Despite Economic Challenges, 10 Banks Granted N65.6 Trillion Loans to Customers

Oil and gas, general commerce dominate exposure **S&P: Naira depreciation inflated amount of loans** **Forecast 25-30% average loan growth in 2025**

Kayode Tokede

Amid macro-economic challenges and competition with Fintechs, 10 Nigerian banks operating in the country, Sub-Sahara Africa countries (SSA) and other parts of the world granted N65.6 trillion loans to customers in 2024 financial year.

The loans granted last year represent about 41.2 per cent increase over N46.46 trillion recorded in 2023.

The 10 banks are Access Holdings Plc, Zenith Bank Plc, Guaranty Trust Holding Company Plc (GTCO), United Bank for Africa Plc (UBA), Ecobank Transnational Incorporated (ETI), and First Holdings Plc.

Others are FCMB Group Plc, Wema Bank Plc, Stanbic IBTC Holdings Plc, and Fidelity Bank Plc.

THISDAY analysis of the banks'

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Tinubu Back in Abuja After over Two Weeks of Working Visits to France and UK... Page 6

THISDAY

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Pope Francis Dies at 88: Tinubu, Trump, Putin, Macron, King Charles Pay Tributes

Vatican reveals Catholic head died from stroke, heart failure

Deji Elumoye, Emmanuel Addeh, Chuks Okocha, Onyebuchi Ezigbo in Abuja and **John Shiklam** in Kaduna

World leaders, yesterday, paid tributes to Pope Francis, leader of the Roman Catholic Church, who passed away, ending the reign of the revered 88-year-old religious leader, after suffering a prolonged bout of double pneumonia this year.

However, the death of Pope Francis, who is estimated to have as many as 35 million members in Nigeria and 1.4 billion globally, came as a shock after he had been driven around St. Peter's Square in an open-air popemobile to greet cheering crowds the previous day on Easter Sunday.

Announcing Pope's death, Cardinal Kevin Farrell, said: "Dearest brothers and sisters, with deep sorrow, I must announce the death of our Holy Father Francis.

"At 7:35 this morning (Monday), The Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the Father's house. His entire life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and His church.

"He taught us to live the values of the Gospel with faithfulness, courage, and universal love, especially for the poorest and most marginalised.

"With immense gratitude for his example as a true disciple of the Lord Jesus, we commend the soul of Pope Francis to the infinite merciful love of God, One and Triune."

Late last night, the Vatican revealed in a statement that Pope Francis died of a stroke and subsequent heart failure, noting that the pontiff had requested to be buried in a simple, unadorned tomb.

His cause of death was confirmed through an Electrocardiogram (ECG) test, the Vatican said.

The pope confirmed in his will that he wished to be buried at Santa Maria Maggiore church in Rome's

Continued on page 9



THE PEOPLES' POPE...
Pope Francis, who died of stroke and irreversible heart failure, yesterday



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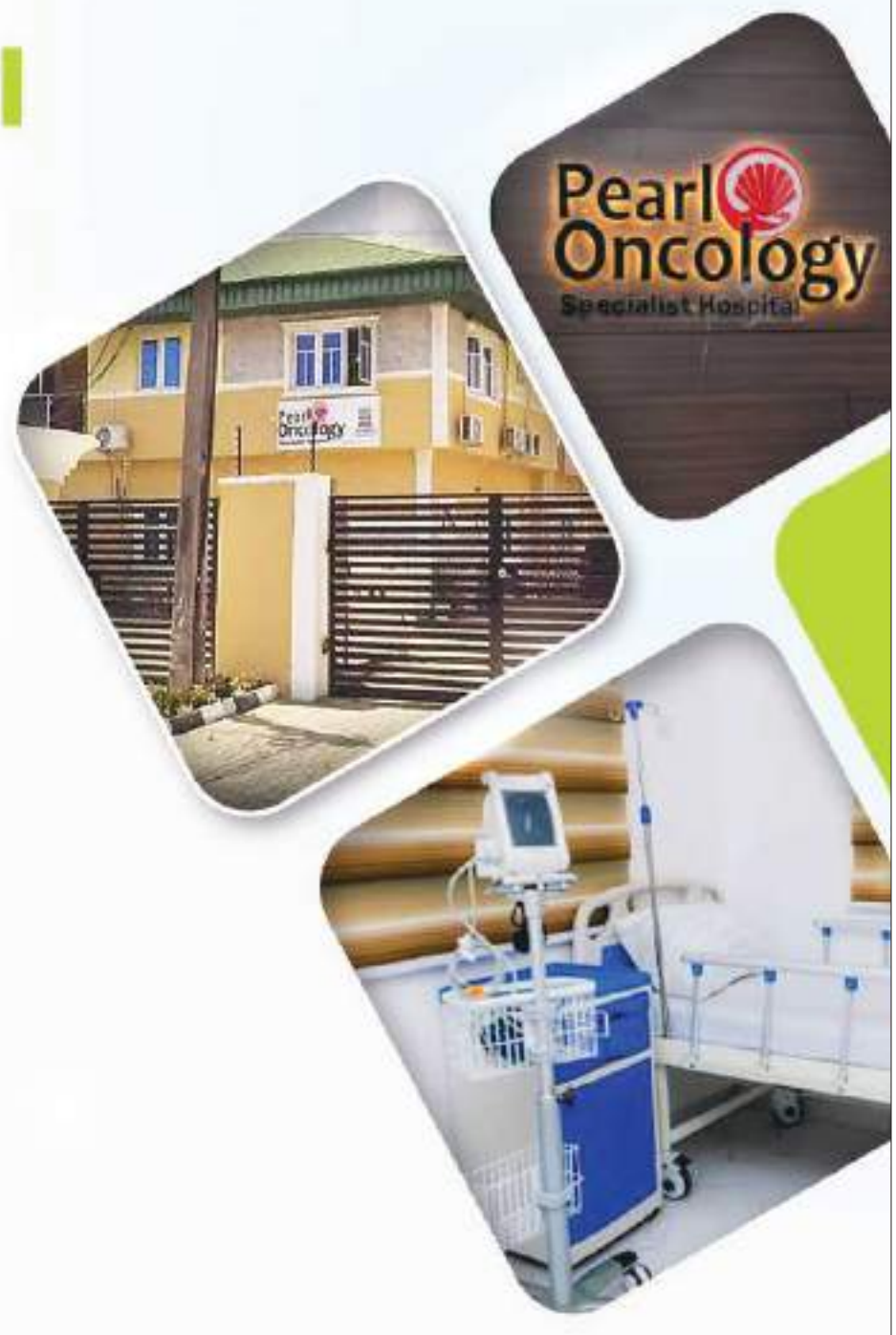
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TINUBU RETURNS FROM WORKING VISIT TO FRANCE, UK...

L–R: Chief of Staff to the President, Mr. Femi Gbajabiamila; Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mr. George Akume; FCT Minister, Mr. Nyesom Wike; and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, during his arrival from a working visit to France and the UK, at the Presidential Wing of Abuja Airport, yesterday

Mutfwang to Stakeholders: Let's Unite to Reclaim Our Land from Bandits, Terrorists

●Church leaders in peaceful demonstration ●Benue under siege, Governor Alia laments ●Namadi tells Danjuma asking citizens to defend themselves can cause anarchy ●Reported explosion at Maiduguri custodial centre false, NcoS declares

Chuks Okocha, Michael Olugbode in Abuja, **Seriki Adinoyi** in Jos and **George Okoh** in Makurdi

Plateau State Governor, Caleb Mutfwang, has challenged stakeholders to stand with him in the fight to redeem the Plateau heritage, saying nearly all the 17 local government areas in the state were plagued with insecurity.

Mutfwang made the plea at an expanded stakeholders meeting held at the Government House, Jos, yesterday, even as church leaders held peaceful demonstration.

In the same vein, the Benue State Governor, Hyacinth Alia, has declared that the state was currently under siege by armed herdsmen.

But the Jigawa State Governor, Umar Namadi, has faulted recent remarks by a former Chief of Army Staff, General Theophilus Danjuma, who urged Nigerians to defend themselves in the face of growing insecurity.

This was as the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) has described as untrue, reported incident of bomb explosion at the Maiduguri Custodial Centre.

Mutfwang, in a remark before the meeting went into a closed-door session, and commended the stakeholders for turning up despite their diverse affiliations and urged them to join with him to reclaim the land, preserve it, and nurture it for the benefit of future generations.

His words: "You are aware of the events of the last three weeks, which have once again pushed our state to the front burner of national discourse, unfortunately, for the wrong reasons.

"Two days after being sworn in, I convened a Security Council meeting. We engaged in a lot of discussions with communities and their leaders. Things calmed downuntil we woke up to a ruthless attack on 2023 Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day in Bokkos that claimed not less than 150 lives in one sweep.

"From January 2024 till February 2025, even though there were sporadic incidents here and there, we did not experience anything close to the magnitude of what has recently occurred—first in a community called Ruwi in Bokkos, and then it spread to other parts.

"Just over 10 days ago, it extended into Bassa Local Government Area. At the last count, we have probably lost well over 100 people.

"In Bassa, I'm told the community documented all the attacks and death's that took place between 2015 to date. Many would be shocked to learn that nearly 3,000 people were lost, particularly in the Miango axis.

"There is no senatorial zone in this state that is without its share of conflict. In Wase, for instance, a grazing reserve was developed as far back as the days of Northern Nigeria, but that area has been inaccessible.

"Kanam has also come under siege. The intelligence we are getting from Pandam (in Qua'an Pan LGA) is very disturbing; it has become a haven for kidnappers and a sort of stock exchange for ransom transactions. Many of the kidnappings that took place in Shendam have also been linked to Pandam.

"Bokkos and Mangu have been severely hit, particularly in the last two years. The crisis has even spread into Pankshin. Kanke is not spared either—reports of kidnappings there are becoming alarming.

"In the Northern Zone, perhaps the only local government that might appear relatively calm is Jos North. But that does not mean Jos North has been spared. One of the most dangerous cultic groups—Sarasuka—operates there, and we have been trying to tackle them. That cult group has taken many lives.

"Border communities in Jos South have come under tremendous siege recently—not to mention Riyom and Barkin Ladi that have experienced long-term instability. In essence, Plateau is under siege. Why us? Who is behind this? Where are they coming from? Who is sponsoring them? What is their aim?"

Charging the people further, he said, "We must rise together and ensure that this blessed land God gave us is preserved and that we maximize the blessings embedded in it. While I am open to suggestions—because I don't possess a monopoly of wisdom, I also believe we must speak up.

"When I came on board, the dominant narrative at national and international levels was that Plateau is suffering from a clash between farmers and herders. I ask you, sir, is that true? How can bandits occupy the Wase grazing reserve, and someone calls that a clash? How can they be in forests in Kanam, and someone says it is a clash?

"When it happened in December 2023 in Bokkos, when gunmen attacked defenceless communities with sophisticated weapons on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, what clash was that? Isn't it time we all unite to reject this falsehood?

"I look forward to the day when, regardless of religion or ethnicity, any of us is attacked and we all speak with one voice, saying: what is happening on the Plateau is nothing short of genocide perpetrated by terrorists."

Mutfwang lamented that many advisers might want to "mislead President Bola Tinubu into believing we are the aggressors, or that we are intolerant," but "We must come together. This is the time to hold one another's hands, not throw each other under the bus."

The meeting, which later went into closed doors, had former governors of the state like Fidelis Tapgun, Joshua Dariye, Jonah Jang, and Rear Admiral Bitrus Atukum in attendance.

Continued on page 29

First Lady Canvasses Love, Unity for National Development

●Fetes Christian youth at State House

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

Wife of the president, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, has admonished Christians to always show love to their neighbours, and avoid the inclination to judge others based on religion or region. Mrs. Tinubu stated this on Monday while hosting the Youth Wing of Christian Association of Nigeria (YOWICAN) to Easter Brunch at State House.

The first lady said she was encouraged by the visit and show of love by the youths.

She pointed out that it took sacrificial love and compassion to change the world.

Mrs. Tinubu called on the Nigerian youth to be at the forefront of efforts to promote gender equity, pointing out that there is room for women, who are willing, to thrive in the country.

Earlier, National Chairman of YOWICAN, Belusochukwu Enwerem, expressed the appreciation of the association to the first lady for her interventions.

Enwerem said the group was ready to run with Mrs. Tinubu's vision and that of President Bola Tinubu for peace and development by sustaining engagement with their Muslim counterparts to foster religious harmony in the country.

To further demonstrate the support of the association to her Renewed Hope Initiative, Enwerem announced the launch of Renewed Hope Neighbour2Neighbour Movement, and decorated the first lady as the Grand Patron.

That was the second Easter homage by YOWICAN to Mrs Tinubu and, like the first, it afforded members of the association the opportunity to share Easter felicitations, as well as dine and wine with their grand patron.

Mrs Tinubu thereafter announced the donation of seven 14-seater CNG powered buses to aid the evangelical work of YOWICAN across the country.



PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF 2025 SURVEY REPORT ON OIL AND GAS SECTOR...

L-R. Executive Director, Good Governance Africa, Dr. Ola Bello; Publisher, Africa Oil & Gas Report, Mr. Toyin Akinosho; Managing Director, SellyFak Energy, Mr. Stanley Fagbule; Tax Partner and Regulatory, Deloitte, Mrs. Asiata Agboluaje; Managing Director, Africa Business Convention, Dr. Ogho Okiti; Partner, Bloomfield LP, Dr. Ayodele Oni; and Chief Operating Officer, Arbiterz Media Mr. Dotun Ajiboye at the public presentation of a new survey titled "Investor Perceptions of Nigeria's Regulatory and Policy Reforms in the Oil & Gas Sector", organised by Arbiterz Media, held at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos… recently

NUPRC: No Underhand Dealings in 2024 Oil Licensing Bid Round

Says exercise was first in 70 years to deploy technology

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) yesterday refuted imputations that it rigged the allocation of oil blocks during the 2024 oil licensing bid round.

A statement by the Chairman of the 2024 Bid Round Committee, NUPRC, Mr Bashari Indabawa, maintained that the process was characterised by a comprehensive and rigorous framework designed to ensure transparency and stakeholder engagement.

The NUPRC stated that the selection process for the 2024 oil bid round involved a diverse array of stakeholders such as the International Oil Companies (IOCs), various local and international firms, the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), relevant government agencies, civil society organisations, and both national and international media representatives.

Stressing that at various stages, all relevant industry stakeholders were encouraged to participate and voice their perspectives, the commission stated that the hearings facilitated a collaborative atmosphere, allowing for input from regulatory agencies and all parties operating in, and oversighting industry operations.

"The licensing round conducted by NUPRC under Engr Gbenga Komolafe was the first in nearly 70 years of Nigeria's upstream petroleum industry history to leverage digital technology, devoid of any human interference, in a manner adjudged to be in line with global best practices.

"The outcome was televised live and attended by all the aforementioned stakeholders. There was no room for any manipulation to warrant any underhand dealings whatsoever, as insinuated mischievously in the publication.

"Therefore, any allegations or insinuations regarding underhand dealings or bribery lack merit and are entirely unfounded, serving only to mislead. These claims are not rooted in truth, and disregard the rigorous standards upheld throughout the selection process," Indabawa added.

Going through the publication, the NUPRC stated that it was obvious that the anonymous "our reporter" by the blog was on a blackmail mission, intentionally obscuring the identity of his so-called sources, failing to properly identify even one of the more than 14 alleged informants and so-called experts and groups cited.

"Furthermore, the article provides no conclusions regarding the alleged cases involving the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Offences Commission (ICPC) or the Lagos Division of the Federal High Court.

"The publication's consistent omission of the outcomes of the various investigations and adjudications raised in the concocted article suggests a deliberate attempt to mislead the audience and bolster the impact of his unfounded claims.

"In conclusion, the article is nothing more than a fabricated narrative aimed at defaming the leadership of the commission. Its reliance on anonymous sources undermines the credibility of the claims made, raising serious doubts about the journalistic integrity of the piece," the NUPRC added.

The meticulous processes and regulatory frameworks established by the commission during the bid round, according to the NUPRC, demonstrate a commitment to transparency and fairness in the industry. Allegations of misconduct, particularly those lacking substantive evidence, distract from the real advancements being made in the oil sector and contribute to a culture of misinformation, the upstream regulator noted.

"It is essential for media outlets to uphold rigorous standards of accuracy, especially when discussing matters of significant public interest and economic importance. The baseless claims made in the aforementioned article serve only to mislead and create unnecessary controversy, detracting from the progress being achieved within the framework of the Petroleum Industry Act, (PIA) 2021.

"Regardless of the mischievous motives of those behind the smear campaigns, the NUPRC leadership is unwavering in its firm commitment to implementation of the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's bold reform initiatives in the Nigeria oil and gas sector for optimisation of federation revenue in the overall national interest," the bid round chair pointed out.

Oando Foundation Supports Women Representation in STEM Education

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

Oando Foundation has raised its support for young girls in education, encouraging women's representation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), hosting an event at its headquarters to commemorate the International Women's Month.

It stated that this is with the aim of dismantling barriers/stereotypes and inspiring young girls to pique their interest in STEM education, noting that the quest for gender equality in Nigeria, particularly in education and professional development, faces significant challenges.

"Despite some progress, sociocultural norms often hinder the educational journeys of girls, and women's representation in STEM fields remains notably low.

"In response to this situation, Oando Foundation, an independent charity established in 2011 to support the Nigerian government in achieving its Universal Basic Education goals, recently hosted an event to commemorate International Women's Month with the aim of dismantling barriers/stereotypes and inspiring young girls; to pique their interest in STEM," it said in a statement.

Statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Oando Foundation said, indicate that women comprise only approximately 22 per cent of graduates in STEM-related fields nationwide.

According to the group, persistent gender stereotypes, a scarcity of female role models, and systemic biases that deter girls from pursuing STEM careers are key contributing factors to this disparity.

"Recognising these enduring challenges, Oando Foundation hosted a transformative experience for girls from Dele Ajomale School Complex – home to one of the Foundation's beneficiary schools under the Adopt-A-School program – at the Oando headquarters in Lagos.

"This impactful initiative went beyond conventional outreach programs by providing first hand exposure to the diverse career paths and opportunities available to women in the energy sector," the foundation said.

Responding to the urgency for action, Oando Foundation said it adopted a grassroots approach, focusing on empowering young girls at a critical stage in their development.

The goal, it said, was to plant "seeds of change" by showcasing the inherent potential within each girl, demonstrating that they can aspire to and achieve far beyond their current perceptions.

As a result of this initiative, it noted that several girls from the Dele Ajomale School Complex have expressed a newfound interest in STEM fields and have set ambitious career goals for themselves.

During the event, Tonia Uduimoh, Head, Oando Foundation, addressed the young attendees, stating: "As you witness the activities here and observe how our professionals work – women just like yourselves, though at a different stage of life – I am confident that something will resonate within you, broadening your understanding of the vast possibilities of who you can become".

A central element of the initiative was an immersive tour of the Oando Headquarters, allowing the students to directly observe the diverse roles women occupy within a corporate environment.

The students met with professionals within the business who shared personal journeys and words of encouragement. They encouraged the girls to recognise their potential for heroism and to pursue their dreams, emphasising the importance of determination and overcoming obstacles to achieving one's dreams.

They also highlighted the importance of courage, commitment, forming positive relationships, and the need for girls to have a voice and advocate for themselves.

Such initiatives, it said, are particularly crucial in Nigeria, where, despite advancements, achieving gender equality in STEM remains "an elusive goal", as noted by Uche Nnaji, Minister of Innovation, Science, and Technology, during the commemoration of International Day for Women and Girls in Science 2024.

"Oando Foundation's unwavering commitment to nurturing the potential of young Nigerian girls demonstrated through this initiative, is a sentiment shared across the nation's energy sector," the foundation added.

Tinubu Back in Abuja After over Two Weeks of Working Visits to France and UK

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu, last night, returned to Abuja after over two-week working visit to France and the United Kingdom.

The President, whose official aircraft, Nigeria Air Force 1, touched down at the Presidential Wing of the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, at 9:50pm, was received by top officials of his administration.

Those on the ground to welcome President Tinubu were the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), George Akume; Chief of Staff to the President, Hon Femi Gbajabiamila; the National Security Adviser (NSA), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu; Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Atiku Bagudu; and his counterpart in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike.

The president, who departed Nigeria on Wednesday, April 2, had spent some time in Paris, France, before he headed to London recently.

While in Europe, President Tinubu, his media team claimed,"effectively maintained constant communication with key government officials, overseeing critical national matters, including directives to security chiefs to address emerging threats in some parts of the country."

Also, while in Paris, the President was said to have held a high-level meeting with the US Department of State's Senior Advisor for Africa, Mr. Massad Boulos.

His discussions with the US official, it was gathered, focused on deepening bilateral collaboration aimed at enhancing regional security and promoting sustainable economic development across Africa.

A key aspect of the talks included joint efforts to advance lasting peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), with emphasis on multilateral cooperation and the role of regional stakeholders.

The meeting underscored Nigeria's ongoing engagement with international partners in addressing complex security and development challenges across Africa.


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NEWS



JIMOH IBRAHIM IN WASHINGTON DC...
IMF Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva, and Senator Jimoh Ibrahim at the ongoing ancillary meetings in Washington DC

Report: Weak Regulatory Capacity, Bureaucratic Inefficiencies, Others Cloud Investor Confidence in Nigeria's Oil Industry

Stresses need for consistent policy execution, confidence-building

Peter Uzoho

Different systemic issues, including inconsistent policy implementation, weak regulatory capacity, and entrenched bureaucratic inefficiencies, have continued to cloud optimism and investor confidence initially sparked by two major reforms in Nigeria's oil industry, a survey has revealed.

The reforms – namely the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021, and the Presidential Executive Orders – introduced by President Bola Tinubu, garnered over 75 per cent positive rating among stakeholders, according to the 2025 Investor Perception Survey, conducted by Arbiterz Conferences, in collaboration with Good Governance Africa (GGA).

The survey provided a unified and urgent message to the Nigerian government and its oil and gas regulators, stressing the need for consistent execution and confidence-building.

Titled, "Investor Perceptions of Nigeria's Regulatory and Policy Reforms in the Oil and Gas Sector," the survey captured a nuanced industry outlook: cautious optimism driven by recent reforms, such as PIA and Executive Orders, tempered by continued concern over implementation delays, regulatory inefficiencies, and persistent structural challenges.

As part of the build-up to the License to Energy series of Arbiterz Conferences, scheduled for September 2025, with the theme, "Pitching Nigerian Gas to the World: How to Structure for Success and Unlock Investment in High-Value Gas Projects," key stakeholders in Nigeria's energy sector gathered in Lagos for the public presentation of the new investor sentiment survey.

Designed as a masterclass, the conveners said the event will provide a focused platform for Nigerian asset and project owners to understand what global investors looked for, and explore how best to structure, position, and present their gas projects to attract the capital needed to unlock their full potential.

Speaking during the public presentation of the report, Founder of Arbiterz Conferences, Dr. Abimbola Agboluaje, stated that respondents' perceptions were shaped by their historical experiences with past reform efforts in the sector as they were by the current design and implementation progress of the Petroleum Industry Act and the Presidential Executive Orders.

Agboluaje stated, "In future editions of the survey, respondents' perceptions will increasingly be influenced by the tangible outcomes of the Petroleum Industry Act and the Presidential Executive Orders – specifically, how effectively these reforms are being implemented and the extent to which they are driving real investment into the sector."

In Confrontation With Nigerian Senator over FG's Policies, IMF Regrets Comments to Nigeria

Jimoh Ibrahim rattles fund over untruthful comments void of data evidence

Says Tinubu's achievements should be seen as success for Africa, supported worldwide

By our Correspondents

The Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Kristalina Georgieva yesterday in Washington DC allegedly regretted comments she made recently on the need for the federal government to consider the poor in its economic policies.

Georgieva's purported regret came against the backdrop of comments by Senator Jimoh Ibrahim, who criticised the IMF over its "negative comments that lack supporting data" about Nigeria's economy.

