the final. Spurs have not had anywhere near that success lately, thus putting Chelsea in the driving seat.

Although Enzo Maresca invested in a handful of wingers last summer, none of them have lived up to expectation with most players only displaying form for a small run of matches. The goal-scoring burden has been heavy on Cole Palmer, in particular, so Lookman would be a terrific new addition for a nominal price for the Blues.

Though he has been a forward for Atalanta for much of the ongoing campaign on paper, Lookman tends to drift onto the left flank, while for Nigeria, he features as a specialist winger. With artful trickery in his feet, rapid pace and superb finishing, there is every reason to believe the player would be the answer to Chelsea's woes in the final third.

Liverpool are reportedly one of three Premier League clubs prepared to offer around £37m to sign Lookman in the summer transfer window.

The Nigeria international has scored 49 goals and provided 22 assists in 108 competitive appearances, including 26 goal contributions in 45 matches during the 2023-24 campaign, helping Atalanta win the Europa League, reach the Coppa Italia final and achieve a fourth-placed finish in Serie A.

Lookman has continued to play a starring role for Atalanta in the current campaign, having racked up 17 goals and seven assists across 30 matches in all competitions.

The 27-year-old's impressive displays have led to speculation about a potential move away from Bergamo, and rumours surrounding his future have grown stronger following his public fallout with Atalanta boss.

Last month, Gasperini said Lookman was "one of the worst penalty takers" he had ever seen after he missed a spot kick in the Champions League defeat to Club Brugge, leading the forward to call the comments "deeply disrespectful" in a social media post.

Liverpool are believed to be willing to offer in the region of €£37m plus bonuses to prise Lookman away from the Serie A title challengers.

However, the Reds are set to face competition from Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur, who are also prepared to make a similar offer for Lookman's services.

The attacker's Premier League suitors will be boosted by the suggestion that Atalanta would rather sell Lookman to a club outside Italy.

However, there is surely some doubt about whether the Italian club would accept a £37m proposal for the star player in Gasperini's side.

A recent report claimed that Atalanta will demand around £53.8m amid further Premier League interest from Manchester United and Newcastle United.

Lookman will enter the final 12 months of his contract this summer, although Atalanta are understood to have the option to extend his deal by an additional year.

GLOBAL SOCCER



Arsenal Test United Resolve

Continental Blow: Ogunbote Laments 3SC's 97th-minute Goal against Katsina Utd

Shooting Stars Coach, Gbenga Ogunbote has described his team's 1-0 loss to Katsina United FC as unfortunate after Conceding 90+7 minutes goal.

Katsina United defeated Shooting Stars 1-0 on the match day 28 match played yesterday at the Muhammadu Dikko Stadium via Ahmed Abdul Taofeek strike, seven minutes deep into stoppage time.

Coach Ogunbote believe his boys ran out of luck in the match after putting so much to get at least a point considering the fact that they arrived the venue of the match 24 hours to the kick off and the boys have to cope with fatigue through out the duration of the match.

In his post match reaction after the loss, Ogunbote bared his mind to newsmen on ground.

" It's unfortunate that we lost the match at the last minute."

" The boys did put out up their best, and did very well, considering what we face, we came here yesterday and the boys can't really expresse themselves , they are fatigued."

Shooting Stars endured over 48 hours on the road on their way from Ibadan to Katsina as the team's bus developed several breakdowns due to mechanical fault on the way.

The loss is huge set back for the ambition of the Oluyole Warriors who are eyeing a continental spot but have failed to win any of their last five matches in the NPFL.

They remained in third position with 48 points, after 28 matches, 11 points behind the leader, Remo Stars with a game at hand.

Forest Host Man City as United, Arsenal Clash on Showmax

Manchester City will face a stiff test in their bid to finish as high as possible in the Premier League when they face high-flying Nottingham Forest today. The game is available for live streaming on Showmax Premier League mobile at 1 pm.

The day will also see a trio of games kick off at 4 pm. Brighton and Fulham will seek to make a push to qualify for the Europa League, with leaders, Liverpool, aiming to put the daylight between them and the chasing pack when they face relegation-haunted Southampton. Also, Crystal Palace will host relegation-haunted Ipswich, who have lost four of their last five and won only one.