IMF had also questioned the federal government's reforms and its impact on poor Nigerians during an inter parliamentary meetings.

However, Ibrahim, who represented the Senate at the World Bank Parliament in Washington, D.C., specifically challenged the World Bank institution over the negative comment on the Nigerian economy.

The senator further pressed Georgieva, demanding to know what President Tinubu had done wrong with ongoing reforms so far implemented since the president took over the helm of affairs in 2023.

He stressed that such misleading statements had the potential to harm the economy, and create instability in domestic management.

Furthermore, Ibrahim argued that rather than condemnation, the international community needed to acknowledge Tinubu's noble economic initiatives, especially tariff regulation, improved revenue ratio to GDP ratio, cash flow management relative to GDP, and debt repayment among others.

The senator said, "Madam IMF, in recent weeks, the IMF has criticised the Nigerian reform programmes with negative comments that lack supporting data.

"Do you believe this is fair? Suppose we are to look inward to build a strong economy, as you suggested in your paper.

"Is it appropriate for the IMF to make untruthful comments about the domestic economy?

"Is the IMF the entity managing the economy?" Ibrahim also said Tinubu's achievements should be considered a success for Africa, warranting worldwide support.

However, addressing the senator's concerns, the IMF boss said, "We shall be mindful of our comments on Nigeria from now on. We are your IMF; we are sorry again."

Ibrahim, thereafter, thanked the IMF MD for her straightforward comments and accepted her apology on behalf of the country.

The Fund recently urged the federal government to ensure that its efforts to stabilise economy and boost growth are supported by measures that protect the country's poorest citizens.

To ease the suffering of the poorest citizens, the IMF asked the federal government to expedite the completion of its cash transfer programme to support the vulnerable households.

According to the Director of the IMF's Communications Department, Julie Kozack, the cash transfer is a crucial priority in the face of ongoing economic reforms.

"We do recognise the extremely difficult situation that many Nigerians face. For that reason, I just want to emphasise that completing the rollout of cash transfers to vulnerable households is an important priority for Nigeria, as is improving revenue mobilisation domestically," Kozack said.

She confirmed that the IMF's First Deputy Managing Director, Gita Gopinath, had visited Nigeria earlier in March and met with key officials, including the Minister of Finance, Wale Edun, and the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Yemi Cardoso.

Army Dismantles 16 Illegal Oil Refining Sites, Arrests 23 Suspects in N'Delta

Blessing Ibunge in Port Harcourt

In their determination to sustain the operational successes recorded against oil theft in the Niger Delta Region, troops of 6 Division, Nigerian Army, have dismantled 16 illegal refining sites across the region.

The troops who made the achievements between April 14 to 20, this year, also arrested 23 suspected oil thieves and associated criminals, as well as recovered arms and ammunition.

In their operation with other sister agencies, the soldiers further recovered over 62,000 and 5,000 litres of stolen crude and illegally refined Automotive Gasoline Oil (AGO) from the suspects and their mounted illegal bunkering sites in Niger Delta.

In a statement made available to journalists in Port Harcourt, the Acting Deputy Director, 6 Division Army Public Relations, Lieutenant Colonel Danjuma Jonah said that clearance operations conducted along the Imo River led to the "dismantling of 6 artisanal refineries, 30 drum pots, 24 drum receivers, 1,100 sacks filled with over 22,000 litres of stolen products around Obuzor in Ukwa West LGA of Abia State and Okoloma in Oyigbo LGA of Rivers State".

He disclosed that in Okrika Creek, following human intelligence, troops recovered a wooden boat loaded with over 2,500 litres of stolen crude, suspected to have been siphoned from Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Jetty in Okrika.

"In Kula general area, in Akuku-Toru LGA, troops positively identified and arrested three buyers and three sellers of stolen products. The arrest of these criminal merchants, further led to the interception of three tug boats and one fibre boat loaded with over 1,500 litres of illegally refined AGO in jerricans.

"At Obohia road to Obrikom waterside, in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA (ONELGA), one wooden boat loaded with several sacks of stolen products was intercepted. Seizures were also made at Okwuizi also in ONELGA as well as Okarki Forest in Ahoada West LGA".

Danjuma revealed that in Bayelsa State, around Adibawa Oando Wellhead in Yenagoa LGA, troops surged operations against the criminals, which led to the deactivation of four illegal refining sites, confiscation of three large concrete reinforced dug out pits filled with over 35,000 litres of stolen crude from the Wellhead.

He said, additionally, over 2,500 litres of illegally refined AGO, with Wellhead valve and pumping machines were also recovered at the site.

Nigerian Journalist Sets New Guinness World Record with 72-hour Interview

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

Nigerian journalist, Livinus Victor has broken the Guinness World Record for the longest interviewing marathon, clocking an astonishing 72 hours and 30 minutes of non-stop conversations in Abuja.

The previous record, held by Clara Kronborg, stood at 55 hours and 24 seconds.

The marathon interview session, held at the Harrow Park Golf Club, Abuja, began at exactly 12:20 p.m. on Thursday, April 17, 2025, and ended triumphantly at 3:44 p.m. on Sunday, April 20, 2025.

The event with the theme, "Nigeria Our Strength," was more than just an attempt to break a record. It was a bold statement on the importance of press freedom in strengthening democracy.

Months of preparation preceded the marathon. Livinus undertook mental and physical training, combining meditation, resilience-building routines, and a strict nutritional plan to condition his body and mind for the challenge.

Throughout the event, a medical team monitored his vitals, ensuring he remained hydrated and alert with nutrient-rich meals and strategic rest breaks.

With each question and answer, Livinus sought to celebrate storytelling, amplify unheard voices, and underscore the resilience of journalists working under immense pressure.

He said: "This isn't just about endurance," Livinus remarked during a press briefing. "It's about showing the world how vital a free press is to democracy. Journalists face censorship and threats, yet we keep going. This marathon is for them."

Livinus interviewed over 100 individuals throughout the record-breaking session, including politicians, captains of industry, entertainers, musicians, fellow journalists, and everyday Nigerians.

Jonathan on Sunhak Prize: I Wish I Can Secure Global Peace, End Human Suffering

Nigeria missed golden opportunity by failing to re-elect Jonathan, says ex-Aso Rock Chaplain

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

Former President Goodluck Jonathan has said he would have been happier if he could end human suffering and bring about peace and stability in Nigeria and across the globe.

Jonathan spoke at a reception organised for him in Abuja by his friends and associates to mark the conferment of the Sunhak Peace Prize on him by the Sunhak Peace Prize Foundation in South Korea.

The Sunhak Peace Prize was founded by Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, wife of the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon. It is aimed at ending world-wide suffering, conflict, poverty and threats to the environment by promoting a comprehensive, future-oriented vision of peace.

Jonathan, who was honoured with his wife, Patience, said he was often overwhelmed with grief and concern when he came across citizens, who were suffering and labouring to survive.

He told the audience of friends and well-wishers, "I wish I could end the suffering of people that I come across daily. I do not really want to see human beings suffering and I would be happy to give a helping hand to them if I had the means and be in a position to do so.

"Indeed, I always feel bad seeing people suffering. But let me assure you all seated here today that my commitment to peace remains unchanged till I die. I will continue to seek peace and pursue it for as long as I am alive."

Jonathan spoke to the thunderous applause of the crowd of supporters and friends.

He thanked the man behind the reception party, Robert Azibaola, a fellow of the Nigerian Society of Engineers, for bringing together the people who honoured him for winning the peace prize in Seoul.

The former president was surrounded by many former aides, friends, former governors and associates, as well as religious, traditional and political leaders, among them, the Labour Party presidential candidate in the 2023 general election, Peter Obi, who chaired the event.

Obi said the reception could not have come at a better time than on Easter Sunday, a time of peace and reconciliation with Christ, the leader of the Christian faith.

Referring to Jonathan, Obi said, "You made Nigeria to be peaceful in your time as the president of Nigeria. May God grant you more peace and strength."

Former Chaplain of the Aso Villa, Professor Obioma Unwuzurumba, who also spoke at the ceremony, described Jonathan as a man Nigerians will miss for a long time, given the things he did to make the country better while in office.

Unwuzurumba lamented that Nigerians missed a golden opportunity given to them by God to excel in peace and prosperity by failing to re-elect Jonathan as president in 2019, thereby exposing themselves to avoidable challenges.

He stated, "The man we are celebrating today is a man of good heart and who is always unwilling to hurt a fly. My only regret today is that God gave Nigeria a gift and they rejected that gift.

"President Jonathan, you are a peacemaker who should be highly celebrated. The country has refused to acknowledge God but delights in playing dirty politics.

"Nigeria lost a man of peace by not electing Jonathan president in 2015. May God give us a leader that can save the country."

Former information minister, Labaran Maku, said it was befitting and pleasing for a peace foundation in faraway South Korea to be the one to recognise and award Jonathan with a peace prize, confirming the biblical saying that a prophet is not without honour except in his hometown.

Maku said, "It is not easy to find in our clime a leader who stands out as a beacon of peace by losing an election without putting up a deadly fight back. Jonathan is, indeed, a patriot, who should be cherished by all Nigerians.



Goodluck Jonathan

"We should pray for him to be in good health and to continue to champion global peace and prosperity."

POPE FRANCIS DIES AT 88: TINUBU, TRUMP, PUTIN, MACRON, KING CHARLES PAY TRIBUTES

Esquilino neighbourhood, breaking with longstanding Vatican tradition.

He would pray at the basilica before and after trips overseas, and last visited on 12 April, the Guardian UK reported.

The text of his will specified that Francis wanted to be buried "in the ground, without particular decoration" but with the inscription of his papal name in Latin: Franciscus.

Popes are usually buried with much fanfare in the grottoes beneath St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, but Francis – loved by many Catholics for his humility – simplified rites for papal funerals last year.

In the text of his will that was published by the Vatican, the late pope said, "The cost of preparing the burial will be covered by a sum provided by a benefactor, which I have arranged to be transferred to the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major.

"I have given the necessary instructions regarding this to Cardinal Rolandas Makrickas, Extraordinary Commissioner of the Liberian Basilica."

His body was transferred into a coffin in the chapel of Casa Santa Marta on Monday night. The coffin will be taken to St Peter's basilica on Wednesday morning to allow the public to pay their respects. No date has been fixed for the pope's funeral.

Francis, who was the Bishop of Rome, became pope in 2013 after his predecessor, Benedict XVI resigned, and had experienced a string of health worries in recent years, spending 38 days in hospital in February and March this year. However, he recovered enough to leave the hospital recently.

Doctors had prescribed two months of rest when the pope left hospital last month, but he appeared on a number of occasions and met Britain's King Charles in April and had a brief meeting on Sunday with visiting US Vice President, JD Vance.

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the Argentine cleric's election as pope on March 13, 2013, surprised many Church watchers who had seen him as an outsider.

He sought to project simplicity into the grand role and never took possession of the ornate papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace used by his predecessors, saying he preferred to live in a community setting for his "psychological health," a Reuters report stated.

He initiated changes within the Vatican, emphasising transparency, accountability and financial reform, and appointed more women to senior posts in its hierarchy.

However, Francis was also viewed as a 'haphazard' leader, often blindsiding Vatican officials with his off-the-cuff comments.

He struggled to get a grip on the Church's crisis over sexual abuse by clerics and he inherited a Church torn by infighting in the Vatican bureaucracy, and was elected with a clear mandate to restore order.

But as his papacy progressed, he faced criticisms from conservatives, who accused him of trashing cherished traditions. He also drew the ire of progressives, who felt he should have done much more to reshape the 2,000-year-old Church.

While he battled with internal dissent, Francis became a global superstar, drawing huge crowds on his many foreign travels as he tirelessly promoted interfaith dialogue and peace, taking the side of the marginalised, such as migrants.

Francis appointed nearly 80 per cent of the cardinal electors who will choose the next pope, increasing the possibility that his successor will continue his progressive policies, despite the strong pushback from traditionalists.

A conclave to elect a new pope normally takes place between 15 and 20 days after the death of a pontiff. Some 135 cardinals are eligible to take part in the highly secretive ballot which can stretch out over days. At present, there is no clear frontrunner to succeed Francis.

Born in 1936, Francis was the first pope from South America. His papacy was marked by his championing of those escaping war and hunger, as well as those in poverty, earning him the moniker the "People's Pope".

In 2016, he washed the feet of refugees from different religions at an asylum centre outside Rome in a "gesture of humility and service". He also made his views known on a wide range of issues, from climate change to wealth inequality and the role of women in the Catholic Church.

His controversial acceptance of the LGBTQ community was unprecedented – beginning with an unexpected remark to reporters on a flight back from Brazil about gay clergy.

"If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge them?" he said at the time.

In April 2024, he appeared to reiterate the Vatican's staunch opposition to gender reassignment, surrogacy, abortion and euthanasia, by signing the text "Dignitas Infinita" (Infinite Dignity).

As a young man in his native Argentina, Francis had part of one lung removed. In 2022, he hinted he might step down if his health deteriorated after he was pictured using a wheelchair due to mobility issues caused by a flare-up of sciatica – a nerve condition that causes leg pain.

Meanwhile, world leaders continued to pay tribute to the pope yesterday, praising his humility as well as his efforts to reform the worldwide church and offered condolences to Catholic faithful globally.

Tinubu: He Was Humble Servant of God

President Bola Tinubu, yesterday, joined the Catholic faithful and Christians worldwide to mourn the passing of His Holiness, Pope Francis, praying to God to grant His beloved servant eternal rest.

He described the Pope as a humble servant of God, epitome of peace, tireless champion of the poor, and guiding light for millions.

In a statement he personally signed, the Pope's passing, coming just after the celebration of Christ's resurrection, is a sacred return to his maker at a time of renewed hope for Christians.

The president further stated that in mourning the late Pontiff, humanity should also celebrate his legacy by honouring him "not with words alone but with action: by lifting those who are down, healing our communities, and defending the dignity of every person."

"Today, with a heavy heart, I join the Catholic faithful and Christians worldwide in mourning the passing of Pope Francis, a humble servant of God, tireless champion of the poor, and guiding light for millions. His passing, coming just after the celebration of Christ's Resurrection, is a sacred return to his Maker at a time of renewed hope for Christians.

"His Holiness served the Church and the Master of the Church until the end. In 2013, he stepped onto the global stage with a message of mercy, urging us to see the face of Christ in the marginalised, the refugees, the migrants, and the forgotten.

"He challenged the powerful to act with justice, called nations to welcome the stranger, and reminded us that our common home—this Earth—is a gift we must protect for future generations.

"He was an instrument of peace who deeply embodied the message of Christ: love for God and love for humanity. In a time of division, he built bridges between faiths and the rich and the poor," Tinubu wrote.

According to the Nigerian leader, Pope Francis was a steadfast advocate for the developing world, where he consistently spoke against economic injustice and ceaselessly prayed for peace and stability in troubled regions.

"His encyclicals were not only doctrinal and seminal but also timely and relevant. Through his pastoral letters, the Pope offered spiritual clarity and hope in an increasingly complex world. He charted a path of renewal for all humanity through his words and deeds.

"In my 2025 Easter Message, I joined the Christian faithful in thanksgiving for the convalescing Pontiff. I was happy to watch his appearance to deliver the traditional Easter Sunday blessing in St. Peter's Basilica.

"Alas, the Lord called him home a day after, making the world lose its most trenchant voice for justice and action against climate change. May the good Lord, whom he served with all his might, receive him into His eternal bosom," the president added.

As the world mourns the late Pontiff, on behalf of the government and the people of Nigeria, Tinubu extended condolences to the Catholic Church, the global Catholic community, and the Christian faithful. "May God Almighty grant His beloved servant eternal rest," he stressed.

Trump: US Flags Will Fly at Half-mast

President Donald Trump paid tribute to Pope Francis in a post on Truth Social as news of the pontiff's death emerged, although the late Catholic head previously condemned the US president's stance on immigration during his first term in office in 2016.

"Rest in Peace, Pope Francis! May God Bless him and all who loved him!" he wrote on his social media platform. Later, Trump confirmed in a separate post that flags would be flown at half-mast in honor.

"I hereby order that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff at the White House and upon all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval stations, and on all naval vessels of the federal government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its Territories and possessions until sunset, on the day of interment," the president wrote in part. He added that his order extended to U.S. embassies worldwide.

Trump made an official visit to the Vatican in May 2017, a year after he attacked Pope Francis for condemning his immigration policies. At the time, Pope Francis declared that "a person who thinks only about building walls [...] and not of building bridges, is not Christian."

Putin: He Promoted Orthodox, Catholic Harmony

Russian President, Vladimir Putin, paid tribute, with the Kremlin sharing his statement.

Putin said: "Pope Francis enjoyed great international authority as a faithful servant of Christian teaching, a wise religious and statesman, and a consistent defender of the high values of humanism and justice.

"Throughout his pontificate, he actively promoted the development of dialogue between the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, as well as constructive interaction between Russia and the Holy See.

"I had the opportunity to communicate with this outstanding person on many occasions, and I will forever preserve the brightest memories of him."

Putin also sent a message to Cardinal Kevin Joseph Farrell offering his condolences.

King Charles: Pope Francis Touched Many Lives

In a statement from Buckingham Palace, the King hailed Pope Francis for touching "the lives of so many". The King and Queen met the pontiff earlier this month, during a visit to Italy.

"My wife and I were most deeply saddened to learn of the death of Pope Francis. Our heavy hearts have been somewhat eased, however, to know that His Holiness was able to share an Easter Greeting with the church and the world he served with such devotion throughout his life and ministry.

"His Holiness will be remembered for his compassion, his concern for the unity of the Church and for his tireless commitment to the common causes of all people of faith, and to those of goodwill who work for the benefit of others," the monarch stated.

Giorgia Meloni: I Enjoyed His Friendship

One of the first to pay tribute was the Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni, who said she was deeply saddened by his death.

She wrote: "I had the privilege of enjoying his friendship, his advice and his teachings, which never failed even in moments of trial and suffering."

Discussing his Via Crucis meditations, she said, "He asked the world, once again, for the courage to change direction, to follow a path that 'does not destroy, but cultivates, repairs, protects'."

She went on: "We will walk in this direction, to seek the path of peace, pursue the common good and build a more just and equitable society. His teaching and his legacy will not be lost.

"We greet the Holy Father with hearts full of sadness, but we know that he is now in the peace of the Lord."

Biden: One of Most Consequential Leaders

Former US leader Joe Biden posted a photo of him previously meeting the pope, calling him "unlike any who came before him."

He said he would be remembered "as one of the most consequential leaders of our time," adding: "and I am better for having known him.

"For decades, he served the most vulnerable across Argentina and his mission of serving the poor never ceased. As Pope, he was a loving pastor and challenging teacher who reached out to different faiths.

"He commanded us to fight for peace and protect our planet from a climate crisis. He advocated for the voiceless and powerless. He made all feel welcome and seen by the Church.

"He promoted equity and an end to poverty and suffering across the globe. And above all, he was a Pope for everyone. He was the People's Pope - a light of faith, hope, and love."

Keir Starmer: He Wanted Fairer World

UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer said he was "deeply saddened" to learn of the pope's death, writing on X: "His tireless efforts to promote a world that is fairer for all will leave a lasting legacy. On behalf of the people of the United Kingdom, I share my sincerest condolences to the whole Catholic Church."

In a longer statement, he said he joined millions around the world grieving Pope Francis's death, going on to praise his leadership in "complex and challenging" times, saying it was "courageous, yet always came from

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DESPITE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES, 10 BANKS GRANTED N65.6 TRILLION LOANS TO CUSTOMERS

financial reports showed that oil and gas, general commerce, lending to government and manufacturing sectors dominated their exposures.

The audited results for the year ended December 31, showed that ETI, followed by Access Holdings granted the highest loans to customers amid expanding branch frontier to key African countries.

According to the results, ETI's loans to customers stand at N15.35 trillion, up by 53 per cent from N10.03 trillion in 2023, while Access Holdings declared N11.5 trillion as loans to customers in 2024, representing an increase of 42.9 per cent from N8.04 trillion declared in 2023.

Zenith Bank during the period under consideration granted N9.97 trillion loans to customers, a growth of 52 per cent from N6.6 trillion in 2023.

Zenith Bank said the growth in loans to customers was partly due to the revaluation of foreign currency denominated loans as well as growth in local currency loans.

First Holdco generated N8.77 trillion loans to customers in 2024, up by 37.8 per cent from N6.36 trillion in 2023.

Meanwhile, UBA reported N6.95 trillion loans to customers in 2024, about 33 per cent growth from N5.2 trillion in 2023, which meant the lender in the period granted about N1.73 trillion more loans to customers.

On its part, GTCO granted N2.79 trillion loans to customers, representing an increase of 12.3 per cent from N2.48 trillion in 2023.

GTCO, in a presentation to investors and analysts, said it continued to maintain a well-distributed loan book with specific focus on asset quality across select business segments.

The bank explained, "The contribution of the oil and gas sector to the gross loans portfolio at the bank level improved to 48 per cent in FY-2024, from 50 per cent in FY-2023 due to derecognition of a key financial asset.

"Upstream and midstream sector contribution dropped to 25.57 per cent from 31.24 per cent, and 14.14 per cent to 8.91 per cent, respectively, while downstream, and natural gas increased to 4.57 per cent and 8.88 per cent from 3.29 per cent and 2.54 per cent, respectively, between FY-2023 and FY-2024.

"Contributions of the manufacturing sector increased to 20.99 per cent, agriculture increased to 8.37per cent, and information, telecoms, and transport also increased to 6.94 per cent."

While Fidelity Bank Plc granted N4.38 trillion as loans to customers, FCMB Group's loans to customers stood at N2.36 trillion in 2024. Also, Wema Bank Plc granted N1.2 trillion loans to customers in 2024 while Stanbic IBTC Holding's loans stood at N2.35trillion during the period under review.

S&P Global Ratings, in a report titled, "Nigerian Banking Outlook 2025: Resilient Performance Amid Macroeconomic Pressures," stated that the naira depreciation inflated the amount of loans in 2023 and 2024, with nominal loan growth of 50 per cent-60 per cent but real loan growth had been muted.

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EASTER SERVICE AT ST. LIMA OF ROSE CATHOLIC CHURCH OZUH...

Catholic Bishop of Orly, His Grace, Most Rev Dr. Augustine Ukwuoma (left), presents a gift that symbolises leadership to Governor Hope Uzodimma of Imo State and his wife, Chioma, during the Easter Service at St. Lima of Rose Catholic Church Ozuh, Omuma on Sunday.

Ewor: Tinubu Funding Wike to Destroy Wike, Says FCT Minister No Longer Party Member

Group hopeful of Gov. Fubara's recall, restoration of progress in Rivers State

Chuks Okocha in Abuja and **Blessing Ibunge** in Port Harcourt

Acting Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Rivers State, Robinson Ewor, has accused President Bola Tinubu of funding the Minister of Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, to wreck the party from within.

Ewor, speaking during an interview with ARISE NEWS, yesterday, declared that Wike was no longer a true member of the PDP, asserting that the former Rivers governor's loyalty now lies firmly with the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

"Nyesom Wike, FCT minister, is no longer a member of the PDP. Nyesom Wike today exists in PDP because he is on a mission to destroy the PDP, to destroy the opposition in the country, not just Rivers state," Ewor said.

He alleged that Wike's insistence on keeping Sam Anyanwu as PDP's National Secretary, despite internal opposition, was part of a broader plan to destabilise the opposition party ahead of the 2027 general election.

"That is why today he is insisting that Sam Anyanwu remains national secretary. What is his business? You are serving an APC government. You have pledged your loyalty to the APC.

"You have said it openly and publicly that you will support the APC in the 2027 general election. What business does Wike still have in the APC?

"In good conscience, let's leave the law and every other thing. In good conscience, can Nigerians still see Wike as a member of the PDP? The answer is no," Ewor said.

Ewor, however, accused President Tinubu of bankrolling Wike's activities, claiming the FCT minister was being used as a political tool to weaken the PDP from within.