Later in the day, Unai Emery's inconsistent Aston Villa will face a stern test away at Brentford who, on their day, can give anybody a game. The game is at 6.30 pm. The last game of the day, kicking off at 9 pm, will see Wolves host Everton.

Tomorrow, Arsenal will hope to breathe into their fading title hopes when they travel to take on out-of-sorts Manchester United at Old Trafford at 5.30 pm. Before the clash of the giants, Tottenham Hotspur, who have tapered off really badly on account of injuries, would host Bournemouth at 3 pm. Also, kicking off at the same time is the clash between Chelsea and Leicester.

Catch all the Premier League matches live on Showmax. Sign up for the Showmax Premier League mobile plan for just N3,200 at www.showmax.com.

Netflix Targeting Joshua/Fury Showdown after Paul vs Tyson Success

Streaming Slugfest, Netflix 'aggressively' targeting huge fight between Tyson Fury and Anthony Joshua after Jake Paul vs Mike Tyson success.

The long-overdue Battle of Britain between Tyson Fury and Anthony Joshua could end up on Netflix, if The Gypsy King comes out of retirement.

Fury seemingly put the final nail in the coffin of the domestic dust-up in January when he announced his fifth retirement, which came on the back of consecutive losses to Oleksandr Usyk.

Saud boxing supremo Turki Alalshikh, however, is expected to dangle a gargantuan purse in front of the Wythenshawe warrior to coax him out of retirement.

And if he's successful, Netflix will make a play to land the broadcast rights for the mammoth melee.

That's according to Sports Illustrated, who claim the streaming platform is "aggressively moving into boxing's big event space" and is eager to land Fury vs Joshua.

Netflix dipped their toes into the boxing world last November for Mike Tyson's controversial comeback fight against Jake Paul.

FIFA Clears 'Ineligible' Equatorial Guinea Skipper to Play for Country After 10 Years

Equatorial Guinea's record goalscorer Emilio Nsue has been officially cleared to play for the country by Fifa - more than a decade after the former Spain youth international made his senior debut for the African nation.

There was widespread surprise in May last year when football's world governing body handed Nsue, now 35, a six-month ban, deeming him ineligible to play in 2026 World Cup qualifiers.

At the time, Fifa said it was "comfortably satisfied" that Nsue, who won the golden boot at last year's Africa Cup of Nations, had never received clearance to formalise his switch from Spain.

But that changed on Wednesday when Fifa approved a second request by Equatorial Guinea's football federation (Feguifut) - 12 years after its first attempt.

"Fifa's decision has been very positive for us and for all the people of Equatorial Guinea," Feguifut president Venancio Tomas Ndong Micha told BBC Sport Africa.

"After so many years, and months, we were able to show that Emilio was eligible and finally Fifa showed justice in this case."

Fifa's shock ruling last year came 43 games after Nsue's 2013 debut for Equatorial Guinea, a side he has often captained and for whom he has scored a record 22 goals.

After he struck twice in World Cup qualifying wins against Namibia and Liberia in late 2023, Fifa ruled that both games would be forfeited 3-0.

Feguifut was also fined 150,000 Swiss francs ($164,000, £129,000) for fielding the player, who had previously taken part in both the 2018 and 2022 World Cup qualifying campaigns without incident.

The second - and ultimately successful - bid to change Nsue's allegiance was launched shortly after his six-month ban ended, while a Feguifut appeal last year resulted in the fine being reduced to 50,000 Swiss francs, with the remaining 100,000 suspended for two years.



Nwaneri celebrates his goal against PSV in the Champions League

Amid Nigeria's Interest, Arteta Backs Nwaneri's England Call-up

Arsenal Manager, Mikel Arteta has expressed his support for Ethan Nwaneri potentially being called up to the England national team, though he emphasised that the decision lies with England Manager, Thomas Tuchel and his coaching staff.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday ahead of Arsenal's Premier League clash with Manchester United, Arteta was asked whether he expects the two young talents to be on England's radar.

"I have no idea other than what I've read and heard the noise around it," Arteta was quoted as saying by Arsenal's official website. "Thomas and his coaches will take the decision, and we will support it."

Both Nwaneri and Lewis-Skelly have been making waves in Arsenal's youth setup, with Nwaneri in particular catching attention after his impressive performances for the first team.

The 17-year-old midfielder recently made headlines with a goal in Arsenal's dominant 7-1 Champions League win against PSV, fueling calls for him to receive an England senior team call-up.

Nwaneri is eligible to represent both Nigeria and England at the international level, making his future a subject of keen interest.

When asked if such an opportunity would benefit the young players at this stage of their careers, Arteta expressed confidence in England's coaching environment.

"Knowing Thomas and his coaching staff and the environment they have created in the England camp, I think it would be an incredible experience for them if that is the case, whenever that is," he said.

Mourinho Praises Super Eagles Returnee, Dessers after Brace Against Fenerbahce

Fenerbahce head Coach, Jose Mourinho, has heaped praises on Super Eagles and Rangers striker, Cyriel Kolawole Dessers, after his brilliant display in the UEFA Europa League last night.

The 30-year-old opened the scoring inside seven minutes for Rangers at the Ülker Stadyumu Fenerbahçe, and taunted the fans of the Turkish club by celebrating his goal by cupping his ears with his hands.

As a result, Dessers shared a laugh with Mourinho after the goal, hinting the Portuguese manager enjoyed the feistiness of the Super Eagles forward.

Dessers turned provider for Rangers' second goal and was heavily involved in the Gers' third before he was withdrawn in the 88th minute, and the manager of the opposition was left awed.

"Dessers is a good player, but today he looked like the best player in the world, but he is not," Jose Mourinho said in quotes revealed by Rangers Review.

Dessers' goal against Fenerbahce took his goal tally to 22 goals this season.

Additionally, the former Chelsea boss lauded Rangers goalkeeper for his solidity at the back. Mourinho admitted his side weren't at their best, but concluded by saying the tie is far from over.

"I know that Butland makes three fantastic saves. I know that there is, I think, a penalty, but to speak about the referee after this performance, I don't think it's ethical.

Iheanacho Snubbed Derby County Loan Move for Middlesbrough Switch

Nigerian forward, Kelechi Iheanacho rejected a loan move to Derby County before sealing a switch to Middlesbrough during the last winter transfer window, according to Telegraph UK.

The former Leicester City striker, who struggled for game time at Sevilla, opted for a return to English football with Michael Carrick's side as they pushed for a Championship play-off spot.

Derby County had expressed strong interest in signing Iheanacho as they sought to strengthen their attack in their bid to avoid relegation.

The Rams saw the Nigerian international as an ideal addition to provide experience and quality in the final third, but Iheanacho prioritised a move to Boro.

Middlesbrough emerged as a more appealing option. The opportunity to work under Michael Carrick played a key role in his decision to reject Derby County and join Boro.

Iheanacho had joined Sevilla on a free transfer last summer after leaving Leicester City, where he spent seven years and won the FA Cup.

However, his time in La Liga proved difficult, as he found himself on the fringes of the squad.

Sevilla's playing style did not suit his strengths, and he struggled for minutes under manager García Pimienta.

With limited game time and no goals to his name, Iheanacho sought a move away in January. Several clubs showed interest, but the Nigerian was determined to find the right fit.

Middlesbrough, needing attacking reinforcements, moved quickly to secure Iheanacho's services.

Amorim Admits Man Utd can't Give Him the Luxury Arteta Enjoyed at Arsenal

Manchester United head coach, Ruben Amorim says the club will not give him the time that Mikel Arteta was afforded to change fortunes at Arsenal.

Spaniard Arteta replaced Unai Emery as Arsenal manager in December 2019 and has helped transform the Gunners into regular title challengers.

Arteta won the 2020 FA Cup in his first season but it remains the only piece of silverware he has won since his appointment - and it took him three seasons to return the club to the Champions League.

"I will not have the time the Arteta had," said Amorim.

However, Amorim said he could draw inspiration from the manner in which Arteta dealt with a number of issues during his early days at Arsenal.

"I feel that (Arsenal) is a different club," continued Amorim.

"It is a different club, in that aspect, the way how Arteta dealt with that [the issues] is an inspiration for everybody."