"To us in Rivers, Wike is no longer a member of the PDP. He is only here to destroy the PDP, to destroy the opposition. And the president is helping him. That is the irony of it. The president is funding Wike," he alleged.

Meanwhile, supporters of suspended Governor Siminalayi Fubara, has said they remained hopeful that Rivers State would soon experience restoration, peace, and progress.

The supporters, who came under the aegis of Simplified Movement, expressed hope that Fubara would soon be recalled and reinstated.

They expressed the belief that President Bola Tinubu as a democrat was acting in the best interest of the state.

The group made the expression during an Easter praise session which they organised simultaneously across the 23 local government areas of the state.

The sessions, marked by singing, dancing, and prayers, served as both spiritual celebration and moment of reflection and encouragement for members of the movement.

Speaking during the gathering in Ahoada, a leader of the Simplified Movement, Stephen Ihua-Maduenyi, said, "Our Lord, our Father, Jesus Christ, is resurrected. We are here to celebrate this at Easter.

"We are here to call on Him to celebrate us, just as He celebrated mankind that He can make it possible for our Governor to come back.

"We believe He can do it for us. Only He can do it for us. It is not by our power. It is His power. That is why we are gathered here."

Also, speaking, the suspended Commissioner for Education, Dr Ovy Chukwuma, stated that, "They tried burying us in Rivers State, but we are here to tell the world that we are alive. That Rivers State is alive. That Rivers State is with him, Governor Siminalayi Fubara."

Both speakers emphasised their belief in Tinubu's wisdom, noting that his ongoing actions would ultimately serve the state's interest and lead to the governor's reinstatement.

Court Upholds UK Judgment in $3.5m Debt Case Against Businessman Makanjuola, Others

Wale Igbintade

Justice Serifat Sonaike of the Lagos State High Court, sitting at Tafawa Balewa Square, has granted an application to register and enforce a UK judgment in Nigeria.

The judgment, delivered by Judge Pelling KC of the High Court of Justice, Business and Property Courts of England and Wales, awarded $3,522,919.08 in damages against businessman Mr. Adeniyi Makanjuola and his wife, Mrs. Oludarafunmi Clarissa Makanjuola.

It also included £144,428.66 in additional damages, £53,986.45 in legal costs, and post-judgment interest at 8% per annum.

The April 22, 2024 ruling in Claim No. LM-2023-000109 arose from a suit filed by 9089900 Canada Inc. against Sovereign Finance Holdings Limited, Mr. Adeniyi Makanjuola, and Mrs. Oludarafunmi Makanjuola.

Through their counsel, Stanley Imhanruor and Clement Onwuenwunor SAN, the Canadian firm filed an ex parte application on July 24, 2024, seeking to register the UK judgment in Nigeria under Section 3(1) of the Reciprocal Enforcement of Judgments Ordinance, Cap. 175, Laws of the Federation and Lagos (1958), and Rule 1(1) of the relevant court rules.

Supporting the application was a 30-paragraph affidavit of urgency deposed to by Andre Khury, as well as a written address adopted by Onwuenwunor during the hearing.

He argued that all legal requirements for recognising the foreign judgment had been satisfied.

Further documents included a four-paragraph affidavit dated August 5, 2024, attaching a "Worldwide Freezing Order" issued by the UK court on July 26, and an August 6 affidavit containing certified copies of the UK judgment and related proceedings.

In her ruling on August 9, 2024, Justice Sonaike adopted the sole issue raised in the petitioner's written address - whether the petitioner was entitled to have the UK judgment registered in Nigeria.

Relying on the Reciprocal Enforcement of Judgments Ordinance, Cap. 175 (1958), and the Foreign Judgments (Reciprocal Enforcement) Act, Cap. F35, LFN 2004, the court found that the judgment met all statutory requirements.

Justice Sonaike held that the UK court had jurisdiction, the respondents had voluntarily submitted to it, and there was no evidence of fraud or procedural irregularities.

She also noted that the time for appeal in the UK had lapsed, with no pending appeal.

Accordingly, she ordered the registration of the UK judgment in favour of 9089900 Canada Inc. against Sovereign Finance Holdings Limited and the Makanjuolas.

In a 19-paragraph affidavit in support of the judgment summons, deposed to by Andre Khury, CEO of the judgment creditor, he affirmed that the April 22 UK judgment awarded the sums jointly and severally against the respondents.

Despite this, he said, the respondents had failed or refused to satisfy the judgment.

Khury noted that demand letters were issued on August 14, 2024, yet the judgment debt remains unpaid.

Natural Word Restoration Canvasses Global Restructuring Under 'Divine Executive Orders'

Funmi Ogundare

The promoter, Natural Word Restoration, Morenike Tejuade Babington-Ashaye, has called for dramatic changes to global governance, societal structure, territorial ownership, and human conduct.

Babington-Ashaye in a statement titled, 'God's Executive Orders' which she ascribed to divine instruction, stressed land restitution, geopolitical realignment, abolition of monarchies and political parties.

She expressed God's displeasure with current global systems marked by inequality, war, greed, and injustice.

According to her, "the world has reached a moral crisis point where power and wealth are concentrated in the hands of a select few, monarchs and political elites have failed humanity, and global systems are rife with inequality, war, and environmental abuse.

"God has reportedly declared a universal restructuring project, to take place between 2024 and 2030, with Nigeria selected as the pilot nation."

Babington-Ashaye stressed global restructuring which spans from 2024 to 2030, with three phases; foundation (2024), experimental (2025–2027), and practice (2027–2030). "God's promise is made clear; nations and individuals who resist or mock the new world restoration will face divine wrath," she stated

In the statement, she added that nations are instructed to return to their original geographical boundaries as they existed before foreign interference and colonisation, adding that those whose ancestors were enslaved are granted dual blessings; full rights in both the land of their ancestors and where they currently reside.

Zulum Approves N850m for Rehabilitation, Upgrade of Boreholes in Flood Affected Areas

Michael Olugbode in Maiduguri

Borno State Governor, Professor Babagana Zulum, has approved the release of N850 million for the procurement of pumps, accessories and other components necessary for the rehabilitation and upgrade of boreholes across Maiduguri and surrounding communities.

This is part of a decisive move to address water scarcity caused by the devastating flood of 10th September 2024 and to restore access to potable water in most affected areas.

The General Manager of Borno State Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWASA), Dr. Mohammed Aliyu, disclosed this to journalists in Maiduguri.

He said: "His Excellency, Governor Babagana Umara Zulum, has approved the sum of N850 million for the procurement of pumps, accessories, and other spare parts required for the rehabilitation and upgrading of boreholes in Maiduguri and its environs. Suppliers have already commenced delivery of the required materials."

The GM revealed that RUWASA has established a Rapid Response Team tasked with inspecting and repairing water facilities in flood-affected areas.

He said the team will be deployed across Maiduguri, Jere, Dikwa, Mafa, Gamboru Ngala, and other impacted local government areas to identify and address faulty boreholes.

"We have constituted a Rapid Response Team that will commence operations immediately. They will assess all affected areas and carry out necessary repairs.

"The team is expected to complete the assessment within two weeks and will work in close collaboration with professionals from the State Ministry of Water Resources and other relevant experts," Aliyu added.

Furthermore, Governor Zulum has approved the construction of additional waterworks in several communities across the state to further strengthen access to potable water.

Aliyu announced that new facilities will be established in Zarmari, Shaukari, Gubio, Gajiganna, Gajiram, Kaleri, and Mafa towns.

"This initiative builds upon previous achievements by the Zulum administration which has already successfully completed waterworks projects in Pulka, Chibok, Azare in Hawul Local Government, Moramti-Konduga Local Government, and Ngarannam in Maiduguri Metropolis," he said.

ITSEKIRI ETHNIC NATIONALITY

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ITSEKIRI ETHNIC NATIONALITY REJECTS THE PURPORTED PROPOSED FRESH POLLING UNITS AND WARDS/RAS DELINEATION ARISING FROM THE FIELD WORK DONE BY INEC

1, The Itsekiri ethnic nationality is the single largest ethnic nationality in the Warri Federal Constituency and therefore a major stakeholder in the Federal Constituency.

2. On 4th April, 2025, the Itsekiri Ethnic Nationality alongside the !jaw and the Urhobo of Warri Federal Constituency, were at Asaba on the invitation of the Independent National Electoral Commission (!NEC) for a briefing on the outcome of the field work on the Supreme Court ordered delineation of wards and polling units in Warri Federal Constituency.

3. At the meeting, INEC did a brief slide presentation of captured points and showed sketches of aerial views, with emphasis on predominantly Ijaw communities, with less attention on the Itsekiri communities in Warri North and Warri South-West Local Government Areas (LGAs) during the field exercise. The presentation, even strangely, went as far as showing Ijaw communities in Ondo state, crossing state boundaries.

4. In Warri South Local Government Area, it was only the un-inhabited riverine parts that were shown, with little or no emphasis on the hugely populated Warri urban area, dominated by the Itsekiri.

5. The presentation did not show population (demographic ratio of ethnic nationalities) and registered voters, and which ethnic nationality occupies where, but only attempted to award territorial ownership to the Ijaw and Urhobo in the three Warri Local Government Areas, contrary to settled court judgments and contrary to the duties of INEC in electoral administration, which is not a court of law that can determine ownership of territories/land.

6. **What is the delineation with regards to polling units and wards in election management?**

7. Delineation is the process of **defining or redrawing** the boundaries of electoral areas such as **polling units, wards, constituencies,** and electoral districts. It is a key administrative and logistical step that helps ensure **fair, efficient** and **accessible** elections.

8. Delineation involves:
i. **Creating or adjusting boundaries of wards (also called registration areas) comprising of polling units with define names, location, addresses and description having a maximum 750 registered voters.**

ii. **Establishing new polling units** or relocating existing ones to make it easier for. voters to access polling stations.

iii. **Ensuring that each polling unit** serves a manageable number of voters-often no more than a set threshold (eg. 750 voters)-to reduce overcrowding and improve voting experience.

iv. Maintaining a **balanced representation** of voters across wards and polling units, so that each vote carries roughly equal weight.

9. The above is the worldwide standard for electoral/ward delineation, which INEC also adopted for this exercise and presented to stakeholders on the 21st March, 2024, at Asaba. (See INEC criteria/guidelines for fresh delineation of wards/units in Warri federal constituency attached)

10. When INEC embarked on the field work, our expectation was that it will follow its criteria/guideline for the Supreme Court ordered fresh delineation in the Warri Federal Constituency, but to our utmost shock and dismay, INEC abandoned the guidelines.

11. This is not new to us, having regard to the antecedent of INEC in the Warri Federal Constituency.

12. We recall with trauma how INEC in 1997 illegally created 12 wards in Warri South Local Government Area, which was a clear issue of gerrymandering in favor of the Urhobo in the Warri Federal Constituency. The said action which was nullified by the Federal High Court in Suit No. FHC/B/109/97: Dr. Joseph Otumara & ors vs. Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) & Ors on the 13th August, 2003. INEC is yet to comply to the judgment of the Court.

INEC NON-COMPLIANCE WITH EXTANT CRITERIA/GUIDELINES IN THE DELINEATION EXERCISE:

WARRI SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA:

There are only two ethnic nationalities that are indigenous to Warri South LGA Itsekiri and Urhobo. The Ijaw are not in Warri South LGA, neither do they own an inch of land in Warri South LGA, and have been barred from contesting the ownership of any part of Warri with the Itsekiri in **suit no. W/ 148/56 (SC/450/1965) Chief Izoukumo Olioki and ors and Itsekiri Communal Land Trustees & Anor.** But INEC in the recent field work, and in pursuant of an Ijaw expansionist agenda, proposed for Ijaw three wards in Warri South LGA.

WARRI NORTH LGA:

In Warri North LGA, **18** wards are being proposed, with the Ijaw having **10** wards and the Itsek iri 8, as against the old structure were the Itsekiri had **6** and !jaw **4.**

WARRI SOUTH WEST LGA:

In Warri South West LGA, **19** wards are being proposed, with the !jaws having **14** wards and the Itsekiris **5,** as against the old structure were the Itsekiri had **6** and Ijaw **4.**

From the foregoing, we condemn and reject the field work and the entire report contained in the INEC proposals on the delineation of wards in Warri South, Warri North and in Warri South West LGA in Warri Federal Constituency.

WAY FORWARD:

First and foremost, when the Itsekiri noticed the un-holy alliance between the Ijaw/Urhobo and some INEC officials, we wrote several petitions to the Chairman of the commission and sought an audience with him. All were turned down, but meanwhile, the Ijaw and Urhobo had easy and un-impeded access to him.

Again, when it came to our knowledge that Professor Rhoda H. Gumus, an Ijaw from Bayelsa state was the Hon. National Commissioner Representing the Hon. Chairman, INEC & Supervising Delta, Edo & Cross River States, was the one in charge of this exercise, we protested and went to court on the ground that she cannot be a judge in her own cause.

Democracy is not just about purpled finger. It is more than mere voting. The electoral process which includes voters' registration, creation of electoral wards are the foundation upon which democracy stands.

INEC from its dealing with Itsekiri Ethnic Nationality in Warri Federal Constituency starting in 2003, has shown that it is neither guided by the law that created it, its own guidelines nor honor, or incline to do a fair exercise. It is without a moral sense. Justice for it is a matter of calculation.

From our analysis, it is clear that INEC has become an institution hobbled by institutional vulnerabilities and this has led to the consequent erosion of public confidence. There is still a little window for it to redeem its image, and this has to be done quickly. It has to retrace its steps and go back to its criteria/guideline which it has set for itself since 24th day of March, 2004. This is to ensure fairness, effectiveness, and inclusivity in the electoral management process.

OUR DEMAND:

As a way forward, we have carried out detailed study of the guidelines, the INEC registered voters (which is a public document), and all relevant1 universal indices, and come to this conclusion, and we submit our demand based on that, as contained in the attached schedules, namely;

1. **Annexure 1** is our proposal for delineation of electoral units/ward in Warri South LGA.

2. **Annexure 2** is our proposal for delineation of electoral units/ward in Warri North LGA

3. **Annexure 3** is our proposal for delineation of electoral units/ward in Warri South West LGA.

Sjgned for and on behalf of Itsekiri Ethnic Nationality

Chief Brown Mene
Ogwaolusan of Warri Kingdom

Barr. Austin Oboroegbeyi

Barr. Andrew O. Igban

Hon. T'oju Ighonmeieyetan

Sir A. S. Mene

Chief Edward O. Ekpoko

SUMMARIZED SUBMISSION TO INEC BY THE ITSEKIRI ETHNIC NATIONALITY

Publication Sponsored By The Itsekiri Renaissance Group. (IRG)

NEWS



INDUCTION CEREMONY...
L-R: Vice Chairman Membership Committee Nigerian-British Chamber of Commerce (NBCC),Ini Abimbola; Deputy President/Chairman Membership Committee, Akin Osuntoki; Chairman Advocacy Committee, Anne Rinu, and, Chairman Programmes Committee, Tajudeen Ahmed, at NBCC's Members' Evening/Induction held in Lagos…recently

Ganduje: Tinubu's Reforms Painful, Necessary to Reposition Nation's Economy

Chides Galadima, says he's a failed, rejected politician

Chuks Okocha and **Adedayo Akinwale** in Abuja

The National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje, has reiterated the fact that the economic reforms of President Bola Tinubu's administration might be painful, but were necessary steps to reposition Nigeria's economy for sustainable growth.

Ganduje, however, chided a chieftain of New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), Alhaji Buba Galadima, describing him as a failed politician who was also rejected by his people.

Ganduje, who disclosed this in Paris, France, while inaugurating the new executive committee of the APC,France Chapter, emphasised the importance of unity among party members in the diaspora, and stressed their role in supporting the administration's economic transformation efforts.

According to a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Edwin Olofu, Ganduje commended efforts of the diaspora in expanding the party's base abroad through active recruitment of members and mobilisation.

"While the reforms under President Tinubu May be seen as painful, they are necessary steps to reposition Nigeria's economy for sustainable growth," he noted.

He further assured the gathering that the party was committed to working with the National Assembly to realise the long-sought goal of diaspora voting, enabling full political inclusion for Nigerians living abroad.

Ganduje expressed optimism about APC's prospects heading into the 2027 elections, pointing to increasing internal stability and the defection of key figures from other political parties.

"There is peace in the APC, unlike in other parties that are battling internal crises. Because of this enabling environment, many are decamping to our party, including senators, members of the House of Representatives, state assemblies, and other notable political figures. Our party respects its constitution and practices internal democracy.

"We appreciate you for holding the banner of our party, expanding its membership, and supporting President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, especially in light of the critical reforms he is undertaking. There is now more funding for capital development, and both governors and local government chairmen can attest to this."

Responding, the newly inaugurated Chairlady of the APC, France Chapter, Hajjiya Amina Suzuki, reiterated the critical role of Nigerians in the diaspora in national development—not just as economic contributors, but also as political stakeholders.

"The Nigerian diaspora contributes billions in remittances and investments, but we are also thought leaders and proud ambassadors of Nigeria's democracy," she said.

She, however, appealed to Ganduje and the APC leadership to champion the cause of diaspora voting.

"Under your visionary leadership, we believe diaspora voting can become a reality. It is not only possible — it is necessary. We respectfully urge you to make this dream come true during the life of this administration. After all, where there is a will, there is always a way," she added.

In another development, Ganduje has described Galadima as a failed, rejected and frustrated politician without any base in Nigeria.

In a statement by Oliver Okpala, his Senior Special Assistant, Ganduje said, "His past political record of mercantilism, political duplicity and incompetence clearly shows he has no space of existence in the current political landscape in the country."

Reacting to Galadima's claim in a recent interview that Ganduje had no electoral value, he said Galadima had been known as a politician with acute character deficit and treachery.

He wondered how Galadima could say that a man who has been two time Governor of a state like Kano and presently, chairman of APC lacked electoral value.

According to him, "His statement clearly portrays him as a mischievous personality, politically. We know Galadima's garrulous and weightless antecedents and we are not surprised by this his baseless claims.

"He was a well known member of the Buhari Organisation but always preferred to take skewed positions, that made all attempts of the organisation to win election futile. Is that the kind of person who would determine who has electoral value?

"Ganduje is well known tested and trusted, result orientated technocrat and politician of high repute, who successful led Kano for two uninterrupted terms.

"He is a man with infallible proof of performance across Kano and beyond. His developmental projects are still littered across Kano State, a testament of his unbroken connection with the people.

Group Petitions NASS, Demands Immediate Suspension, Review of Ibas Appointments Across 23 LGAs

Blessing Ibunge in Port Harcourt

A group under the aegis of League of Concerned Rivers Indigenes (LOCRI), has demanded the immediate suspension and review of all appointments made by the Rivers State Sole Administrator, Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (rtd), including transitional committee lists across the 23 local government areas of the state.

The group made the demand in a petition to the National Assembly Committee on Rivers State Emergency Rule, signed by Derefaka Ajubo (President), Meshac Jaja (Secretary) and Dagogo Achese (23 LGAs Supervisor).

In the petition, the group expressed concern over the worsening political crisis allegedly resulting from the recent appointment of Sole Administrators (SOLADs) across the 23 local government councils.

They stated: "Rather than stabilise the state as intended by the presidential peace directive, the transition arrangement is fueling widespread unrest, allegedly manipulated by loyalists of the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike.

"What was meant to be a neutral, interim measure has instead become a weapon of political entrenchment deepening divisions, alienating grassroots voices, and provoking tension across local councils."

The petitioners added: "There is growing evidence that the current Sole Administrator of Rivers State, Mr. Ibas, is not acting independently. Insiders allege that the list of local government administrators was handed directly to him by Mr. Wike.

"These appointments heavily favor Wike's faction, sidelining Simplified Movement members and other neutral grassroots stakeholders. This has undermined the spirit of inclusivity, trust, and neutrality needed for a successful transitional process.

The polarising appointments has spark local backlash and might provoke intense local resistance across the 23 local government areas."

The group listed some of the appointments of SOLAD in the LGAs to include "Obio/Akpor LGA: Dr. Clifford Ndu Walter, known as a staunch Wike loyalist, has been appointed, triggering discontent among local leaders who back Governor Siminalayi Fubara.

"Ikwerre LGA: Isaiah Christian Nobuawu, a relative of Hon. Samuel Nwanosike (a divisive Wike ally), was appointed, rekindling political tension. Degema LGA: Dr Francis Sokari Ibifuro, an open Wike supporter.

Eleme LGA: Dr Gloria Obo-Dibiah, a Wike campaign mobiliser. Khana LGA: Dr. Barinedum Neibere, a known pro-Wike political figure.

"Asari-Toru LGA: The appointment of a relative of Ibinabo Michael West has sparked ethnic and political unrest in Kalabari land.

According to the group, the same pattern of appointments was made in Tai, Okrika, Ahoada East, Andoni, Oyigbo, and Gokana LGAs.

They also observed that instead of building bridges, the process has become a proxy battleground favoring conflict merchants over bridge-builders.

"Even key state institutions like the RSIEC, Local Government Service Commission, and Civil Service Commission are reportedly being filled with pro-Wike loyalists, further undermining neutrality."

They however, demanded an investigation into allegations of external political influence in the appointment process.

Gombe Gov Mourns Victims of Billiri Easter Procession Tragedy, Calls for Calm

Segun Awofadeji in Gombe

Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe State has expressed deep sorrow and concern over the tragic incident that occurred during an Easter procession in Billiri, in the state, which resulted in the loss of five lives and injuries to many others.

The unfortunate incident reportedly occurred on Monday when a trailer truck transporting grains from Adamawa State to Gombe suffered brake failure and lost control, veering into a group of Christian faithful who were participating in a religious procession to mark the Easter celebration.

Reacting to the tragedy, Governor Inuwa Yahaya described the incident as heartbreaking and regrettable.

His words: "This is a dark and painful moment for the families affected and for all of us as a people.

"On behalf of the government and people of Gombe State, I extend my heartfelt condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and pray for the swift and full recovery of those currently receiving treatment.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the entire Christian community in Billiri and beyond, as well as with all those affected by this terrible tragedy.

"As a government, we are committed to ensuring that the victims receive the best possible medical care".

Meanwhile, Governor Inuwa Yahaya has directed the relevant authorities to immediately investigate the circumstances surrounding the accident and vowed that those found culpable would face the full weight of the law.

"We will ensure that those responsible are held accountable, and decisive action will be taken against anyone found wanting in this incident," the governor stated.

"The safety and well-being of our citizens remain our top priority. While we mourn, I call on all residents of Billiri and the entire state to remain calm and law-abiding. We must resist the temptation to allow grief and anger to lead us into actions that could further endanger lives or disrupt the peace we have worked so hard to build.

"The security agencies have been directed to maintain law and order, and to engage with community leaders to promote peace and mutual understanding at this critical time".

Invest in Social Amenities, Clergy Tells Nigerian Leaders

Blessing Ibunge in Port Harcourt

Clergyman David Udo has called on political leaders in Nigeria to invest in social amenities for the benefit of the citizens.

Speaking with journalists, shortly after celebrating 25th anniversary of his church, The Apostolic Mount Olive Church, in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Udo, a prophet, stressed the essence of functional social amenities and a social security system that will cater for the needs of Nigerians.

He charged the leaders to begin to replicate the type of infrastructural development they see abroad back home, given Nigeria's abundant resources.

He said: "To our leaders in this country Nigeria, who go out to other countries, see what other presidents are doing, we pray to Almighty God to give them wisdom.

"I advise them to use wisdom, what they go out and see: good hospitals, good education, good economy, the way others manage their countries for the rich and poor to be alive to eat and succeed in this life, you should bring back to this country."

Udo, who thanked God for the grace upon his ministry in the past 25 years, warned that poor Nigerians, especially children and the elderly, would be exposed to untimely deaths if the leaders fail to take care of them.

"As you go out, you see steady light. We can have it in this country. You see children born, some of them, government gives them money. Elders, they have a place, they treat them in the way they will live long."