Arsenal travel to Old Trafford tomorrow in the Premier League and face a United side without a number of key players including long-term absentees Lisandro Martinez, Luke Shaw and Mason Mount.



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MISSILE

PDP to Akpabio

"It is scandalous, and amounts to gross abuse of office and violation of the fundamentals of justice and fair hearing to sit as a judge in a matter in which he is the accused; a situation which validates public apprehension of a desperation by the embattled Senate President to suppress open legislative probe into the allegation of sexual harassment leveled against him"

– PDP National Publicity Secretary, Debo Ologunagba condemns the suspension of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan from the Senate



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NASENI's 'Irrigates Nigeria' Project

Our people say that there is nothing wrong with a man irrigating his farmland, provided he is not fetching the water from his neighbour's water pot, or rechanneling the village stream. Our people also say that the beauty of community farming is that every member of the community benefits from every aspect of the enterprise, as distinct from when one kindred or the other is made to suffer unduly. All must pay attention to the soil type, the topography, the water sources, the seasonal water availability and priority crop types.

Put more simply, to construct a dam in order to get more water, or to draw water for irrigation, is to do something that will invariably affect the lives of folks living downstream. If you do not pay attention to the latter fact, but focus instead on the episodic benefits of the water you are drawing to create a haven of greenery elsewhere, all will not be well in the long run.

Take, for instance, the case of someone who wants to travel from Abuja to Taraba State today. He flies to Yola and then makes a four-hour road trip to Jalingo, the state capital. While on the road journey, he is counting how many bridges are spanning dry rivers. Yes, dry rivers without any water at all. And these rivers were not always like that. The story is the same in many parts of northern Nigeria.

If you think it is a northern Nigeria problem, then head southwards from Abuja by road. Get to Lokoja and drive past it. Continue all the way beyond Ajaokuta to Anyigba. While you are at it, count the number of rivers that are now tiny streams in the middle of a vast plains. Also check out how many rivers that once spanned some 100 to 200 meters of water across are now without water during the dry season. Even at the peak of the rainy season, they are pitiful shadows of what they used to be.

Or would you rather have us talk about the Onitsha end of the River Niger? It used to be a massive body of water. Not anymore! But more of that later.

These were the thoughts on my mind when, a few days ago, I watched the National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI) flag off the Irrigate Nigeria Project. The initiative is designed to ensure that farmers in some parts of the country achieve three farming cycles every year. Such a transformative endeavour is expected to positively impact food availability, by enhancing mechanized outcomes at TIAMIN Rice Farm, Udubo, Gamawa Local Government Area of Bauchi State.

The projected short, medium, and long-term benefits would include job creation, increased agricultural output and overall improvement in national productivity. No one can fail to see the good intentions behind this project, especially as a response to the problem of food insecurity.

This good initiative, which is being jointly implemented by NASENI and the Renewed Hope Infrastructure Development Fund (RHIDF), needs a thoroughgoing holistic approach, so that the gains would be lasting ones. Since it is being executed with the participation of the private sector, there is need to ascertain the critical roles of the Environment Ministry,



CEO NASENI, Khalil Suleiman Halilu

Nigeria Inland Waterways authority (NIWA) and the Ministry of Water resources in all of this.

Let us note that NASENI's Executive Vice Chairman (EVC) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mr. Khalil Suleiman Halilu, said at the flag-off that the initiative is capable of revolutionizing agriculture in Nigeria. In his own words, "…the goal of Irrigate Nigeria is to transform Nigeria's agriculture through the provision of sustainable irrigation systems that empower farmers to achieve year-round farming, and by extension, increased productivity and reduce food prices". That is correct.

Simply put, this project is a way of making modern irrigation techniques, and also modern equipment for dry-season farming, available to farmers. The major pillars of the project include the following, among others: (1) The deployment of centralised NASENI irrigation systems to support farming clusters in the participating communities, (2) The provision of input – enhanced seeds, (3) The provision of fertilizers, (4) Technical support to the participating farmers.

With the project's goal of enhancing food security, by equipping farmers with modern irrigation systems and dry season farming tools, the ultimate goal is obviously year-round productivity; as earlier stated. The project is planned to run on a commercial basis, and there's the worry. Will the farmers not be overburdened?