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The Kwara State Indigenes Forum, Abuja, heartily felicitate with

ENGR. BASHIR BAYO OJULARI

on your well-deserved appointment as the

Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the
Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) by

HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT BOLA AHMED TINUBU, GCFR.

Your appointment at this pivotal time is a clear testament to President Tinubu's commitment to revitalizing the Oil Sector through strategic leadership and reforms. It also speaks volumes of the professionalism, integrity, and wealth of experience you have garnered more than three decades in the Oil and Gas Industry.

It is therefore no surprise that your appointment has been widely applauded and endorsed by oil and gas professionals both locally and internationally. We pray that Almighty God guides you in this new and significant responsibility, while granting you needed wisdom and strength to succeed in your new role.

Congratulations.

SIGNED

Hon. Dr. Ahmed Adamu Saba MHR
Hon. Abiola Abdulkareem (Jangunlabi)
Mustapha Hussain Olarewaju (Babareke) FCA
Tajudeen Audu Makama FCA
Hon. Ahmad Muhammad (Dan masani Gwanabe)
Hon. Muhammed B. Akanbi
Dr. Bankole Alex Kehinde (KAB)
Adeboye J. Taiwo FCA, ACTI, CISA, CISM

Sir Ben Duntoye KSJI
Otunba (Dr.) Isaac Amao, fmic
Hon. Asiwaju Tajudeen Olabisi Abioye
Al-amin Olasunkanmi Lukman (Yakoyo)
Otunba Anu Ibiwoye
Mallam Ismaila Giwa
Femi Ogunshola
Hon. Otunba Abdulganiyu Zubairu (Ganzy)

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JEFF GODWIN DOKI argues for 'principled negotiation' to resolve the Rivers' crisis

NEGATIVE PEACE IN RIVERS STATE

It is no longer news that there is an intractable political crisis in the oil-rich state of Rivers, located in the South-South region of Nigeria. It is also no news, at all, that the crisis revolves around two dramatis personae : Nyesom Wike and Siminalayi Fubara. Wike has been in power since the year 2000. He served two terms as a local government chairman in Rivers State, he served as chief of staff to a Minister in Nigeria and he also served two terms as Governor of Rivers State. This is as much as to say that Wike must have been drinking, and, perhaps, is still drinking generously, from the palm wine of power for close to 25 years now, serving Nigeria presently as the current FCT Minister in Abuja under the APC regime led by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. Until he became Governor of Rivers State in 2023, Siminalayi Fubara is less known because he was an Accountant General in Rivers State who served Wike for very many years. Perhaps, this explains why some political pundits argue that Wike found in Fubara a right choice for his replacement in 2023. But that is a matter for another story and for another day.

As a former Accountant General of the oil-rich state, Fubara is expected to have a good knowledge, or at least an idea, of revenue derivation and, of course, the amount, manner and methods of revenue generation in Rivers State. Unfortunately, this was the beginning of the trouble between Fubara and his Boss, Nyesom Wike. Three months into office as Governor, Fubara demanded to have an update about revenue generation from the chairman of the board of Rivers Internal Revenue Generation Service (RIRS). The chairman of the board, a Wike appointee, was shocked and very quickly intimated Wike his protégé in Abuja. Wike, now FCT Minister, was piqued by what he considered to be Fubara's effrontery and arrogance. But by now the fire of anger and pride had flared up and relations between Wike and Fubara became strained and frosty; what with plans for impeachment and irate Ijaw youths burning down the State Assembly complex to stop the impeachment process against their own Ijaw brother, Governor Fubara. At this time also, the Rivers State House Assembly was clearly divided into two factions: the pro-Wike group led by Marthins Amaewhule and 25 others who hurriedly went to another part of the city and read an impeachment order against Fubara, and four other members led by Edison Ehie, apparently loyal to Fubara, who equally went to another part of the city to suspend the pro-Wike group for not following due process and for impeaching Governor Fubara for no good reason. The two factions also went to court to get orders and counter orders. It was a war of political wills.

At this time, it became apparent that the oil-rich-state had degenerated into a metaphor of all that is wrong with our country Nigeria. And as things stand now, Rivers State has become a battlefield on



which is fought a continuous battle between the forces that are pledged to confirm our humanity and those forces determined to dismantle it. It is a battle between those who do the pulling and the majority of us who are meant only to be pulled. We must concede that the Presidency made an intervention on December 18, 2023 and handed both parties an eight- point resolution. But while Governor Fubara was trying to implement six out of the eight points resolution, the pro-Wike camp remained adamant, defiant and resolute. And to make matters worse, the Presidency, in a dramatic turn of events, accused Governor Fubara of oil sabotage and declared a State of Emergency in Rivers State on Tuesday March 18 2025.

Now, several questions could be asked concerning President Tinubu's declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State. One, is Emergency rule constitutional in our Democracy? Two, is this declaration of emergency rule not a glamorized patriotism or a neo-fascist dictatorship? Three, is the emergency rule not a show of force or extravagant ambition? But most fundamentally, has the emergency rule brought peace to the oil-rich state?

Here, we must understand Peace to mean the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence. And this would also mean that Peace is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society and the resolution of conflicts by non-violent means. It was the famed Norwegian Peace scholar, Johan Galtung, who identified two kinds of Peace namely: negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace is the absence of direct violence like war, fear and conflict at both the individual, regional and international levels. Positive peace, on the other hand, means the absence of unjust structures and the presence of justice, freedom, development and inner peace at the individual level. Taken together, the approach taken by President Tinubu in resolving the political crisis in Rivers State is the most clearest example of Negative peace. In other words, there may be no direct violence on the streets of Port Harcourt; there may be no gunshots in the air or corpses on the streets. Yet there is no justice, no freedom and no democracy. If the Nigerian government is sincere about resolving the conflict in Rivers State it could have tried Negotiation which is another viable method of conflict resolution in a democracy. Negotiation is a basic means of getting what you want from others. Negotiation is a back- and -forth communication designed to reach an agreement when two parties have some interests that are shared and others that are opposed. As a matter of fact, the crisis in Rivers State requires only a kind of Negotiation that would allow many people participate in the decision-making process. The declaration of emergency rule is no solution to this crisis, it is only tantamount to a rape of democracy. As a matter of fact, the proper method to resolve the crisis in River State is the kind of Negotiation called Principled Negotiation. This kind of Negotiation is both hard and soft to the parties in dispute and it insists on deciding issues on their merits rather than through the haggling process. This kind of Negotiation suggests that President Tinubu would have looked for mutual gains where ever possible and where the interests of Wike and Fubara conflict, the President would have insisted that the result should be based on some fair standards independent of the will of either side. The method of principled negotiation is usually hard on the merits and soft on the people. It employs no tricks and no posturing. It shows you how to obtain what you are entitled to in a decent and honest manner. Most importantly, principled negotiation would have been a huge lesson for both Wike and Fubara, and perhaps, one may add, posterity.

With the arbitrary declaration of Emergency Rule in Rivers State, the city of Port Harcourt offers Nigerian citizens/ audiences a comic, theatrical admixture of farce and burlesque. On the one hand, there is a queer irony at work: we have a hired crowd of women dressed in white carrying placards in support of Emergency rule in a nascent democracy like Nigeria. On the other hand, we have another set of women all clad in red denouncing emergency rule and calling for Fubara's reinstatement. Whether it is through long marches on the streets of Port Harcourt or peaceful protests, the emergency rule is symptomatic of the negative peace that exists in Rivers State. But more than that, between these three Elephants: Tinubu, Wike and Fubara who among them is concerned with confirming our humanity? And on the other side, who among them is determined to destroy or dismantle it by killing us citizens like little ants? Here again, the choice is ours! Ultimately, however, to paraphrase Wole Soyinka,'history will lay its heavy hand on those who led the nation by the nose on a tortuous ride to a destination that did not exist, even while dissipating the vast fortunes of the nation.'

Doki Ph.D
is Conflict Manager, Writer, Public Analyst and Professor of Comparative Literature with the University of Jos

TAMING THE BOGEY OF TERROR

Nuhu Ribadu, National Security Adviser, is making a difference, reckons ***JACK OKUDE***



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LAGOS AND REGULATED ON-STREET PARKING

Regulated street parking will create order, contends ***ADEBISI ADELABU***



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EDITORIAL

PASSAGE OF THE PEOPLE'S POPE



22

Nuhu Ribadu, National Security Adviser, is making a difference, reckons JACK OKUDE

TAMING THE BOGEY OF TERROR

The incumbent National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu, is a busy man. It's the demand of his office, especially at these times. Ribadu has a pedigree. A brilliant, fearless police officer. He was the first Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). He came highly recommended and President Olusegun Obasanjo wasted no time in appointing him at that time. And my word, he fared well. Investigating and convicting high profile Nigerians who soiled their fingers in the broth of sleaze.

Ribadu won the hearts of many Nigerians with the manner he courageously reined in the untouchables, some of whom were either jailed or made to return money stolen from both public and private tills. He gave anti-corruption war a bite and a bounce. His hand was further strengthened by Obasanjo who openly supported him. Under him, the creed was "the fear of EFCC is the beginning of wisdom." Ribadu was ruthless against the looters. And Nigerians loved him to no end. His success at his duty post as anti-corruption czar also won him enemies. Envy from certain quarters foreshadowed his every action. Threat to his life became a routine. But he was unfazed. He left behind undeniable imprints of integrity and raw boldness at the EFCC.

Fast forward to 2023. Ribadu was appointed National Security Adviser by President Bola Tinubu. An appointment at a time Nigeria was deep into an internal war against insurgents. For over a decade, Nigeria has been globally branded a terrorist nation. It doesn't matter our sentiments at home. Overseas, the world sees Nigeria through the eyes of terror. Terrorism and its financing have come to define Nigeria and global media, and to some extent local media, has played into the hands of the terrorists by promoting their heinous acts against the nation.

Let's be clear. The Office of the NSA (ONSA) is administrative; basically, to coordinate security activities among the various security agencies and brief the President on matters of security. Nigeria copied the ONSA concept from the United States APNSA (Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs) which is more popularly referred to as the National Security Advisor (NSA). Created in the US in 1953 during the Cold War era under the National Security Act of 1947, its duties include to coordinate defence, foreign affairs, international economic policy, and intelligence.

The NSA reports directly to the US President and it's the duty of the NSA to brief the President on security situations regularly, especially in periods of emergencies and war. Within the United States security structure, the NSA is regarded as the person who has the ears of the President at all times, at the shortest notices. It's regarded historically as the mother security office that paved way for the creation of the Department of Defence (DoD) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The NSA chairs security meetings in the absence of the President. That's how critical the office is. Largely advisory, the NSA sits atop all the security agencies, monitoring operational efficiencies and strategies. He holds regular meetings with the heads of security agencies and he's the first and last person to talk with the US president on matters of security. Very critical office.

In Nigeria, the architecture is in many ways the same. The NSA has (or should have) the ears of the President at all times. Anything outside that is an aberration. So far, Ribadu has enjoyed the good ears and confidence of President Tinubu. This has shored up the performance of the NSA especially in the core area of helping to forge effective synergies among the security agencies. Despite the recent attacks in Benue and Plateau and isolated cases of kidnapping in Delta and Edo states, there has been a significant shift in the manner the terrorists attack persons and institutions across the country. This stems largely from the degradation



of the ranks of the terrorists by the stealth neutralisation of their leaderships in various cells by the Nigerian security apparatchik.

This improved synergy has resulted in improved security nationwide compared to the situation in the pre-Ribadu era. The heads of the various security agencies have themselves attested to this improvement in synergy which has boosted intelligence gathering and sharing leading to a drastic decimation of the leaderships of the insurgents. Under Ribadu, no fewer than 14 terrorists' leaders have been neutralized. They include the notorious Kachalla Ali Kawaje, Kachalla Halilu Sububu, Kachalla Damina, Kachalla Dangote, Kachalla Jafaru, Kachalla Barume, Kachalla Shehu, Kachalla Yellow Mai Buhu, Yellow Sirajo, Kachalla Dan Muhammadu, Kachalla Makasko, Yellow Hassan, Kachalla Dan Ba Birki, Auta Dan Mai Jan Kai and the dangerous duo of Tsoho and Boderi.

The decimation of terror leaders has whittled down their hitherto brazen audacity to attack city centres and security units and formations. They have restricted their operations to soft targets in rural areas. But even that is only a matter of time. They will soon be pushed out of the country.

Lest we forget, before Ribadu, Nigeria has had cases of terrorists attacking the Presidential advance convoy of security personnel (Presidential Guard). A Presidential convoy is a combined team of military, police, DSS and allied security personnel. Such was the profile of the convoy ambushed by terrorists in July 2021 on its way to Daura, President Muhammadu Buhari's homestead. That was an attack on the President, the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The terrorists succeeded in injuring at least two security personnel in a blitzkrieg of gunfire.

That same Tuesday night, terrorists, armed to the hilt, invaded Kuje prison in the FCT, a supposedly well-manned prison. They burnt vehicles, detonated explosives, and released in one fell swoop over 600 inmates, including over 60 Boko Haram members. How about the orchestrated bombing of trains in Edo State and along Kaduna-Abuja highway? Or the daring attacks on military formations by the insurgents in Kaduna and parts of the North east? It has been a litany of losses by Nigeria to the terrorists. But all that is abating these Ribadu days. Prognosis: There's more work to be done, but there's hope.

Aside taming the bogey of terror, the manner top security chiefs including the NSA himself has responded and made physical appearances at scenes of terror attacks in recent times only attest to the responsiveness and collaboration among the agencies. ■

Okude,
public policy analyst, writes from Jalingo

Regulated street parking will create order, contends ADEBISI ADELABU

LAGOS AND REGULATED ON-STREET PARKING

Without a doubt, Lagos remains Nigeria's most vibrant commercial and industrial hub. A dynamic city where the streets tell the tale of rapid growth and urbanization, Lagos exudes amazing energy and vibrancy.

However, one persistent issue continues to disrupt the flow of life in Lagos -parking. Plagued with already overcrowded streets, indiscriminate parking further complicates the congestion, continually hindering the city's mobility.

As one of Africa's key economic and entertainment hubs, Lagos daily witness a steady rise in population, putting continual pressure on its infrastructure and intensifying traffic on its streets. Among many challenges the city faces, indiscriminate parking stands out as a major concern.

Over time, the streets of Lagos have become chaotic parking lots, contributing to severe traffic jams, environmental degradation, and economic setbacks.

It has become evident that without proper regulation streets will continue to function as makeshift parking spaces. This is where the introduction of regulated on-street parking could make a transformative difference, easing congestion and improving the city's overall functionality.

Non-government actors are already profiting from the disfunctional parking system by offering 'illegal' parking spaces, turning what should be major access routes for pedestrians and vehicles into unregulated parking lots. This complicates the problems already caused by heavy urban migration, which is straining existing infrastructure. These unregulated parking activities not only cause inconvenience but also expose the city to needless risks.

Sadly, some homeowners are adding to the problem by not providing sufficient parking spaces for their tenants, thereby turning roads into makeshift parking areas.

It is important to stress that the problem of parking is common to major cities of the world, especially where rapid population growth is overstretching available infrastructure. On-street parking is commonly adopted in these cities, either as a strategy to mitigate parking challenges or as an integral part of development plans to preemptively address parking issues caused by rapid urbanization.

For example, cities such as San Francisco, Seattle, London, Singapore, Tokyo, Barcelona, and Denver, implement dynamic parking pricing and smart technologies to manage demand, optimize space usage, and reduce congestion.

The cost of congestion in major cities worldwide is estimated to be in trillions of dollars annually, and Lagos is no exception. According to a 2020 report by the Lagos State Ministry of Transportation, traffic congestion in the state costs the economy approximately ₦1 trillion annually in lost productivity, fuel wastage, and environmental damage. A cursory look at the situation reveals that the unchecked use of public spaces as parking lots and indiscriminate parking contribute significantly to the congestion.

Indiscriminate street parking, particularly in Lagos - especially on major roads - often leads to double-parking, encroachment on walkways, and obstruction of pedestrian paths. While this may be manageable in some parts of the state, the impact is notably severe in the Central Business Districts (CBDs). In these areas, traffic bottlenecks are frequent, particularly during rush hours, leading to prolonged commute times, missed business opportunities, and wasted fuel.

The environmental impact is also considerable. Traffic congestion results in increased carbon emissions, as vehicles remain idle in gridlocks - many of which are caused by parking issues. In Lagos, where vehicular emissions are a major contributor to air pollution, which remains an urgent environmental concern. The introduction of regulated on-street parking could help mitigate these issues by reducing congestion and promoting smoother traffic flow.

So, how can the introduction of regulated On-Street Parking help in mitigating the issue?



Cities like New York, London, Tokyo, and Singapore have implemented this system to address their respective parking crises. They have shown that regulation leads to improved traffic flow, more organized streets, and a better environment for businesses and residents. Lagos, as a rapidly growing urban center, can draw valuable lessons from these global cities to better manage its own parking challenges.

Some might argue that introducing regulated on-street parking is simply another ploy by the government to generate revenue. However, this perception overlooks the primary purpose of such regulations, which is to create order where there is currently none. It's not just about making money; it's about maximizing urban public spaces to address parking shortages and improving the quality of life for Lagosians.

An attempt to regulate on-street parking is a bold step toward bringing order to the streets, ensuring that parking is only done in designated spaces. This will allow both pedestrians and vehicles to access the roads without hindrance. Importantly, the scheme will also help curb the excesses of non-state actors who profit from the chaos, such as blocking driveways or leaving vehicles in dangerous positions. Ultimately, it will make the streets safer for everyone.

This renewed effort by the Lagos state government, through the Lagos State Parking Authority (LASPA), aims to introduce state-of-the-art technology to manage parking on the streets of Lagos and make parking hassle-free through the implementation of the Lagos State Parking Policy. This will ensure that parking is done only on approved roads with proper lane markings, as well as the installation of instructional signage to manage parking more efficiently. This technological upgrade will help monitor and control parking spaces more effectively, leading to a reduction in the chaos that currently plagues our streets. Cities like Paris, Berlin, and Hong Kong, where parking spaces are scarce and traffic is heavy, have adopted comparable strategies. These cities understand that regulating parking isn't just about reducing congestion but also improving the overall urban experience.

Lagos, as a bustling metropolis, faces challenges similar to those of other global cities, particularly in managing limited public space. By adopting a regulated on-street parking system, Lagos can ensure that its infrastructure, at least to some extent, keeps pace with the city's growth, enhancing the overall livability and functionality of the city.

The economic impact of introducing a regulated on-street parking system in Lagos cannot be overemphasized. It will have a significant positive impact on Lagos' economy. It will inadvertently reduce the time wasted searching for parking, leading to increased productivity for both individuals and businesses. ■

Adelabu
is the General Manager, Lagos State Parking Authority, Ikeja

Editor, Editorial Page **PETER ISHAKA**
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EDITORIAL

PASSAGE OF THE PEOPLE'S POPE

Pope Francis, first Latin American pontiff, dies at age 88

All over the world, there has been an outpouring of grief and condolences for Pope Francis who died yesterday morning at age 88. The late Pope assumed the papacy in 2013 and had 12 spectacular (many will say controversial) years of service, during which he displayed unusual courage while trying to navigate some of the most delicate moral dilemmas of the day. It is indeed instructive that he died on Easter Monday, 24 hours after he waved on wheelchair to Catholics on the symbolic Resurrection Morning.

The late Pope was a down to earth realist who sought to exemplify the preferential option of Jesus Christ for the poor, the weak and the public sinner. This led him to denounce what he considered the rigidity of the traditional elements in the Catholic Church who fought on the side of doctrinal purity, especially regarding issues pertaining to divorced and remarried Catholics, the pastoral care of gays and lesbians, and most controversial of all, whether 'blessing' by whatever description, and in any form, is appropriate for couples in homosexuality relationships. His position: no human being should sit in judgment over others on matters of faith and choices.

Less controversial, however, were the late Pope's strong positions against clericalism, and his charge that the leaders of the church - including the bishops and priests - should be real stewards, sharing the sufferings and pains of the people they serve, rather than aligning with the oppressor class in the society. Pope Francis constantly lamented what he famously called the 'globalisation of insensitivity,' by which he meant the lack of care and concern about the poverty and destitution of multitudes in the world in which we live, even as a few in the global family live in obscene affluence and conspicuous consumption.



He carved a niche for himself as a great moral force, preaching harmony and inclusiveness in a world being increasingly torn apart by the rhetoric of hate and division

The passing of Pope Francis therefore marks the end of a papacy that lasted through a turbulent time in the world. In so many ways, Pope Francis made the papacy his own by imprinting it with his personal identity. He was the First Latin American pope. On record, he was a self-defining commoner who deliberately shunned ostentation and protocol. He rejected grand SUVs in preference for a small vehicle. He was in every way, a Pope of the people, an immensely compassionate man who never forgot how he rose from ordinary beginnings as a technician and even bouncer to become a bishop and subsequently Pope.

Throughout his life Pope Francis embraced common causes- poverty, refugee crises, homelessness. The rights of children and the underprivileged were close to his heart and he travelled the world to reach and touch ordinary people whom he saw as his primary constituency. His 2015 Encyclical 'Laudato Si' is a landmark philosophical and theological contribution to the global campaign for environmental justice and ecological sustainability. He embraced the great issues of his day: Wars, gender discrepancies, new world order. He opposed the use of war as an instrument of international resolution and tacitly rejected the bullying of smaller nations by the big and powerful.

Pope Francis was a universalist and infinite humanist, advocating the kinship of all humanity and the brotherhood of mankind. So, he freely travelled the world and mixed freely with leaders of all faiths as he did in Iraq and United Arab Emirate (UAE) respectively. At the end, he carved a niche for himself as a great moral force, preaching harmony and inclusiveness in a world being increasingly torn apart by the rhetoric of hate and division. In the death of Pope Francis, therefore, the Catholic Church has lost one of its most illustrious Popes while the world has lost a strategic mediator and ambassador of peace.

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

LETTERS

TOPE FASUA AND HUNGRY NIGERIANS

Dr. Tope Fasua, the special adviser to president Bola Ahmed Tinubu on economic affairs, was recently on Channels television where he made some striking observations.

He cast doubt on the data which puts Nigeria's poor at about 100 million before adding some interesting insights on the Naira to Dollar exchange rate, particularly as it in implies value.

The greatest dilemma facing the Tinubu presidency right now is not to be found in the disquisitions or dissertations of his bevy of economists and technocrats. It lies in a simple distillation: that Nigerians are hungry and need to eat. They need food.

The aphorism that a hungry man is an angry man is very true and even among the hungry hordes in parts of the country scarred by hunger long before Tinubu became president, new ways are being conceived to beat hunger into anger.

There is an unspoken but unavoidable remit that comes with government appointments in Nigeria: defend the government at times and at all costs. Get dirty, if possible, the government will provide cover.

So, hitherto honorable and honest professionals have been appointed to government posts and then converted into attack dogs almost immediately.

When the government is doing well, which is hardly ever the case here, they have less to defend, which suits them just fine as facts speak for themselves. However, they are in for a nightmare when the government they work for is embarrassingly inept as is the case many times in Nigeria. Because they still have to do their jobs, they are always out there chasing shadows. Many of them eventually leave the government with their reputations shredded. They never manage to recover.

For many Nigerians, the reality which government appointees constantly try to twist hardly ever changes. It remains harsh and humiliating. Scorching hunger and scalding insecurity form their daily living. So, regardless of what is disputed on national television by whom and for what motive, hunger paints a starker and more direct reality.

For many families too, all that bills ever do is mount. As they mount, the resources with which to clear them crawl away.

Does Fasua really believe his views, or was he just putting up a show for his anchor and audience? Does he really doubt a lot of the data bandied about concerning Nigeria even by the National Bureau of Statistics or did he feel compelled to use that to bat away criticism directed at the current administration?

To solve a problem, the solver must firstly identify the problem, acknowledge it, and then confront it. Whatever a concern is, the solution cannot lie in denial.

Nigerians are waiting for their fortunes to change. For people like Fasua, everything is in place and everyone is happy, so there is no convincing reason to change a winning team.

However, two years into the regime of the current administration, the president is yet to show that he can work the miracles Nigeria so badly needs.

Ike Willie-Nwobu,
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LAWYER

TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025

A THISDAY WEEKLY PULLOUT

TRUTH & REASON



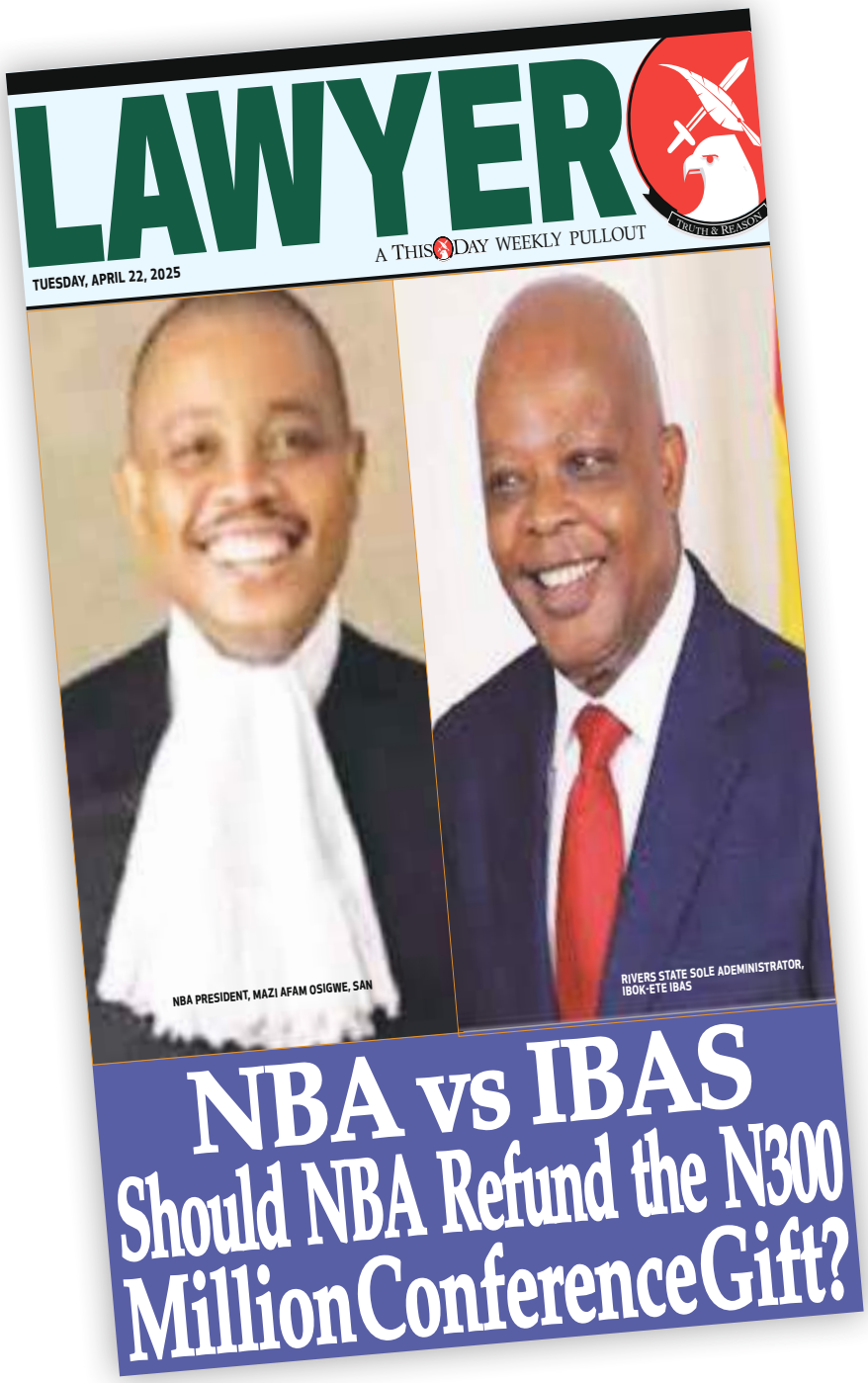
NBA PRESIDENT, MAZI AFAM OSIGWE, SAN



RIVERS STATE SOLE ADEMINISTRATOR, IBOK-ETE IBAS

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'Having condemned the declaration of emergency, and having openly expressed the position that the government is illegal and unconstitutional, the same government cannot be their host. That will amount to self-contradiction. NBA cannot approbate and reprobate, at the same time….If you give me money and you say you are not giving me again, l will refund your money. The money is yours ab initio.' - ***Dele Adesina, SAN, former General Secretary, Nigerian Bar Association***



'I see no reason to return the money - especially since it was not tied to hosting rights. If we all agree that the NBA should not accept money from the Government, then we must also agree to fund it ourselves.' - ***Jubril Sam Okutepa, SAN***

THISDAY LAWYER

ONIKEPO BRAITHWAITE: EDITOR, JUDE IGBANOI: DEPUTY EDITOR,
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Between Biological and Certificated Sex

Lia Thomas, Imane Khelif and Caster Semenya

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The Advocate



"One thing I gathered from the UKSC decision, is that their Lordships considered biological/natural sex as different from acquired gender by means of gender reassignment…. And, in reality, they are undeniably different…. Their Lordships referred to a man who has done gender reassignment to become female…a trans woman, as a "female as a matter of law", and a woman who becomes a trans man….as legally male….I dare say that, any other law that provides otherwise, that is, that natural and acquired gender are one and the same, would not be telling the truth"

Last Wednesday, I had an argument with my friend and her son, Lateef, about the issue of having men who declare themselves to be women or have gender reassignment surgery, aka 'trans women', being allowed to participate in the female category in sports. Lateef and I appeared to be on the same side - that it is unfair. We cited the example of male swimmer, Lia Thomas, who was ranked No. 462 in male swimming, and upon declaring himself as a woman, is said to have subsequently become tops in female swimming, because he obviously has an unfair advantage over the average woman he's competing with. Mummy Lateef countered our argument with Imane Khelif, the female Algerian Boxer, who was born female and has always lived her life as a woman, as an example of a physically strong female. However, there has been some controversy about Ms Khelif, as she was disqualified from a World Boxing Championship by the IBA in 2023, for not meeting the eligibility criteria in an unspecified test. Recall that during the 2024 Paris Olympics, Italian, Angela Carini withdrew from the boxing match just 46 seconds into it, after receiving some heavy punches from Ms Khelif.

In the case of South African athlete, Caster Semenya, a biological woman who has a sex development disorder that gives her testosterone levels that qualify as that of a man, the new World Athletics Rules of 2019 made it mandatory that such people must take testosterone suppression medication, in order to be able to participate in the female category. Ms Semenya had taken the medication from 2010 - 2015 and then refused to continue taking them, citing the negative physical side effects the medication had on her as the reason for her refusal. She went to court, on the ground that the World Athletics Rules were discriminatory. World Athletics predicated its rules on fairness and "protecting the integrity of female competition". On appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in 2023, the ECHR held inter alia that Ms Semenya had the right to challenge the World Athletics rule to reduce testosterone levels, but did not invalidate the rule nor restore her right to compete.

Gender-Affected Activities

Lateef and I, were somehow correct. Section 19(2) (a) & (b) of **UK Gender Recognition Act 2004 (GRA)** provides for prohibition or restriction on the participation of those who have acquired genders in gender-affected sports or activities, to secure fair competition and the safety of other competitors. Section 195(3) of the **UK Equality Act 2010 (EA)** defines a gender-affected activity thus: "*… a sport, game or other activity of a competitive nature in circumstances in which the physical strength, stamina or physique of average persons of one sex would put them at a disadvantage compared to average persons of the other sex as competitors in events involving the activity*" (also see Section 19(4) of the GRA). Certainly, Swimming is a gender-affected sport, and so are Boxing and Running.

Competitive Sports is about fair-play, and that is why athletes who take performance enhancing drugs which gives them dominance over others, are barred from participation and punished. The playing field is no longer level in sports, if a competitor has an upper hand, not borne out of training and preparation, but out of some unfair advantage such as, stamina or strength as a result of the previous biological male gender, or even biological disorders. It is more than trite, also a biological fact that, men are predominantly born stronger than women - men are generally bigger in size, have more muscle mass, testosterone, larger and stronger lungs, more upper body strength (women have more lower body strength), cortical bones (stronger skeletons), durability, all culminating in more power, strength, and resulting in at least 30% more superior performance than women in sports.

If we look at the aforementioned male attributes, we observe that coupled with the fact that Lia Thomas is 6ft 1 in height, he appears to have a biological advantage over the women swimmers. How then, can any serious, ethical sports body that claims to uphold the tenets of fair competition which is the essence of sporting, say that such a person is equally yoked with the average woman in a swimming competition, when today, even natural, biological women themselves undergo scrutiny to ensure that they do not have an unfair advantage against their own fellow womenfolk in competitions, even if that advantage isn't of their own making, but has been endowed on them by God?

Where do we draw the line between nature, truth, fact and logic on the one hand, and trying to be open minded, politically or societally correct, affirm or stretch the right to freedom of thought and freedom from discrimination, even if it's beyond comfortable limits of reasonableness? (see Sections 38(1) & 42 of the 1**999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended)(the Constitution)**). Lia Thomas, is a biological man who was 20, past the age of puberty, before he started taking testosterone suppression hormones. The World Aquatics Gender Inclusion Policy, only allowed males whose puberty is stopped by age 12, to compete in the female category. From the foregoing, logic tells us that World Aquatics appears to recognise the fact that a male who decides to change to the female gender in adulthood, has a physical advantage over a true or biological female, and allowing Lia Thomas who didn't stop male puberty by age 12, would be unfair to women competitors.

This immediately brings to mind Section 42(1)(a) of the Constitution, that is, discriminating against women by allowing someone who has a definite physical advantage over them to participate in their sporting category, or Section 42(1)(b), giving someone who has an unfair physical advantage the opportunity to compete against those that he is superior to in terms of the physical attributes required, on the basis of the acquired gender status he identifies as.

It appears that, in order not to offend the sensibilities of transgenders, the female gender which has been discriminated upon from time immemorial, continues to be treated unfairly. Discrimination against one group to accommodate another, is also clearly bias and prejudice against the former group.

For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers [2025] UKSC 16

This is why I welcomed the unanimous judgement in **For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers [2025] UKSC 16 delivered on 16/4/2025**. The manner in which the UK Supreme Court (UKSC) set out the 87 paged judgement, giving a brief summary of the reasoning behind the judgement at the end of the decision, is desirable, as non-Lawyers can easily read the summary to grasp an understanding of it.

According to their Lordships the appeal ***"is concerned with establishing the correct interpretation of the Equality Act 2010 ("the EA 2010") which seeks to give statutory protection to people who are at risk of suffering from unlawful discrimination"***, and categories of those who were determined to require protection from discrimination are women, and now, the transgender community. ***The UKSC however, held that: "The context in which the EA 2010 was enacted was therefore that the SDA 1975 (Sex Discrimination Act 1975) definitions of "man" and "woman" referred to biological sex…..The meaning of the terms "sex", "man" and "woman" in the EA 2010 is biological and not certificated sex. Any other interpretation would render the EA 2010 incoherent and impracticable to operate….".***

Certainly, the SDA, was enacted to protect women from discrimination, and as far back as 1975 when gender reassignment surgery wasn't exactly the order of the day, the SDA could only be referring to biological sex when defining a man and a woman. Their Lordships held that ***the presumption that a word has the same meaning throughout an enactment, is consistent with creating a "coherent statutory text".*** Their Lordships held that ***"…the general rule is that words or terms used more than once in the same legislation are taken to have the same meaning whenever they appear, and the general purpose of an interpretation provision is to fix the meaning of such a word or term throughout the legislation in question".***

The sum and substance of this is that, in the SDA, man and woman cannot mean a biological man and woman, and also a trans man and trans woman in the same legislation. Their Lordships held inter alia that, giving a term a variable meaning in a statute is rare, and usually occurs when there is an error. See the case of **NPF & Ors v Police Service Commission & Anor (2023) LPELR-60782(SC) per Tijjani Abubakar, JSC** where the Supreme Court held inter alia that: ***"The primary approach that has been adopted by the Courts in the interpretation of the Constitution is known as originalism or textualism, which emphasises interpreting constitutional provisions according to their original public meaning at the time they were adopted"***. In applying this decision to the SDA, in 1975 when it was enacted, the original public meaning of a "man" and a "woman" then were a biological man and woman, and it would only be logical to believe that "man" and "woman" could only have been meant to mean the biological/natural sense of the words.



Gender Rights Activists

President Donald Trump's Executive Order

This judgement, in some ways, appears to be in tandem with Section 2(a)-(e) of **President Donald Trump's Executive Order dated 20/1/2025 "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government" (EO)**, which defines sex as "an individual's immutable biological classification as either male or female", excluding the concept of gender identity, which Section 2(g) refers to as being "disconnected from biological reality".

Section 1 of the EO mentions the use of coercive methods to permit men who self-identify as women, to gain access into intimate female spaces, such as showers (conveniences), and states that this is wrong. I concur. Perverts have happily used this technique, to gain access to intimate female spaces. I even saw a video of such a man who claimed to be a woman, openly performing lewd sexual acts on himself in a female public bathroom. What if there were little girls present in the bathroom? Do children not enjoy the right to security, welfare, dignity and freedom of movement, like everyone else? Children do, possibly more so than adults, as they need to be protected. See Sections 14(2)(b), 34(1) & 41(1) of the Constitution and the **Child's Rights Act 2003.**

How far can we stretch the right to freedom of thought, provided for in Section 38(1) of the Constitution? (See the First Amendment to the **US Constitution**). Section 45(1)(a) of the Constitution provides for any law that restricts, inter alia, the aforementioned freedom, in the interest of defence, public safety, order, morality and health. This means that the right to freedom of thought, is not at large. Where it obstructs public safety, order and morality, as in the case of the pervert I cited above using the female public bathroom, giving the rights of women to a man because he identifies himself as a woman in order not to discriminate against such a man, must be properly balanced against the rights of women and girls. I say the right of the women and girls, must take precedence here.

Conclusion

One thing I gathered from the UKSC decision, is that their Lordships considered biological/natural sex as different from acquired gender by means of gender reassignment (surgery) complete with a Gender Reassignment Certificate (GRC). And, in reality, they are undeniably different. The essence of the gender reassignment surgery, is to create an outward physical appearance that represents the gender that an individual identifies with. Their Lordships referred to a man who has done gender reassignment to become female and has a GRC, that is, a trans woman, as a "female as a matter of law", and a woman who becomes a trans man that also has a GRC, as legally male. I submit that being of a sex naturally and of that sex legally, cannot be the same. For example, even if the outward physical appearance of a woman who chooses to become a man (trans man) can be changed by gender reassignment surgery, such an individual cannot produce sperm to father a child like a biological man. In fact, if the trans man's internal reproductive organs aren't removed, he may still able to carry a pregnancy and deliver by means of caesarean section. Similarly, man who chooses to become a woman (trans woman) can still father a child, if his sperm was harvested and stored in a sperm bank before the gender reassignment surgery. How then, can anyone honestly say that terms referring to a biological man and woman, can also have the same meaning for those who have undergone gender reassignment surgery? A biological woman cannot father a child, nor can a biological man carry a pregnancy. I submit that being able to look the same in physical appearance, doesn't translate to being the same!

While the milestones that have been achieved in the medical field are undeniable, the bottom line is that, beyond the UKSC decision, the truth is that someone of a biological sex (natural) and one who has an acquired gender of the same sex (legal), can never be the same. The UKSC decision with regard to the EA and SDA in this regard, is correct. I dare say that, any other law that provides otherwise, that is, that natural and acquired gender are one and the same, would not be telling the truth.

Finally, one cannot ignore the fact that, globally, Governments/Politicians use different issues affecting the people, to play politics to their own advantage. While we may use ethnicity and religion here, in the Western world, they have used gay rights and now transgender rights to further their agendas.

LAW REPORT

Key Consideration to Determine Proper Signing and Endorsement of Court Process

Facts

The Respondents filed an action before the High Court of Anambra State against the Appellants claiming amongst others reliefs, a declaration that the Appellants' alienation of the Respondents' land without the Respondents' authorisation constitutes acts of trespass and an order of perpetual injunction restraining the Appellants from committing further acts of trespass on the said land.

The Appellants filed their Statement of Defence as well as a Notice of Preliminary Objection praying the court to dismiss the Respondents' claim for want of jurisdiction on the ground that it is statute barred. The Appellants argued that the action was commenced outside the statutory period of twelve years prescribed by section 22(2) and 36 of the Action Law of Anambra State, Cap 3, Laws of Anambra State 1981. The trial court upheld the Appellants' objection and dismissed the suit on the basis that it was caught by the statutory limitation period.

Dissatisfied, the Respondents appealed to the Court of Appeal. In its judgement, the Court of Appeal held that since the Respondents relied on customary law as their root of title, section 18 of the Action Law exempted their suit from the limitation period imposed by Section 22(2) of the same Law. The Court of Appeal allowed the Respondents' appeal and ordered that the case be remitted to the Chief Judge of Anambra State for re-assignment to another judge of the High Court of Anambra for trial on the merit.

Aggrieved, the Appellants filed an appeal before the Supreme Court. The parties filed and exchanged their respective briefs. The Respondents raised a preliminary objection against the appeal, which was argued in their brief.

Respondents' Preliminary Objection

Counsel for the Respondents challenged the competence of ground 1 of the Appellants' Notice of Appeal, arguing that the complaint raised therein that the Respondents' Notice of Appeal before the Court of Appeal was incompetent, was not raised at the Court of Appeal and did not arise judgment of the Court of Appeal. Counsel urged the Court to strike out the said ground 1 and the issue distilled therefrom.

In response, counsel for the Appellants contended that the complaint in ground 1 challenged the competence of the Respondents' Notice of Appeal at the lower court, which is a jurisdictional issue that can be raised at any time, even for the first time on appeal at the Supreme Court without leave. Counsel urged the Court to dismiss the objection.

Court's Resolution of Preliminary Objection

The Court held that a preliminary objection is suitable only when a Respondent seeks to challenge the competence of the entire appeal; where however, the grouse of the Respondent is only against a specific ground or a defect affecting part of the appeal and not the entire appeal, such that if the objection succeeds, the appeal can still survive, a Notice of Preliminary Objection will not be the appropriate procedure for the Respondent to raise his challenge. The Apex Court held that in such a circumstance, what the Respondent ought to file is a Motion on Notice to challenge the ground or the defect, and since the Respondents challenged only ground one out of the three grounds of the Appellants' Notice of Appeal, their use of a preliminary objection was improper. The Court held further that in any event, the issue raised in the said ground 1 was a jurisdictional issue which can be raised for the first time on appeal. Accordingly, the Court found that ground 1, being one bordering on jurisdiction, was competently raised for the first time in the Appellants' Notice of Appeal. The Apex Court consequently dismissed the Respondents' preliminary objection.

Issues for Determination

In determining the appeal, the Supreme Court adopted the two issues raised by the Appellants, as follows:

i. Whether the Notice of Appeal filed in the lower court on 22nd February, 2016 and later amended on 19th December, 2016 is valid as to present a competent appeal before the Court of Appeal.

ii. Whether the learned Justices of the Court of Appeal were not wrong in invoking the provision of Section 18 of the Action Law of Anambra State to arrive at a conclusion that the suit of the Respondents was not statute barred.



Honourable Adamu Jauro, JSC

In the Supreme Court of Nigeria
Holden at Abuja
On Friday, the 19th day of July, 2024

Before Their Lordships

Adamu Jauro
Chidiebere Nwaoma Uwa
Obande Festus Ogbuinya
Habeeb Adewale Olumuyiwa Abiru
Mohammed Baba Idris
Justices, Supreme Court

SC/1245/2019

Between

NATHANIEL NNADUAKA & 14 ORS — APPELLANTS
(Sued for themselves and as representing the members of Umuji Village, Ebenebe)

And

EMMANUEL ANUNOBI & 9 ORS — RESPONDENTS
(Suing for themselves and as representing the other members of Umudiaba Kindred of Umuajana Village, Ebenebe)

(Lead Judgement delivered by Honourable Adamu Jauro, JSC)

Arguments

On the 1st issue, counsel for the Appellants argued that the original Notice of Appeal and the Amended Notice of Appeal filed by the Respondents at the Court of Appeal were incompetent because they were signed "for" J. R. Nduka & Co, a law firm, which is not a person whose name is on the roll of legal practitioners in Nigeria. Counsel relying on sections 2 and 24 of the Legal Practitioners Act and Order 7 Rules 2 & 6 of the Court of Appeal Rules, 2016, submitted that the Court of Appeal ought to have declined jurisdiction to entertain the appeal for this reason. Counsel for the Appellants argued further that assuming the original Notice of Appeal and Amended Notice of Appeal were valid, the signing of the original Notice of Appeal by a lawyer other than the lawyer whose seal was affixed rendered it incompetent. Counsel submitted that the Amended Notice of Appeal thus had nothing to stand.

In response, counsel for the Respondents submitted that the important consideration is whether the Notices of Appeal were signed by a legal practitioner and this was evident as the name of J. R. Nduka, Esq. was clearly written under the signature column of both Notices of Appeal, with his seal attached. Counsel argued further that even though the original Notice of Appeal was signed by D. C. Ani, Esq for J. R. Nduka Esq, this did not render it incompetent because both persons are legal practitioners, particularly as the other processes show that D. C. Ani, Esq who signed the original Notice of Appeal and J. R. Nduka whose seal was affixed thereto are legal practitioners who practice at the same chambers of J. R. Nduka & Co. Counsel relied on **GTB v INNOSON NIGERIA LTD (2017) LPELR - 42368 (SC) and OGUNPEHIN v NUCLEUS VENTURE (2019) LPELR – 48772 (SC).**

Arguing the 2nd issue, counsel for the Appellants submitted that the Court of Appeal wrongly applied Section 18 of the Action Law of Anambra State to find that the case of the Respondents was not caught by the statute of limitation. Counsel argued that the Respondents did not seek declaration of title to the land in dispute, but were complaining that the Appellants were disposing of part of the land in dispute and that the mere mention of the words 'inheritance' or 'tradition' was not sufficient to bring the Respondents' case within the contemplation of Section 18 of the Action Law.

In response, counsel for the Respondents submitted that so far as the Respondents' root of title as pleaded is derived from customary law, their action was exempted from the limitation period under Section 18 of the Action Law. Counsel argued that contrary to the Appellants' argument, title to land was in issue between the Appellants and the Respondents.

Court's Judgement and Rationale

In resolving issue 1, the Supreme Court emphasised that indeed one of the conditions for the competence of an originating process is that it must be signed by the Plaintiff or Appellant as the case may be, or his legal representative who must be a person qualified to practice as a legal practitioner in Nigeria whose name is on the roll of legal practitioners. The Apex Court also re-affirmed the position of the law that a court process signed by an unknown person or signed for a legal practitioner by an unknown proxy or a person whose status as a legal practitioner is impossible to determine is incompetent.

The Supreme Court held that *in determining whether a process is signed by a legal practitioner, what the law requires is that court processes must, on their faces, be seen to be signed by legal practitioners. The Apex Court held as inelegant as the original Notice of Appeal was, it was evident that it was ex facie signed by a legal practitioner in the person of D. C. Ani Esq whose name was indicated in bracket and whose identity as a legal practitioner was not contested by the Appellants, on behalf of another legal practitioner (J. R. Nduka, Esq.), thus, it was competent.* The Court agreed with the submission of the Respondents' counsel that *a court process signed for a Lawyer by another Lawyer whose identity is disclosed, is not incompetent.*

The Apex Court further held that the other limb of the Appellants' complaint that the Original and Amended Notices of Appeal were incompetent because they were signed for a law firm - "For" J. R. Nduka, Esq, was unfounded. Their Lordships held that *it was clear that the Notices of Appeal were signed by legal practitioners whose names were indicated thereafter, and the indication of "For: J. R. Nduka & Co." under the name of Counsel was merely an indication of the law firm of the Counsel who signed.*

On the contention of the Counsel for the Appellants that the original Notice of Appeal was incompetent because the seal of a Lawyer different from the signatory was affixed, the Court held that that *the non-affixation of the NBA seal of the Lawyer who signed a court process, or the affixation of the seal of a Lawyer different from the Lawyer who signed a court process are irregularities that do not affect the validity or competence of the court process, hence, such complaints cannot nullify a court process.* The Court found that the original and Amended Notices of Appeal filed before the Court of Appeal were competent and the Appellate Court rightly assumed jurisdiction to entertain the appeal before it.