NASENI says no, promising that "… the repayments by farmers for the support being provided will be in the form of convenient portions of their harvests, like rice paddy". The repayments are to be "…pooled into a strategic food reserve that will help to stabilize commodity prices, and also be available for institutional sale and for export".

All said, no one can fault the good intentions, projected positive outcomes and the expected impact on food availability and food prices.

But, going back to the issues with which we flagged off today's conversation, there are concerns which must be put on the table here. I refer us to two articles which appeared on this page within the last seven years. The first, titled "Onitsha Port and its Enemies" came out on February 5, 2017. The second, titled "Onitsha Port and Other Matters", was published here on April 13 2024. The two articles emphasized the desirability of an inland port in Onitsha, to ease trade for the South East trades and businessmen, while pointing out the challenge of water availability.

The latter of the two articles said: "One of the major overlooked, and largely unacknowledged, problem is the probability of not ever really getting enough water for the primary business of a port. You need water for a river port and the Onitsha end of the river Niger does not have enough. Dredging is a good idea, but it will give you a bigger ditch and wipe out the means of livelihood of water dependent local economies".

The article continued: "All things considered, the challenges that come to mind regarding the proposed Onitsha River Port are: (1) How the river dams along the Niger, Benue and their many tributaries have reduced available water at onitsha by over 68%; (2) Possibly unrealistic projections about the prospects of the project; (3) The credibility of some of the existing Environmental Impact Assessment (AIE) reports, especially against the background of climate change and other environmental factors; among other factors".

The same article pointed out that the dams built across the rivers Niger and Benue, and their tributaries, over the years have reduced the overall water volume. You now have small sand islands, and unprecedented siltation, at the Onitsha end of the river. That is why the NASENI Irrigate Nigeria project must be approached by working in sync with the Federal Ministries of Agriculture and Natural Resources Environment, blue economy and the Nigeria Inland Waterways authority (NIWA).

The current global response to the devastating impact of dams and water diversion on people and the environment within the past 60 years has been overwhelming. We all know that dams have altered ecosystems, ruined food chains and obliterated local economies for hundreds of thousands of kilometres of waterways all over the world. That is Dams and diversion or all, or part of, natural bodies of water, for electricity, farming, etc.

That article of last April said: "It is on record, for instance, that massive fish populations were killed on the Snake River, Idaho, in the US by dam construction; leading to the decimation of salmon species, among others. An Idaho State Senator, Frank Church, who originally supported dam building later rose in defense of natural waterways and spoke against dams. It was the same Frank Church who, after he saw the damage to the environment, eventually wrote the Wild and Scientific Rivers Act, passed in 1968".

Over 22,000 kilometers of free-flowing rivers in the US are protected by Frank Church`s Act as I write. Meanwhile our natural waters and waterways are available for all comers. The fate of communities displaced by dams all over Nigeria today is rarely a topical issue, yet it is a real problem that has lingered for decades in many places.

The concern about water and free waterways is such that the world is focusing on transboundary cooperation between nations for conscious and deliberate management of the ecosystem and water volume throughout the length of major rivers. Are we doing the same in our country? The conflict between China and Thailand over development on the Lancang/Mekong River says a lot about what is going on all over the world in connection with waterways today.

To think that the government of New Zealand has gone so far as to "recognize" the Whanganui river by giving it the same constitutional rights as a person? This was done as a way of showing that free-flowing rivers have great impact on food security, water access, biodiversity conservation and propagation of the overall global ecology.

All said, NASENI must be sensitive to the impact of its new project on local economies outside the farming communities from where, and to where, the waters are coming. It must also be seen to be working in sync the Nigeria Inland Waterways Authority, the Ministries of Environment, Water resources and Blue Economy on this initiative. That is the only way to derive, and maintain sustainable gains in the Irrigate Nigeria project.

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All Correspondence to P.O. Box 54749, Ikoyi, Lagos. **EMAIL:** editor@thisdaylive.com, info@thisdaylive.com. **TELEPHONE Lagos:** 0802 2924721-2, 08022924485. **Abuja:** Tel: 08155555292, 08155555929
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