In resolving 2nd issue, the Supreme Court held that *in determining whether an action is statute barred, a court is only to consider the originating processes and the reliefs sought therein.* The Court considered Section 22 of the Action Law of Anambra State which prescribed a limitation period of twelve years for any action bordering on recovery of land vis-à-vis the Section 18 of the same law which excludes claims for recovery of land brought by a person who derived his title exclusively under customary law from the application of the limitation bar.

The Supreme Court held that *it was evident on the face of the Respondents' Statement of Claim, that the Respondents predicated their root of title solely on inheritance under customary law; and that being the case, their claim was clearly exempted from the limitation period of 12 years contained in Section 22(2) of the Action Law of Anambra State.* The Supreme Court held that the Court of Appeal was thus, right, to hold that the Respondents' action was not statute barred.

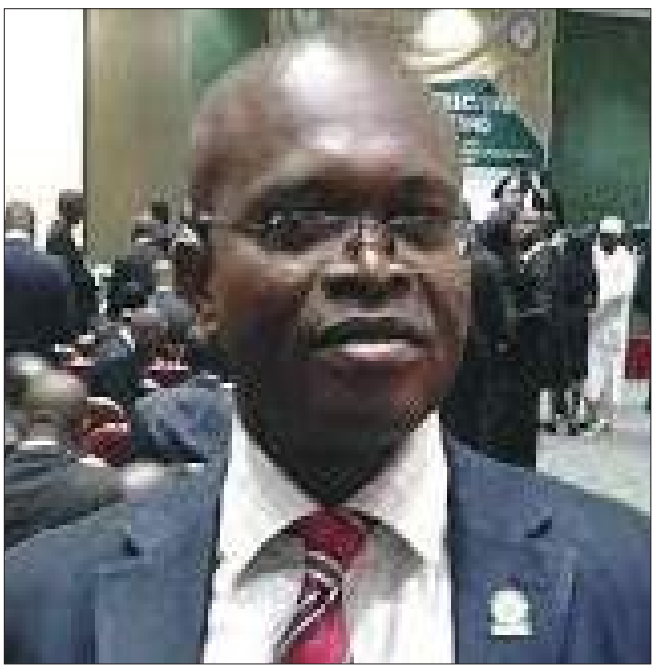
Appeal Dismissed. Judgement of the Court of Appeal remitting the Respondents' suit to the Chief Judge of Anambra State for re-assignment to another Judge affirmed. Accelerated hearing also ordered.

Representation

G. U. Moneke, for the Appellants.
Dr R. E. Nduka, for the Respondents.

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"…. in determining whether a process is signed by a legal practitioner, what the law requires is that court processes must, on their faces, be seen to be signed by legal practitioners….a court process signed for a Lawyer by another Lawyer whose identity is disclosed, is not incompetent….the non-affixation of the NBA seal of the Lawyer who signed a court process, or the affixation of the seal of a Lawyer different from the Lawyer who signed a court process are irregularities that do not affect the validity or competence of the court process…."


NBA Warri Chairman, Solomon Okpakpor


EFCC Chairman, Olanipekun Olukoyede


DG, Nigerian Law School, Prof Isa Chiroma, SAN

100 Years of Legal Practice in Warri: Honouring the Pioneering Efforts of Hon. Asifo Egbe

Stories by State Aya

Tomorrow, April 23, 2025, history will come full circle in the city of Warri, as the legal community will gather to commence the commemoration of a truly monumental milestone, 100 years of legal practice in Warri and the legacy of Hon. Asifo Egbe, the pioneer of legal practice in Warri, who was called to the English Bar on January 26, 1925 and enrolled at the Supreme Court of Nigeria on April 23, 1925. He also became the first Lawyer from the geographical location now known as the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria, to be appointed as a Judicial Officer when he was appointed as a Magistrate sometime in the 1930s. April 23, 2025, marks exactly a Century since Hon. Asifo Egbe was called to the Nigerian Bar. Without hesitation, he returned home and began his legal practice in Warri, establishing himself as the first legal practitioner in the old Warri Province of the Western Region of Nigeria.

The event, themed ***"100 YEARS OF LEGAL PRACTICE IN WARRI: HONOURING THE PIONEERING EFFORTS OF HON. ASIFO EGBE"***, is designed to bring together Lawyers, Judges, Academics, and distinguished guests to celebrate and honour the legacy of Hon. Asifo Egbe.

The event is also designed to reflect on the growth of the legal profession in Warri, and its contribution to the development of the Nigerian legal system over the past century. The Programme of the April 23, 2025, which is the first in a series of programmes lined up to mark the event, will feature a Press Conference and an evening session of reminiscence, where senior members of the Bar will share past experiences, insights, and historical reflections on the legal journey of the Warri Bar from its inception in 1925 to date.

The centenary celebration is not only a tribute to one man's trailblazing path, but also a reminder of how far the legal profession in Warri has come from a single Lawyer in 1925 to a vibrant community of legal minds who continue to fearlessly uphold the tenets of Justice and the Rule of Law.

EFCC, Interpol in Joint N1.3tn CBEX Probe

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, in collaboration with the International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol), has launched an investigation into the alleged N1.3 trillion fraud perpetrated through a digital investment platform, CryptoBank Exchange, better known as CBEX.

CBEX, operated by a group of foreign nationals in collaboration with their Nigerian partners, reportedly collapsed on Monday, leaving thousands of investors stranded and unable to access their funds.

Speaking to the Newsmen, the EFCC spokesman, Dele Oyewale, confirmed that the Commission is collaborating with the Interpol to investigate the incident. Oyewale stated that the Agency had already begun investigating CBEX before its collapse. He added that efforts were underway, to arrest both the local and international operators behind the fraudulent scheme.

He said: "We had our intelligence before the incident. We were already working on it, but, now that the scheme has collapsed, the major actors and their collaborators will be brought in.

"We will ensure that we save Nigerians, from all these troubles associated with Ponzi schemes. Don't forget that we already issued an advisory about the 58 companies we alerted the public about. There are many more, we are currently investigating."

He also revealed that the Commission was working to uncover other Ponzi schemes, operating across the country.

"We are actively working, to handle the CBEX situation. We will collaborate with other regulatory agencies, to ensure that Nigerians are protected from this kind of scheme. We will do our job - where recovery is possible, we will recover; where prosecution is possible, we will prosecute.

"Overall, we will do our best. Additionally, there are similar frauds across the country that people are unaware of, and we are working to uncover them. We are on the local collaborators, while we are partnering with Interpol to trace the foreign operators", he added.

Reports put the volume of stolen investors' funds at $847 million, which may likely increase. The investment platform claims to offer 100% returns within 30 days via online trading, but it restricted withdrawals on April 9, 2025. Users were shocked to find that, their account balances had been wiped out. The platform curiously asked them to deposit at least $100, to access their funds.

Several new users were said to have signed up in the days after the restricted withdrawals, in the belief that it was only a temporary security glitch and would be resolved in a matter of days.

Shortly before locking out its subscribers, the platform sent a message to them stating, "All accounts need to undergo the following verification steps to ensure their authenticity. For accounts with funds below $1,000 before any losses, a deposit of $100 is required. For accounts with funds exceeding $1,000, a deposit of $200 is required. Additionally, please keep your deposit receipts to ensure you can prove the authenticity of the account during future withdrawal reviews".

CBEX had reportedly changed its domain name several times, between January 2024 and February 1, 2025.

The platform, widely promoted on social media and among peer networks, promised high returns on investment, which induced Nigerians to invest substantial amounts.

The development came a few days after the Securities and Exchange Commission, warned Nigerians to stay clear of unregistered trading platforms. SEC particularly pointed out that, following the Investment and Securities Act, 2025, recently signed by President Bola Tinubu, it is now an offence for any entity to operate an online forex trading platform, or provide related services without prior registration with the Commission.

The Director-General of the Commission, Dr Emomotimi Agama, described the new law as "a landmark step in positioning Nigeria's capital market to be more inclusive, robust, and in tune with global best practices".

Agama stated: "The ISA 2025 has given the Commission the legal backing to provide clarity, ensure investor protection, and enhance market confidence, especially in new and previously unregulated segments, such as digital asset exchanges and online foreign exchange platforms".

"By virtue of this act, it is an offence in Nigeria for any entity that is not registered by the Commission, to carry out the business of online foreign exchange trading platforms or related services.

"Any business entity planning to set up a business in any of these areas, is advised to visit the HOD DRM Department of the Commission for further direction on how to register with the Commission to avoid sanctions."

Body of Benchers Leads Legal Tech Revolution with Q-Soft Denovo

In a groundbreaking move to modernise legal disciplinary proceedings, the Body of Benchers, Nigeria's apex legal regulatory body, has introduced Q-Soft Denovo - Africa's first indigenous court recording and transcription system. This innovation, spearheaded by the visionary leadership of Chief Adegboyega Awomolo, SAN, marks a new era of efficiency and transparency in the legal profession.

As the highest decision-making body in Nigeria's justice sector, the Body of Benchers plays a crucial role in upholding ethical and professional standards within the legal profession. Its responsibilities include the formal call to the Bar and the discipline of erring Lawyers. The launch of Q-Soft Denovo, underscores its commitment to leveraging technology for judicial excellence.

The unveiling event brought together distinguished legal luminaries, including Chief Adetokunbo Kayode, SAN; Funke Adekoya, SAN; M.A. Abubakar, SAN; Funmi Quadri, SAN; and the Chairman of the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee (LPDC), Hon. Justice Dr Ishaq Bello, OFR. Also in attendance were LPDC members, who oversee disciplinary cases against legal practitioners under the Legal Practitioners Act.

Speaking on the efficiency of Q-Soft Denovo, Hon. Justice Dr Ishaq Bello, remarked: "We have tested it, and we no longer worry about extensive manual recordings because it works perfectly".

The LPDC, tasked with investigating and determining cases of professional misconduct, now benefits from automated, real-time recording and transcription, ensuring greater accuracy, transparency, and efficiency in disciplinary proceedings. By eliminating the delays and inaccuracies of manual documentation, Q-Soft Denovo significantly enhances the delivery of justice. This technological advancement has already yielded remarkable results. Judges utilising the system have reported a threefold increase in productivity, with one Judge delivering 110 judgements in a single quarter - far exceeding the National Judicial Council's benchmark of 24 judgements per quarter. Such efficiency is a testament to the transformative power of this innovation.

The Body of Benchers, under the leadership of the immediate past Chairman, Chief Adegboyega Awomolo, SAN, deserves commendation for championing this milestone. By embracing digital solutions, the institution sets a precedent for judicial modernisation across Africa, reaffirming its commitment to fostering a more transparent, accountable, and efficient legal system.

Five New Varsities Get CLE's Nod to Admit Law Students

Five new Universities have been given the green light to commence admission of students into their Law programme, by the Council of Legal Education (CLE). A statement made available to the Press by the Council also stated that the CLE has increased the admission quota for the Tier-1 University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), from 220 to 250 students.

The statement also shows that 260 students posted a "First Class" grade in the 2024 Bar Final Examination, while 940 did not scale the hurdle.

CLE held its second quarterly meeting on Thursday, April 17, 2025, at the Council Chambers, Headquarters of the Nigerian Law School, Bwari, Abuja.

Highlights and Resolutions from the Council of Legal Education Hybrid Meeting

During the meeting, the Council received and deliberated on a comprehensive report presented by the Director General, Nigerian Law School, and the Chairman of the Board of Studies, Prof Isa Hayatu Chiroma, SAN, Life Bencher, on verification visits to the following Universities:

Nigerian British University, Asa-Uzuaku, Abia State.

- Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State.
- Modibbo Adama University, Yola.
- Prime University, Kuje, Abuja, and
- Margaret Lawrence University, Abuja.

Following the visits, the team expressed satisfaction with the facilities and academic structures of these Universities, and recommended their approval to commence Law programmes with a quota of 50 students at the 100 level from the 2024/2025 academic session.

The Council has also approved the results of the 2024 Bar Final Examinations, with the summary as follows:

Total number of candidates who sat for the examination: 7,134

First Class Honours: 260
Second Class Upper: 1,193
Second Class Lower: 2,638
Pass: 1,595
Conditional pass: 327
Fail: 940
Absent: 181

This translates to an overall pass rate of 84%, with 16% recorded as failures.

The Council reaffirmed its commitment to the continuous advancement of legal education, and to maintaining the high standards in the training of aspiring legal practitioners in Nigeria.

CROSSFIRE!



NBA President, Mazi Afam Osigwe, SAN



Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara



Rivers State Sole Administrator, Ibok-Ete Ibas

NBA vs IBAS

Should NBA Refund the N300 Million Conference Gift?

The Nigerian polity hasn't had any quiet since the declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State, suspension of the Rivers State Governor and the Rivers State House of Assembly members by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR last month. The latest muddling of the already muddy waters came last week when the **Rivers State Sole Administrator, Ibok-Ete Ibas,** demanded that the N300 million earlier donated to the **Nigerian Bar Association (NBA)** towards hosting this year's Annual General Conference (AGC) to be held in Port Harcourt, be refunded to the coffers of Rivers State Government, consequent upon NBA relocating the AGC to Enugu. The umbrage and controversy this demand has elicited is the subject of this edition, in a Cross Fire

The N300 million Should be Returned to Rivers State

OCJ Okocha, SAN

I do not agree with the decision to relocate the Annual Conference of the Nigerian Bar Association to Enugu.

We, as members of the Association, must learn to adapt to the circumstances that confront us at any given time, and also learn to deal with matters that arise from those circumstances.

The ostensible reason for the relocation of the Conference, is the current Emergency Rule in Rivers State. That, on its own, is ample reason for us to come to Port Harcourt, and discuss the issues that have arisen as a result. We can hold the

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"....it is undeniable that the money was donated because the Conference was to be held in Port Harcourt, and the economy of the city would have benefited greatly from it. It therefore, necessarily follows that, since the Conference is now relocated away from Port Harcourt, the money should be refunded to the Rivers State Government"

NBA Must Refund the N300 million

Dele Adesina, SAN



I am perfectly in agreement with the decision of the President of the NBA and the Conference Planning Committee to relocate the Conference, having regard to the earlier publicly expressed official position of the NBA on the Government in Rivers State. Having condemned the declaration of emergency and having openly expressed the position that the government is illegal and unconstitutional, the same government cannot be their host. That will amount to self- contradiction. NBA cannot approbate and reprobate, at the same time. NBA has a responsibility to defend the Constitution, not only in words, but also by their actions. In the same vein, NBA is honour and integrity-bound to refund the N300 million.

As a past General Secretary of the Bar, l know as a fact that no person or government pays any price to host NBA Conference. A person or Government can give towards the Conference expenses, if they so desire. It is not true that the money was paid for hosting right. No. If you give me money and you say you are not giving me again, l will refund your money. The money is yours ab initio.

Dele Adesina, SAN, former General Secretary of the NBA

CROSSFIRE!

NBA vs IBAS: Should NBA Refund the N300 Million Conference Gift?



NBA 2025 Conference Planning Committee Chairman, Chief Emeka Obegolu, SAN

The N300 million Should be Returned to Rivers State

cont'd from page VI

Conference without the presence of the Administrator, and the people of Rivers State and the people of Nigeria will hear and see how we dealt with a very topical issue.



On the N300,000.00 earlier donated by the Rivers State Government, it is undeniable that the money was donated because the Conference was to be held in Port Harcourt, and the economy of the city would have benefited greatly from it. It therefore, necessarily follows that, since the Conference is now relocated away from Port Harcourt, the money should be refunded to the Rivers State Government.

OCJ Okocha, SAN, former NBA President, Port Harcourt

N300m to NBA Is a free Gift, Not Returnable

Prof Mike Ozekhome, SAN



To me, NBA moving the Conference from PH to Enugu is well-intentioned, inevitable and based on principles, having condemned the appointment of the Sole Administrator as being unconstitutional (exactly what it is). It would have amounted to approbating and reprobating, to be hosted by a person you said is an illegal occupant of and a pretender to the throne of Governorship.

Having said that, whether to return or withhold the N300m, depends on what exactly the N300m was meant for. If it was a free grant in the form of a voluntary donation to the NBA towards hosting the AGC, then it is not returnable and must never be returned by the NBA. If however, it was tied to the hosting of the AGC as part and parcel of the total package, then NBA should quietly return the money, without allowing a messy legal duel.

Prof Mike Ozekhome, SAN, Constitutional and Human Rights Lawyer, Abuja

Sole Administrator Doesn't have the Power to Ask for N300m Refund

Jonathan Gunu Taidi, SAN

The resolve of the NBA-NEC to relocate the AGC to Enugu, was necessitated by the need to show our disapproval of the removal of a democratic government on terms forbidden by the 1999 Constitution, and the installation of a virtual dictatorship in its stead. Indeed, the NBA should not be associated with such brazen breach of our constitutional democracy.



The N300 million which I understand was meant to facilitate preparations for the Conference hitherto scheduled to hold in Port Harcourt, is now inflicted with force majure. Just as the RVSG spent N300 million, our members have made financial commitments by reserving hotels, booked tickets, etc which are not recallable. In addition, I wonder if the Sole Administrator has the vires to make such demand for a refund.

Jonathan Gunu Taidi, SAN, former NBA General Secretary

"On the issue of the N300m, I cannot find my way through the demand by the Rivers State Milad, for a refund. There can be no basis for that demand. It is unwarranted, unjustifiable, unconscionable and accentuated by malice aforethought"

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CROSSFIRE!

NBA vs IBAS: Should NBA Refund the N300 Million Conference Gift?



Rivers State Sole Administrator, Ibok-Ete Ibas

cont'd from page VII

N300m Donation Can't be Refunded

Dr Monday Onyekachi Ubani, SAN

I have read with respectful interest, the recent piece authored by brilliant mind, Dr Ope Banwo, titled "The NBA and the N300 Million 'Donation' Mess - Is it Legit Fundraising or Proof of a Compromised Lawyers' Body?" While I appreciate Dr Banwo's concern for ethical purity in public institutions and Associations like NBA, his attempt to caricature the NBA's acceptance of a financial donation from the Rivers State Government of Governor Fubara as a moral collapse or institutional compromise is, at best, overly idealistic, and, at worst, dangerously disconnected from the operational realities of our present national context.



Let me offer a more grounded, pragmatic, and constitutionally defensible perspective.

1. The NBA Committed No Legal or Moral Wrong

Nowhere in the Constitution of the NBA or in any statute regulating professional conduct, has it been declared illegal or unethical for a State government to support the Bar, especially in the context of hosting or facilitating its Annual General Conference. The argument that a donation, in and of itself, constitutes a compromise of institutional independence lacks both legal foundation and factual proof. Dr Banwo's position is emotive, not evidential. This is without prejudice to NBA returning the funds, if they are convinced that it is the right to do.

One would have expected the learned Dr to cite where such donation contravenes the Legal Practitioners Act, the NBA Constitution, or any provision of the Rules of Professional Conduct. Instead, he launches into broad, moralistic rhetoric that suggests that receiving help to organise a professional event, is a stain on the soul of the Bar. With respect, this is speculative philosophy, not pragmatic institutional analysis.

2. State Support for National Conferences is Not Unusual

Across professional associations in Nigeria - medical, engineering, educational, even accounting, it is routine for State governments to offer financial and logistical support, especially when such associations bring their national conferences to those States. The harsh judgement on NBA over the present donation, is very unfair and unacceptable.

Is it Dr Banwo's argument that the NBA should finance a multi-million-Naira national Conference purely from annual dues of members, many of whom are struggling to meet basic financial obligations in today's Nigeria? Most private donors are finding it difficult to render support, due to harsh economic realities in Nigeria. Is such suggestion or expectation realistic, or is it a utopian ideal

cont'd on page IX

"I do not even think the Sole Administrator deserves a reply from the NBA. If he feels strongly about his case, he should go to court and enforce the alleged breach of the hosting rights agreement. We will meet him there. In any case, was he appointed as a debt collector or to restore peace in Rivers State…."

N300m Donation to NBA is Non-Refundable

Prof Roland Otaru, SAN



I am of the opinion that the donation to NBA by the Rivers State Government was voluntary with no strings attached, to warrant any refund. In addition, under the Constitution of the NBA 2015, the NBA can receive donations and gifts from individuals , entities and Governments who volunteered to do so.

On the relocation of the Conference, the NBA has the discretion to do so. This is because Port Harcourt had hosted several NBA Conferences in the past. Port Harcourt hosted the Conference few years ago, during the regime of Nyesom Wike. This case should not create any animosity between the parties.

Prof Roland Otaru, SAN

Demand for N300m Refund is Unjustifiable and Accentuated by Malice

Anthony Malik, SAN



The relocation of the NBA-AGC, was a swift reaction to a nasty occurrence. It couldn't have been otherwise. Now, days after the proclamation of a state of emergency in Rivers state and the appointment of a Milad by HE, Mr. President, the NBA President issued a statement. That statement speaks for itself. A week or two after, an emergency NBA-NEC meeting held. At that meeting, NEC endorsed the President's earlier statement, and took a decision to relocate the annual Conference. Personally, I believe that it was the best decision in the circumstance. It would have been a contradiction in terms were the AGC to hold in Port-Harcourt, given the indubitable position embodied in the NBA President's statement. So, I endorse the decision and commend the NBA President, for his resoluteness and clear-mindedness.

On the issue of the N300m, I cannot find my way through the demand by the Rivers State Milad, for a refund. There can be no basis for that demand. It is unwarranted, unjustifiable, unconscionable and accentuated by malice aforethought. The fact that it was predicated on a faulty premise of assumed "hosting rights", makes it more laughable! The money was a gift or, at best, a donation towards specific and agreed line items at the conference. For example, Conference bags, pens, jotters, cufflinks, etc. These items, I believe, have already been produced and branded in acknowledgement of the Rivers State Government sponsorship. Significantly, the donation wasn't made because the Conference was to be staged in Port Harcourt. For the record, I have served on the Planning Committee for NBA-AGC twice, so I know that different State Governments do sponsor or make donations to the NBA for our AGC. Ditto corporate organisations and individuals. So, really, there is nothing novel about gifting NBA N300m or any sum at all, towards our Conference.

So, I condemn the attempt to demonise the Association, simply because it took a considered position on an issue of national importance and international ramifications. The Milad, by any stretch of imagination, was not appointed to go and fight. However, if he decides that all he wants to use his six months to do or achieve is fight, he is advised to see and appreciate the wisdom in choosing his fight or picking his battles. Strategic engagement, prioritisation, long-term perspective, emotional intelligence, and self-control, are the hallmarks of true leadership. I say no more.

Anthony Aikhunegbe Malik, SAN

CROSSFIRE!

NBA vs IBAS: Should NBA Refund the N300 Million Conference Gift?



NBA National Secretariat, Abuja

cont'd from page VIII

N300m Donation Can't be Refunded

unsuited to our economic climate?

A Bar Association that aims to remain independent in thought and effective in impact, must be resourced. Denying assistance from State actors, who may genuinely wish to support intellectual and professional engagements, is not a badge of morality; it is the embrace of unnecessary hardship. I am of the view that proper guidelines be mapped out to guide the acceptance, and conditions well spelt out for future engagements with them.

3. Donation Is Not a Bribe; Intent for it Matters

It is misleading, if not disingenuous, to imply that all donations from political actors are tainted. The mens rea, the intention behind the act, matters in both law and morality. The N300 million donation, to the best of available information, was neither tied to any political loyalty nor offered in exchange for silence or support. Anyone with contrary evidence, can provide same.

As stated earlier, unless there is concrete evidence that the Rivers State Government attached conditions to the donation, or that the NBA leadership acted in a way that directly undermines the Bar's neutrality in exchange for this funding, it is inappropriate to call it a bribe or a compromise.

4. We Must Not Demonise Benefactors to Appear Holy

Dr Banwo's argument seems to suggest that accepting financial support from any public officer, automatically makes the Bar complicit in their alleged political sins. This is the kind of extreme moral absolutism, that has no place in responsible advocacy and modern realism.

Should we vilify those who help us, merely because they occupy public office? Are Governors demons whose hands we cannot shake or receive aid from, without risking our moral integrity? This is not how institutions function, not even in the most ethically structured democracies.

5. Realism Must Temper Rhetoric

Dr Banwo urges a refund of the donation, perhaps, as a form of moral atonement. That suggestion, though dramatic, ignores the fact that the NBA's national Conference planning involves massive logistics, accommodations, technology, and security that member dues cannot cover alone.

What, then, is the alternative? To run a substandard Conference? To scale down our operations to match a depleted treasury, thereby reducing our relevance and visibility in national discourse?

If we are to insist on idealistic financial purity, we must first build an internal revenue base that can shoulder the burden of a world-class conference. Until then, moral high horses cannot pull this cart.

6. This Is Not a Crisis, It's a Conversation

The conversation about institutional independence, public perception, and ethical boundaries is a legitimate one, and I raised it in my first article. A new practice or jurisprudence may emerge after this matter dies down, either administratively or through court pronouncement.

However, framing this donation as a scandal is unfair to the NBA, and disingenuous to the public.

The Bar must continue to engage with the State and society. We must hold governments accountable, yes, but not at the expense of refusing cooperation, collaboration, or assistance that can help strengthen the legal profession and its institutions. I may be wrong, for I do not claim to know it all.

7. Let's Not Burn the Bridge While Trying to Stay Pure

To maintain a principled stance without becoming puritanical, is the real test of leadership. The NBA has not sold its conscience. It has simply accepted a donation, without strings, to advance its professional goals. That, in itself, is not a sin.

If we truly believe in institutional progress and growth, the better approach is not to sever public partnerships, but to manage them transparently, ethically, and with a clear firewall between sponsorship and influence. That is a better and godly position, if you ask me.

The NBA is not for sale. But, neither is it a monastery. It exists in the real world, funded by real people, facing real challenges.

Dr Monday Ubani, SAN, Past Chairman, NBA Section on Public Interest and Development Law (SPIDEL)

N300m is a Gift: 'Go to Court, We'll Meet There, NBA Will Not Refund'

Jubril Sam Okutepa, SAN

I have read the views of some of my colleagues that the NBA should return the sum of N300 million donated to it by the legitimate Rivers State Governor for the 2025 Annual General Conference of the Bar, which was initially scheduled to hold in Rivers State in August this year. Some of my colleagues went further to argue that the NBA should not collect money from the Government, and that the NBA must be self-funding. Plausible and sound as these arguments may be, I think most are not rooted in the realities of our situation as Nigerian Lawyers.



But, before returning to this, let me repeat what I said earlier on this N300 million. I have expressed the view that - even if the N300 million given to the NBA by Governor Sim Fubara was for hosting rights as claimed by the illegal and unconstitutional Sole Administrator of Rivers State - it would be unconstitutional and unlawful for the NBA to return the money to the Sole Administrator. Doing so, would amount to recognising him as a legitimate authority in Rivers State. I do not even think the Sole Administrator deserves a reply from the NBA. If he feels strongly about his case, he should go to court and enforce the alleged breach of the hosting rights agreement. We will meet him there. In any case, was he appointed as a debt collector or to restore peace in Rivers State, which his appointors claim Governor Sim Fubara could not? What an absurdity of illegality.

I stand by this view. The illegal and unconstitutional Sole Administrator can go to court. We will meet him there.

As far as I know, the NBA survives largely on donations from governments and other willing donors, to fund its Annual General Conferences. Conference registration fees alone, are not sufficient to host these events. How many Lawyers in Nigeria, are willing and ready to donate generously to the NBA for its annual Conferences? How much do we pay as membership fees, to fund NBA activities? Even the practising fees are reluctantly paid by many.

While I deeply appreciate the views of my colleagues on the need for the NBA to be self-funded and self-sufficient, we must all commit to financially supporting the Association and ensuring its accountability. The NBA must invest, grow, and become profitable to stand tall. That said, I see no reason to return the money - especially since it was not tied to hosting rights. If we all agree that the NBA should not accept money from the Government, then we must also agree to fund it ourselves.

Jubril Sam Okutepa, SAN, Constitutional Lawyer, Abuja

"If the NBA makes it a habit to be returning every gift given because of intimidation, nothing will stop future donors from demanding return of gifts they make to the NBA….Any refund at all - if necessary - (which I doubt), should not be made during the controversial tenure of Mr Ibas…lest the NBA unwittingly endorses his legitimacy….."

CROSSFIRE!

NBA vs IBAS: Should NBA Refund the N300 Million Conference Gift?



NBA President, Mazi Afam Osigwe, SAN

NBA Can't Refund the N300m

Ibrahim Mark



It was inevitable, that the Conference would be relocated to a more plausible venue.

Having a state of emergency in existence, means that rights of the people will be curtailed at short or no notice at all. The worrying part being there are no known guidelines on what the Sole Administrator should or should not do, security wise, since the reason for the declaration is failure of security.

The issue of refund must be understood, in the right context. Is the money a hosting right? Do States host NBA Conferences? Or is it the Branches that apply to host the Conferences? Is the State limited to provision of security for delegates and other participants in the Conference week? When these are outlined and known, we can start to determine issue of refund or not.

Mind you the NBA, was given that money by a Government and Governor they term legitimate, democracy wise. NBA has also dubbed the government and Sole Administrator, as illegitimate and aberration to democracy. NBA cannot dine with one they called a devil.

Ibrahim Mark, President, African Bar Association

N300m Was a Gift, NBA Can't Refund

Kunle Edun, SAN



The NBA President, Afam Osigwe, SAN has clearly stated the position of the NBA and I fully support it. The current Government in Rivers State is not a democratic government, and the NBA being a responsible organisation, cannot be seen having dealings with anti-democratic forces.

It was the elected government of Rivers State, that voluntarily gifted the NBA the money. That same elected Government is not in place as at today. Whenever, the true Government of the people returns, the NBA will take it from there.

Let it be clear to all, that a gift once given is gone for good. In this case, the N300m was purely a gift that was never attached to any hosting right or other conditions, but, to assist towards the AGC preparation like other donors are doing. The other corporate and institutional organisations that partner with the NBA and decided to support the good work of the NBA, make no noise about it. Moreover, the preparation for the Conference did not start today. It actually predates the installation of the semi-military rule in Rivers State. So, the money has been used long ago for what it was intended. If the Sole Administrator is not comfortable with that, he may file an action in Court to recover same.

Kunle Edun, SAN

Unconscionable for NBA to Keep the N300m

Stephen Kola-Balogun



It would be unconscionable for the NBA as a reputable Association and one which, in many respects, is recognised as the voice of the people, to hold on to the so called N300 million gift given to it by the Rivers State Government, if it has unilaterally taken the decision to no longer hold its annual Conference in Rivers State. If we take seriously our standing as a reputable voice of the people, the money should be returned to the Rivers State Government immediately. It makes no sense to me, for us to take a gift of N300m from the Rivers State Government.

If we are no longer hosting our annual Conference there, that can almost be deemed as taking money through false pretences if we don't refund the money, and keep intact what's left of our dwindling reputation. We have over 500 Senior Advocates. They, along with our top commercial law firms, can easily return N1m each and senior Lawyers like myself, N500,000 or more if need be. It doesn't even have to be compulsory. Even an optional request would raise sufficient funds that could even leave enough to assist in hosting the rescheduled Conference in Enugu State, without having to go round with our begging bowl yet again. However, I am of the opinion that subsequently, there should be an inquiry into how the N300m taken from Rivers has been spent.

Stephen Kola-Balogun, Lagos

No Legal and Equitable Ground for Refund

Kayode Makanjuola

It is my opinion that those advising that the NBA returns the money, need to be properly informed of the consequences of such advisory. If the NBA makes it a habit of returning every gift given because of intimidation, nothing will stop future donors from demanding return of gifts they make to the NBA, thus, blackmailing the NBA. The NBA must not submit to any blackmail or intimidation. The NBA is right, both in law and on the facts. Any refund at all - if necessary (which I doubt), should not be made during the controversial tenure of Mr Ibas as Sole Administrator; lest the NBA unwittingly endorses his legitimacy - which would contradict it's public disavowal of his emergence.

Having said that, even the suspended State Governor, in my view, cannot legitimately demand a refund of the gift, for the simple reason that, that is what it is: an out-and-out gift. It was unconditional.

There is no legal or equitable ground for such a refund (not even pursuant to a court order) unless, of course, it is reasonably suspected to be the proceeds of a crime by virtue of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2022.

Those introducing morality into the debate, are missing the point. That notion (that the NBA should, as it were, put its money where its mouth is) is misconceived.

Kayode Makanjuola, Lagos

Celebration Of *Life*

With gratitude to God for a life well spent, we announce the transition to glory of our matriarch, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother;



MRS ADEWUNMI FLORENCE OJUROYE

(Nee Shodimu-Dawodu)

9TH AUGUST 1939

AGED 85

- 17TH DECEMBER 2024

Burial Arrangements

Thursday, May 1st 2025
Service of Songs

Friday, May 2nd 2025
Funeral Service & Interment

She is survived by

children, grandchildren & great-grandchildren.

SIGNED: MR. AYO OJUROYE

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF MECURE INDUSTRIES PLC

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT AN EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING ("EGM") OF MECURE INDUSTRIES PLC (THE "COMPANY") SCHEDULED TO HOLD VIRTUALLY ON WEDNESDAY, 14TH OF MAY, 2025, AT 11.00AM PROMPT, FOR THE PURPOSE OF TRANSACTING THE FOLLOWING:

SPECIAL BUSINESS

1. To consider and if thought fit, pass the following sub-joined resolutions as a special resolution of the Company:

a) *"That the Company be and is hereby authorised to raise additional capital of up to ₦30,000,000,000 (Thirty Billion Naira Only) or its foreign currency equivalent in the Nigerian and/or international capital markets through the issuance of up to 2,500,000,000 (Two Billion, Five Hundred Million) ordinary shares, either as a standalone issue(s) or by the establishment of a capital raising programme(s), whether by way of public offerings, private placements, rights issues and/or other transaction modes, at price(s) determined through book building or any other acceptable valuation method or combination of methods at such dates, and on such terms and conditions as may be determined by the Board of Directors of the Company (the "Board") subject to obtaining the requisite regulatory approvals;*

b) *The Company's issued share capital be increased by the exact number of shares which will be offered under the capital raise upon the determination of the terms of the capital raise by the Board further to the above resolution;*

c) *Further to the above approvals, the Board be, and is hereby, authorised to: (i) pass the relevant resolutions increasing the Company's share capital by the specific number of new ordinary shares required for the capital raise; and (ii) allot such said number of new ordinary shares upon completion of the capital raising exercise;*

d) *That the Board (where it deems appropriate) be authorised to take the necessary steps to cancel any unallotted shares of the Company created pursuant to (c) above;*

e) *That after the increase of the Company's share capital and the allotment of the new ordinary shares in accordance with resolutions above, the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Company be amended as necessary to reflect the Company's new Issued Share Capital; and*

f) *That the Board be and is hereby authorised to do all acts and things, and to approve, sign and/or execute all documents, perform all such other acts and do all such other things as may be necessary to give effect to the above resolutions".*

2. To consider and if thought fit, pass the following sub-joined resolutions as a special resolution of the Company:

a) *That Clause 3 of the Memorandum of Association of the Company be and is hereby amended by the insertion to the new object clauses as follows:*

i To manufacture, formulate, process, develop, refine, import, export, wholesale and/or retail trade all kinds of pharmaceuticals products, medicines, drugs, biologicals, neutraceuticals, healthcare, ayurvedic and dietary supplement products, medicinal preparations, vaccines, chemicals, multivitamin products and dry salters of all kinds of pharmaceuticals and allied products, and to engage in business of healthcare, life sciences, research and development, contract manufacturing in Nigeria and/or abroad

ii To deal in medicinal goods such as surgical instruments, contraceptives, photographic goods, oils, perfumes, cosmetics, patent medicines, soaps, artificial limbs, hospital requisites, proprietary medicines, veterinary medicines and tinctures extracts

iii To carry on the business of vialling, bottling, repacking, processing of pharmaceutical products tablets, capsules, syrups, injections, ointments, etc and also to carry on the business of chemists, druggists, buyers, sellers, agents, distributors and stockist of all kinds of pharmaceuticals and allied products

b) *That the Memorandum of Association of the Company be re-numbered as appropriate following the amendments in resolution ii (a) above;*

c) *The Board be and is hereby authorised to take all such steps, execute all documents, and give all such directives as may be necessary to give effect to the foregoing resolution;*

Dated this 15th day of April 2025
BY ORDER OF THE BOARD

AZEEZAH MUSE-SADIQ (FRC/2018/NBA/00000018554)
FOR: BANWO & IGHODALO (FRC/2023/COY/649079)
COMPANY SECRETARY

NOTES

1. VOTING & PROXIES:

A member entitled to attend and vote at the EGM is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend in his stead. A proxy need not be a member of the Company. Consequently, members are entitled to appoint a proxy of their choice to represent them at the meeting. A proxy form is attached to the Notice. For the instrument of proxy to be valid, it must be completed and duly stamped for the purpose of this meeting. The Company has made arrangements at its cost for the stamping of the duly completed proxy forms which must be deposited at the office of the Registrar, Cordros Registrars Limited, 21 Norman Williams Street, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria or sent via email to cordrosregistrars@cordros.com not later than 48 hours before the time of holding the meeting.

2. CLOSURE OF THE REGISTER OF MEMBERS

The Register of Members and transfer Books of the Company will be closed from May 5, 2025 to May 9, 2025 (both dates inclusive), for the purpose of preparing an up-to-date Register of Members.

3. RIGHTS OF SHAREHOLDERS TO ASK QUESTIONS

Pursuant to Rule 19.12(c) of Nigerian Exchange Limited Rulebook 2015, shareholders have a right to ask questions not only at the meeting but also in writing prior to the meeting and such questions must be submitted to the Company Secretary not less than a week prior to the date of the meeting.

4. LIVE STREAMING OF THE EGM

The EGM will be streamed live online to enable Shareholders and other relevant Stakeholders to follow the proceedings. The link for the live streaming of the EGM will be made available on the Company's website: MeCure Industries PLC and by the Registrars in due course..

5. VIRTUAL MEETING LINK

Further to Part 1 Paragraph 11 of the Schedule to the Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2023 and Article 10 of the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association, this EGM will be held virtually. The Virtual Meeting Link for the Extra-Ordinary General Meeting is provided above and will also be available on the Company's website: MeCure Industries PLC

6. WEBSITE

A copy of this Notice, Proxy Form and other information relating to the Meeting can be found at MeCure Industries PLC.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

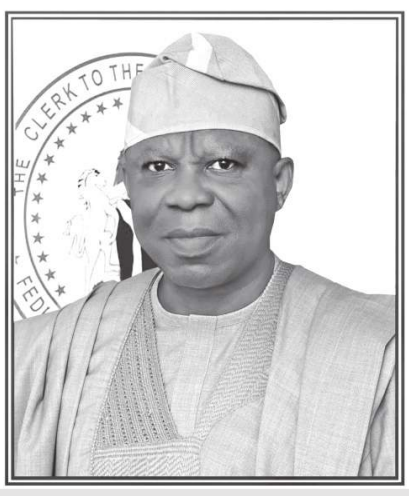
NOTICE OF EXTENSION OF RESUMPTION DATE BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

This is to inform Distinguished Senators, Honourable Members, and the general public that the two Houses of the National Assembly have extended the date for the resumption of plenary sessions from Tuesday, 29th April 2025, to Tuesday, 6th May 2025.

This extension allows Distinguished Senators and Honourable Members to participate in the Workers' Day ceremony and attend to other engagements in their constituencies.

Distinguished Senators, Honourable Members, and the general public are urged to take note of the new resumption date.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and appreciate your understanding.



Signed
Kamoru Ogunlana
Clerk to the National Assembly

TRIBUTE

Mike Adenuga @ 72: Wealth Beyond Money

By Arinze Anapugars



xxx

What sets him apart is not his stupendous wealth or the sprawling empire he has built.

Dr. Michael Agbolade Ishola Adenuga is a man whose fortune transcends money, whose true affluence is etched in the quiet revolutions he has ignited across business, society, and the human soul.

Even as he turns 72 on April 29, Adenuga remains an enigmatic titan – inscrutable as the Sphinx, elusive as a breeze at dusk. Yet his influence echoes thunderously in boardrooms, communities, and economies, belying the quietude he so fiercely guards. "Character is like a tree and reputation like a shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing," Abraham Lincoln once reflected. Dr. Mike Adenuga, in his silence and substance, is unmistakably the tree.

The Quiet Alchemy of a Titan

Dr Adenuga's story is one of unwavering resilience, strategic brilliance, and disarming humility. His rise from modest origins to continental acclaim is not merely a story of wealth acquired, but of vision pursued with Spartan discipline and almost monastic restraint.

By his early twenties, he had already entered the gilded ranks of millionaires; not through inherited fortune, but through the sweat of night shifts as a New York taxi driver and security guard, braving icy streets with stoic resolve. The conditions were so tough that six of his compatriots gave up their jobs owing to what they termed life-threatening weather and adverse work conditions.But Dr Adenuga understood that adversity, like the English poet, George Gordon Byron, wrote in Don Juan "is the first path to truth." And through such crucibles, Adenuga forged not just a fortune, but a formidable will.

Upon returning to Nigeria, eschewing the comfort of white-collar prestige, he chose instead the grit of his parents' sawmill. There, he demonstrated his instinctive flair for transformation — installing cutting-edge equipment, multiplying efficiency, and sowing the first seeds of an empire.

From timber to oil, from banking to telecommunications, and from aviation to real estate, Adenuga's ventures grew with the inevitability of sunrise, guided not merely by profit, but by a philosopher's belief in purpose and permanence. They include Worldspan Holdings, Devcom Bank, Equatorial Trust Bank (later merging with Sterling Bank), Conoil Plc, Conoil Producing, Southern Airline and, eventually, Globacom — each a monument not just to enterprise, but to audacity.

The Rebel Who Drilled

In the tempestuous oil industry of the 1980s, while others bartered oil blocs for quick gain, Adenuga dug deep — literally. His foray into the business was a typically audacious one. When he acquired oil blocs through his Consolidated Oil company as part of the Babangida administration's step to break the monopoly of foreigners in the production of crude oil in the country, Adenuga refused to toe his peers' path of selling off the oil blocs to foreign companies. He chose to embark on drilling against monumental pressure and the risk of failure. His family had warned him the oil business was the preserve of multinational oil companies and not for individual businessmen. The mother whom he was particularly close to preferred him to remain in the manufacturing business where he had made his mark and where Nigerians had succeeded greatly.

Dismissing warnings from family and scepticism from the industry, he pioneered Nigeria's first indigenous oil production through Consolidated Oil. It was an act of entrepreneurial defiance that redefined the energy landscape.

Then came National Oil and Chemical Marketing Company (NOLCHEM), a dying brand he acquired for a then hefty sum of N7.4 billion, when no one else dared touch it. He changed the name to Conoil, and, under his stewardship, it rose phoenix-like, and is now one of Nigeria's most profitable oil marketing firms. He is, in every sense, the Prometheus of Nigerian industry, having wrested fire from the gods of foreign monopoly and gifted it to his people.

The Voice that Gave Us Voice

Yet if oil carved his name in gold, it was telecommunications that etched it into legend. Twice he won a GSM licence auction, twice the licences were revoked. The first auction was done by the Abacha regime, and cancelled by successive administration which opined the exercise did not follow due process. Adenuga was to again win a GSM licence in 2000 under the President Olusegun Obasanjo regime. But the spectrum he was allotted was encumbered as it had earlier been assigned to another company. When he insisted on certain guarantees before he would make the full payment for the licence, the Federal Government petulantly revoked it and stripped him of the $20 million mandatory deposit.

It was a massive loss which would have made lesser mortals recoil. But as Freidrich Nietzsche wrote in 'Twilight of the Idols", "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how." For Adenuga, that 'why' was vision — of a Nigeria where communication was not a privilege but a right. He pressed on, and later went on to bid for the Second National Operator (SNO) license in 2002, and deposited another $20 million. This time, he was lucky. He won the bid in August of that year and Globacom was granted the licence to operate as a national carrier, operate digital mobile lines, serve as international gateway for telecommunications in the country, and operate fixed wireless access services.

Even then, many did not give him a chance. They argued that the telecom sector was for the well established foreign telecom companies and that Adenuga did not have the requisite experience in that field. And when he announced that Globacom would launch with Per Second Billing (PSB), the industry scoffed loudly at him.

Again, the Great Guru, as he is fondly called by admirers, went on to prove sceptics wrong. With the birth of Globacom in 2003, his vision democratising communication was realised. Per Second Billing, once dismissed as folly by older operators, became the new industry standard. Call rates tumbled. SIM cards not only became accessible but also affordable. The digital revolution took root. And millions of Nigerians, once voiceless, found a voice — thanks to the tenacity of one man who would not yield.

A Legacy Forged in Silence

I do not know if he ever came across this quote by Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Roman emperor and philosopher, "Do not seek to be known, but to be worth knowing". But perhaps no modern Nigerian epitomises this Stoic ideal more than Dr Mike Adenuga. Reclusive almost to the point of myth, he is rarely seen, seldom heard, hardly grants media interviews, and virtually never feted in public. Even many of his employees have never glimpsed their elusive Chairman known to them only as "The Board."

Yet his absence is an illusion. For in businesses, homes, hospitals, and schools, Adenuga's presence is indelible. He gives, not for applause, but from an inner compass that points unfailingly to service. His philanthropy, like his wealth, is deliberate, vast, and largely unannounced. He gives quietly, contributing generously to various causes in health, education, and poverty alleviation. He has supported initiatives that aim to improve the lives of millions, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. While his peers may spend their time in the public eye, Adenuga chooses to channel his efforts into creating lasting change in people's lives. For him, wealth is beyond money. It is how you touch people's lives.

Adenuga's legacy looms large – not only in the industries he transformed or the fortunes he built, but in the hearts he touched without fanfare. In an age that worships spectacle, his is a refreshing, almost ancient kind of greatness: the kind that measures success in lives changed, not headlines gained. "To give without ostentation," said the Turkish philosopher Epictetus, "is the truest form of virtue."

The downside to Adenuga's giving spirit, however, is that even gratitude can be an intrusion. It is a taboo to try to reach him to show appreciation, even if you are privileged to have his number. A thank-you text message for a huge cheque from him once earned this writer a stern rebuke. "Not acceptable," he responded curtly. It did not end there. The following day, he called and spent over 10 minutes warning about the "intrusion". Such is the paradox of the man: generous beyond measure, yet resistant to recognition and expression of gratitude.

Now, as he turns 72, Adenuga's legacy looms large — not only in the industries he transformed or the fortunes he built, but in the hearts he touched without fanfare. In an age that worships spectacle, his is a refreshing, almost ancient kind of greatness: the kind that measures success in lives changed, not headlines gained. He prefers, in his words, "to keep my head under the parapet".

Dr Mike Adenuga has done his work – quietly, unceasingly, and profoundly. As he reflects on the past 72 years, he can do so with the serenity of a fulfilled life. For in him we find not just a titan of business, but a philosopher in action — a man whose wealth lies not only in billions, but in the beauty of restraint, the majesty of vision, and the invisible architecture of hope he has built not only in Nigeria but also across the African continent.

His bequest is one of excellence, humility, and selflessness. He stands as a shining example of how to achieve greatness without the need for flamboyance, and how to build empires while remaining steadfastly humble.

Here's to Mr. Chairman — Nigeria's silent sentinel of enterprise, whose greatest fortune is not in what he owns, but in how deeply he has mattered!

•Arinze Anapugars works with Globacom

FEATURES

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Harnessing the GTCO Food and Drink Festival as Feast for the Senses, Lifeline for SMEs, Boost for the Economy

A feast for the senses and a lifeline for small businesses, the GTCO Food and Drink Festival has become more than just a culinary celebration. At its heart lies a powerful mission — to uplift small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria's food and drink industry. From its inception, Guaranty Trust Holding Company (GTCO) set out to go beyond traditional banking by creating platforms that spark growth, inspire creativity, and deliver real economic empowerment to everyday Nigerians. As the countdown to this year's edition begins, **Chiemelie Ezeobi** writes that there is greater focus on sustainability, enhanced cultural experiences, inclusivity and accessibility, international exposure for Nigerian cuisine and even more opportunities for businesses





An overview of the GTCO Food and Drink Festival



A masterclass at the festival



Participants from all walks of life

In 2016, a bold idea was plated onto Nigeria's cultural scene: a celebration of food not just as sustenance, but as an expression of identity, a driver of economic growth, and a unifying force. That idea became the GTCO Food and Drink Festival — a dynamic initiative powered by Guaranty Trust Holding Company Plc (GTCO).

What began as a unique experiment in corporate social responsibility has since evolved into Africa's largest food and drink festival, touching lives, empowering small businesses, and preserving the soul of Nigerian cuisine.

Seven years on, the GTCO Food and Drink Festival has grown into an annual cultural institution. Set against the backdrop of the GTCentre in Oniru, Lagos, the festival has consistently drawn hundreds of thousands of food lovers, chefs, artisans, and entrepreneurs into a vibrant community where flavour meets opportunity.

Each edition is more than a culinary showcase — it's a platform that tells stories of ambition, celebrates Nigeria's entrepreneurial spirit, and spotlights Africa's diverse gastronomic heritage.

A Feast for the Senses and the Economy

At its heart, the GTCO Food and Drink Festival is designed to elevate small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the food and drink sector. From the very first edition, GTCO's goal was clear: to go beyond banking by fostering platforms that provide economic empowerment to everyday Nigerians. As Group Chief Executive Officer Segun Agbaje noted in 2022, "The primary objective of the GTCO Food and Drink Festival is to showcase our diversity and industry as a people whilst delivering a sumptuous culinary experience… We want to see our retail customers who also own small businesses thrive by giving them more opportunities to connect with consumers from around the world."

This ethos has translated into real impact. In 2022, over 140 vendors—many of them small-scale food producers and startup restaurateurs—were given free retail stalls to showcase their culinary offerings. By 2023, that number had grown to 204, a significant boost that opened the doors for even more businesses to scale, generate visibility, and build loyal customer bases. In an era where rising costs and limited access to financing have hampered SME growth, such initiatives are nothing short of lifelines.

But GTCO's support doesn't stop at event logistics. Through targeted products like the Food Industry Credit, entrepreneurs can access much-needed capital to scale their operations. The festival becomes not just a moment in time, but a launchpad for many who dream of going from buka to boutique.

Cultural Preservation Through Cuisine

Beyond its economic value, the festival plays a critical role in preserving and promoting Nigerian and African culinary culture. Over the years, the festival has featured live cooking demonstrations and masterclasses by some of the world's most celebrated chefs, including Nigeria's own Ire Hassan-Odukale on "The Business of Food", and international experts like Francesco Mazzei on "Classic Italian Cooking". Yet, at the core of these demonstrations lies a deeper narrative — a celebration of indigenous flavours, traditional cooking methods, and the storytelling power of food.

GTCO's deliberate focus on African cuisine — from jollof rice to nkwobi, suya to moi moi — underscores a proud cultural agenda. As Segun Agbaje eloquently stated in 2024, "This event is a celebration of not just food, but of the rich tapestry of cultures and traditions that make African cuisine so unique." By placing Nigerian food in the global spotlight, the festival helps reshape perceptions about African cuisine, positioning it as sophisticated, dynamic, and globally relevant.

More Than a Festival: A Community Experience

The GTCO Food and Drink Festival is as much a cultural carnival as it is a business expo. Families stream in by the thousands, children dash across dedicated play zones, and music pulses from top African DJs, creating an immersive sensory experience. In 2024, a children's baking class was introduced — an inspired touch that speaks to the festival's intergenerational vision. Children learned how to craft cupcakes and decorate treats, nurturing a new generation of culinary artists and food lovers.

The event's open access model — completely free to attend — ensures inclusivity. Unlike many international food expos that are locked behind expensive tickets and exclusive panels, GTCO's event remains grounded in its commitment to the everyday Nigerian. It is a space where someone selling akara on the street can stand alongside a five-star chef, both celebrated equally for their contribution to Nigeria's rich foodscape.

Connecting Africa to the World, One Bite at a Time

Over the years, the GTCO Food and Drink Festival has become a magnet for global interest. Chefs and food experts from across the globe converge in Lagos, exchanging ideas, techniques, and flavours. It is not merely a local affair; it's an African story told on an international stage.

With over 250,000 foodies in attendance in recent years, the festival has positioned Lagos as a culinary destination — a vibrant city where egusi soup can sit beside French pastries and Thai curries in beautiful harmony.

Through this melting pot, the festival acts as a cultural ambassador, showcasing the depth of African culinary excellence while inviting cross-cultural collaborations. It bridges communities, encourages tourism, and reflects a Nigeria that is proud, dynamic, and open to the world.

Banking on People, Not Just Profits

GTCO's reputation as an innovative financial services provider is well known, but with the Food and Drink Festival, the company has gone beyond profit-driven enterprise. It has become a curator of culture, an incubator for SMEs, and a community builder.

As Nigeria grapples with economic challenges, initiatives like the GTCO Food and Drink Festival offer both relief and optimism.

They remind us that creativity, community, and culture can be powerful drivers of growth. They remind us that food — in all its humble, spicy, sizzling glory — can bring people together in profound ways.

In many ways, the GTCO Food and Drink Festival is no longer just an event. It is a movement. One that feeds not just bellies, but dreams. And that may be its most enduring legacy.

IMAGES

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



L–R: Chairman, Real Estate Developers Association of Nigeria, Dr. Tony Kolawole; Permanent Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Housing, Mr. Gbolahan Toriola; Lagos State Commissioner for Housing, Hon. Moruf Akinderu-Fatai; Special Adviser to the Governor on Housing, Mr. Barakat Odunuga-Bakare; Chairman, Lagos State Chapter of Nigeria Institution of Estate Surveyor and Valuers, Mr. Gbenga Ismail; and Chairman, Association of Estate Agent In Nigeria, Dr. Adeniyi Tinubu, at the state stakeholders' meeting on the escalation of rents, commission on real estate transactions, and the implementation plan for monthly rent payment, held in Alausa, Lagos… recently



L-R: Groom's mother, Mrs Fokansi Ogungbemi; father, Mr Felix Tunde Ikuseyidunmi; groom, Mr Ariyo Godswill Philip; bride, Mrs Adeola Abigael Philip; bride's parents, Elder Abayomi Akinyele; his wife, Deaconess Agnes Taye Akinyele, and groom step-mother, Mrs Stella Omoloso Ikuseyidunmi, during the wedding of the couple at the Christway Church National Headquarters, Iredapo, Ile-Ife, Osun State… recently



L-R: Birthday guests, Dr. Atinuke Uwajeh, Ms. Abiola Okoya, Kate Henshaw, and Mrs. Lola Omotayo-Okoye; the celebrant, Pastor Ituah Ighodalo; other guests, Pastor Dayo Ekony, Mr. Felix Uwajeh, Mrs. Miriam Olusanya, and Senator Tolu Odebiyi, during the birthday thanksgiving of Pastor Ighodalo held at Trinity House in Lagos… recently



L-R: Chairman/Founder, Nigeria Aviation Award (NIGAV), Mr. Fortune Idu; Director-General, Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), Captain Chris Najomo; Managing Director/Chief Executive, Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Mrs. Olubunmi Kuku (receiving the Aviation Agency Chief Executive Officer of the Year 2024 award); and former Managing Director, Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA), Nnamdi Udoh, during the 14th Nigeria Aviation Awards and Ministerial Dinner held in Lagos… recently



L-R: Compliance Officer, Leadway Assurance, Precious Ogwumike; President, Nigeria Association of Insurance Editors (NAIPE), Nkechi Esezebor; Compliance Officer, Leadway Assurance, Temitope Onabiyi; Compliance Officer, Leadway Assurance, Temidayo Olugbesan; Executive Officer, International-Retail and SME, Leadway Health HMO, Eniola Odukale; and Brand and Communications Manager, Leadway Group, Niyi Abiola, during the Leadway journalism training session organised by Leadway Group at the Leadway Training Academy, Yaba, Lagos… recently

BUSINESSWORLD

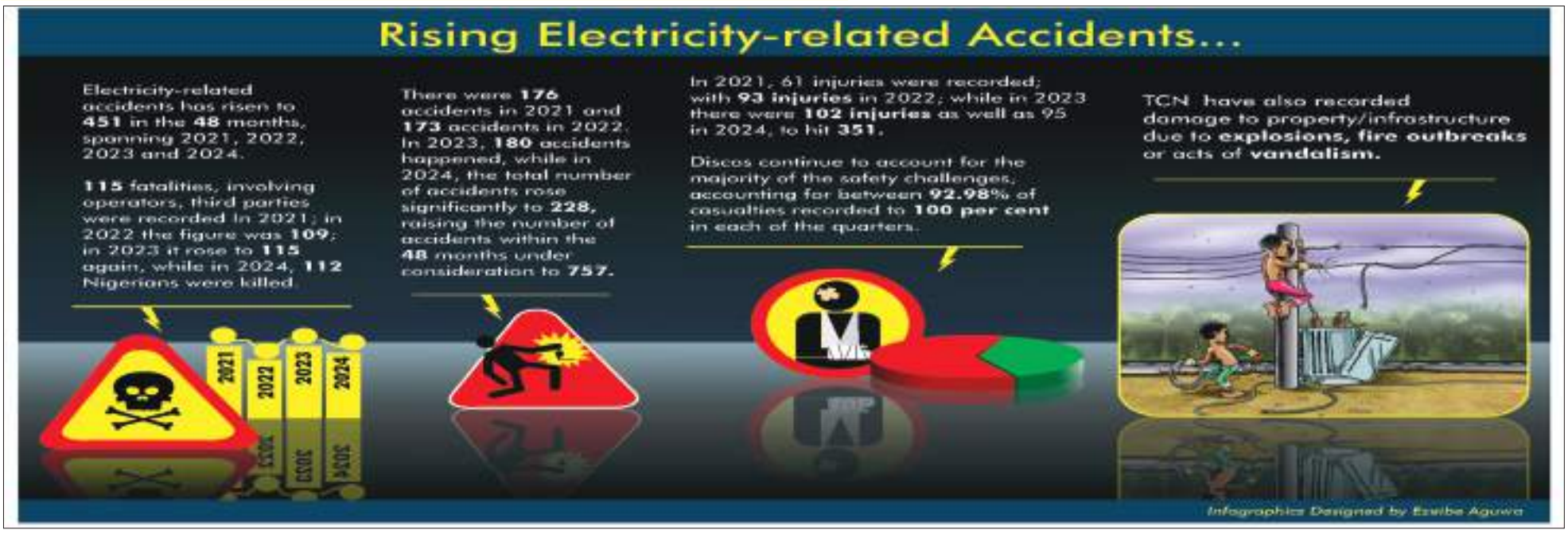
Group Business Editor Eromosele Abiodun
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RATES AS AT APRIL 21, 2025

MONEY MARKET		REPO		S & P INDEX		S & P INDEX		EXCHANGE RATE
OPR	25.34%	CALL	23.25%	INDEX LEVEL	595.26	1/4 TO DATE	0.24%	N1,559.65/ 1 US DOLLAR*
OVERNIGHT	25.18%	1-MONTH	21.37%	1-DAY	0.10%	YEAR TO DATE	-10.99%	*AS AT MONDAY., APR. 21, 2025
		3-MONTH	22.41%	MONTH-TO-DATE	0.24%			

Amid Safety Struggles, 451 Nigerians Killed in Electricity-linked Accidents in 48 Months

• 757 accidents, 351 injuries recorded



Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

There are rising concerns over the annual casualty figures in the power sector as the number of Nigerians killed in electricity-related accidents in the industry has risen to 451 in the 48 months, spanning 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024.

Data sourced from various reports from the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) in the last four years, showed that in 2021, 115 fatalities, involving operators and third parties were recorded; in 2022 the figure was 109; in 2023 it rose to 115 again, while in 2024, 112 Nigerians were killed in accidents related to electricity.

Accidents in Nigeria's power sector remain a pressing and persistent challenge, with both human lives and infrastructure regularly at risk. The number of annual fatalities has recently become very concerning.

Aside from the widespread practice of illegal electrical connections, often carried out without proper safety measures or technical expertise, vandalism also plays a significant role, with destructive acts against power infrastructure accounting for a sizable portion of the incidents.

This, combined with the use of substandard materials, Nigeria's aging power grid, much of which has been in service for over four decades, create a volatile environment prone to frequent failures and safety hazards.

Besides, the NERC reports disclosed that there were 176 accidents in 2021 and 173 accidents in 2022. However, in 2023, the NERC data pieced together by THISDAY indicated that 180 accidents happened, while in 2024, the total number of accidents rose significantly to 228, raising the number of accidents within the 48 months under consideration to 757.

Further checks by THISDAY showed that in 2021, 61 injuries were recorded; with 93 injuries in 2022; while in 2023 there were 102 injuries as well as 95 in 2024, to hit 351.

In all, the information from NERC showed that the accidents were majorly caused by wire snaps, illegal or unauthorised access, vandalism, unsafe acts or conditions and falls from heights.

But the power sector regulator stressed that pursuant to section 34(1)(e) of the Electricity Act, 2023 which mandates the Commission to "ensure the provision of safe and reliable electricity to consumers," the commission continues to monitor the health and safety performance of the industry.

It added that licensees are mandated to submit monthly Health and Safety reports to the commission in accordance with the requirements of their licence, noting that despite the intermittent default in submission of reports, it will continue to enforce 100 per cent reporting compliance by licensees as contained in the terms and conditions of their respective licences, and apply sanctions where applicable.

According to NERC, as observed previously, Discos continue to account for the majority of the safety challenges experienced in Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI), cumulatively, accounting for between 92.98 per cent of casualties recorded to 100 per cent in each of the quarters.

In some cases, NERC stated that aside from the Generation Companies (Gencos) which occasionally record accidents, the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) have also recorded damage to property/infrastructure due to explosions, fire outbreaks or acts of vandalism.

"The commission has initiated investigations into all reported accidents and will enforce appropriate actions where necessary. Furthermore, the commission continues to closely monitor the implementation of licensees' accident reduction strategy for the NESI.

"The commission also organises various programmes such as the Health and Safety Manager's Meeting, aimed at improving the health and safety performance of the NESI.

"The biannual Health and Safety Manager's Meetings organised by the commission with compliance and regulatory officers of licensees are aimed at discussing the reporting obligations of licensees as well as health and safety matters.

"During the meetings, licensees' scorecards on compliance with health and safety standards, forum office decisions, and key performance indicators are discussed while highlighting areas of improvement. The commission shall continue to ensure that all licensees comply with the subsisting performance standards in the NESI," NERC stated.

In addition, the commission stated that it oversees settlement processes between licensees and families of accident victims in the sector, to ensure transparency of the settlement process and to help the victim's family secure fair compensation for losses suffered.

For instance, in 2024/Q3, the commission said it oversaw the successful conclusion of three compensation negotiations between licensees and families of victims of accidents.

WTO Slashes Global Trade Outlook on Trump Tariff Disruptions

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has slashed its forecast for merchandise trade this year as soaring US tariffs and broader uncertainty hammer international commerce.

The Geneva-based WTO expects the volume of world merchandise trade to decline by 0.2 per cent in 2025 — almost three percentage points lower than it would have been without the US-led trade war, marking a dramatic reversal from expectations at the start of the year. Trade is forecast to rebound by 2.5 per cent in 2026.

The flow of goods and services around the world, which went through a tumultuous period during the Covid pandemic, had only recently returned to normal patterns before Donald Trump was elected US president in November.

Two weeks ago, Trump announced so-called reciprocal import taxes ranging from 10 per cent to 50 per cent, though days later he suspended the highest rates for 90 days and kept 10 per cent as the floor for all countries except China, whose exports to the US now face duties in excess of over 100 per cent.

In the WTO's forecasts, this year's contraction will be even worse if the US pushes ahead with those higher levels of reciprocal tariffs. "Together, reciprocal tariffs and spreading trade policy uncertainty would lead to a 1.5 per cent decline in world merchandise trade in 2025," the WTO said in its report, quoted by Bloomberg.

While protectionist policies may boost domestic production, raise revenue and narrow trade imbalances — all three of which are Trump's stated goals — the WTO said that "over the medium to long term, higher import tariffs generally have an overall net negative effect on economic activity and trade."

In response to Trump's measures, China has retaliated with levies of its own, as well as other measures targeting US companies and restricting access to exports of critical raw materials.

The WTO cautioned that a cycle of tit-for-tat responses could lead to a higher cost of living.

"Retaliatory measures in response to restrictive trade policies — such as tariffs on specific, difficult-to-substitute materials or intermediate goods — could have an outsized impact on inflation, or at least inflation expectations," the trade body said in its report.

FOOD COMMODITIES PRICE TODAY

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	STATE	PRICE
RICE 	50KG	ABUJA	N92,500
	50KG	LAGOS	N95,000
	50KG	PLATEAU (JOS)	N95,000 - N100,000
	50KG	OYO	N95,000 - N100,000
	50KG	RIVERS	N99,000
	100KG	SOKOTO	N99,000

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	STATE	PRICE
SORGHUM 	100KG	JIGAWA	N30,000
	100KG	BENUE	N32,000
	100KG	KADUNA	N32,000
	50KG	ENUGU	N24,000
	50KG	LAGOS	N26,000
	100KG	DELTA	N35,000
	100KG	ABIA	N36,000

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	STATE	PRICE
BEANS 	50KG BAG	ABUJA	N95,000 - N100,000
	100KG	LAGOS	N100,000
	100KG	OYO	N98,000 - N100,000
	100KG	ENUGU	N90,000 - N100,000
	100KG	DELTA	N95,000 - N100,000

FOOD COMMODITIES PRICE TODAY

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	STATE	PRICE
PALM OIL	25CL	LAGOS	N20,000-N35,000
	25CL	PH	N24,000 - N35,000
	25CL	OYO	N22,000 — N35,000
	25CL	IMO	N24,000 - N36,500
	25CL	EDO	N20,000 - N35,000
	25CL	ABUJA	N25,500 - N35,000

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	STATE	PRICE
GROUNDNUT	100KG	KANO	N20,500
	100KG	BENUE	N27,000
	100KG	LAGOS	N32,000
	100KG	DELTA	N34,000
	100KG	ABIA	N27,000
	100KG	ENUGU	N23,000

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	STATE	PRICE
ONIONS	100KG	IBADAN	₦60,000
	100KG	KANO	₦30,000
	100KG	BENUE	N250,000-₦270,000
	100KG	PLATEAU	N250,000-₦270,000
	100KG	DELTA	N250,000
	100KG	LAGOS	N250,000
	100KG	ENUGU	N250,000-₦270,000

NAME OF COMMODITY	SIZE	LOCATION	PRICE
MAIZE	100KG	OYO	₦10,000
	100KG	ENUGU	N16,500
	100KG	DELTA	N14,000
	100KG	ABIA	₦11,000
	50KG	LAGOS	N9,000
	100KG	KANO	₦9,400
	50KG	BENUE	N6,000

Indonesia May Reduce Oil, Gas Imports from Nigeria

Stories by Emmanuel Addeh
in Abuja

Indonesia is set to propose increasing its imports of crude oil and liquefied petroleum gas from the United States by around $10 billion and reducing imports from other countries as part of its tariff negotiations, Energy Minister, Bahlil Lahadalia, has said.

A Reuters report quoted Kpler data as showing Indonesia imported 217,000 barrels per day of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) last year, around 124,000 bpd of which came from the US.

Indonesia also imported around 306,000 bpd crude oil last year, with Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Angola as the top suppliers, Kpler data showed. Around 13,000 bpd were imported from the US.

Around 23,000 bpd were imported from Qatar, while the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia each contributed around 20,000 bpd.

In total, Indonesia plans to buy US goods worth $18 billion to $19 billion as it seeks to eliminate its trade surplus with the US and avoid a threatened 32 per cent tariff on its exports.

Bahlil said the energy ministry recommended increasing the LPG import quota for the US, as well as importing more U.S. crude, to help reach the target.

To make room, Indonesia would need to cut LPG imports from other origins, Managing Director at thinktank Energy Shift Institute, Putra Adhiguna said, adding it could start by reducing by 20 per cent-to-30 per cent its LPG imports from non-US sources, depending on existing contracts.

Asked about the US LPG import proposal, a spokesperson at state energy firm Pertamina, the biggest LPG retailer, told Reuters that the company was conducting reviews of its imports and awaiting instructions from the government.

NUPRC, Komolafe Nominated for Africa Energy Awards

The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) has been recognised as a leading force in Africa's energy sector, earning a nomination for the 'Regulator of the Year Award' at the upcoming Africa Energies Summit.

The summit, now in its 29th edition, will be held on May 15 in London, bringing together top industry players, policymakers and innovators shaping Africa's energy future, a statement from the company said.

NUPRC's nomination under the Rhino Award category, the statement said, underscores its significant strides in transforming Nigeria's upstream petroleum landscape through innovation, transparency and effective regulation.

The Commission's Chief Executive, Gbenga Komolafe, is also a strong contender for the Elephant Award, which honours distinguished individual contributions to Africa's energy sector.

Komolafe, who has led NUPRC since its establishment in 2021, has received multiple accolades for his leadership, including the ThisDay/Arise Group CEO of the Year Award and the Sun Public Service Award, recognising his strategic reforms and commitment to Nigeria's energy development.

"As Nigeria continues to advance its energy sector through regulatory excellence, innovation and strategic reforms, NUPRC's nomination highlights its pivotal role in shaping Africa's energy future. The Summit's awards will serve as a platform to honor these trailblazers and reinforce Nigeria's position as a continental energy leader.

In a statement released by the Summit's Marketing Manager, Rachel Creegan, the organisation announced the unveiling of the Big Five Top 50 Leaders, a peer-nominated list celebrating visionaries and institutions driving Africa's energy evolution. The awards aim to recognise excellence across corporate, regulatory, individual and community spheres, emphasising the sector's role in economic growth and energy security across the continent.

"NUPRC's achievements in 2025 include record-high oil reserves of 37.24 billion barrels and gas reserves of 210.5 TCF, with a projected reserve life of 64 years for oil and 93 years for gas. The commission has also revitalised investor confidence and launched initiatives to increase Nigeria's oil production by one million barrels per day, positioning Nigeria as a key player in Africa's energy landscape," it added.

The Summit's awards ceremony will feature distinguished guests, including Gayle Meikle, CEO of Frontier, and Maggy Shino, Petroleum Commissioner of Namibia, serving as Guest of Honour.

The nominees for the Rhino Award (Africa's NOC/Regulator of the Year) include: NUPRC; Société Nationale d'Opérations Pétrolières de la Côte d'Ivoire (PETROCI); Agência Nacional de Petróleo, Gás e Biocombustíveis (ANPG); Agência Nacional de Petróleo de São Tomé e Príncipe (ANP-STP) and SMH (Mauritania) & PETROSEN (Senegal) – Greater Tortue Ahmeyim First Oil .

The other nominees for the Elephant Award are: Alcides Andrade, Executive Board Member, ANPG; John Ardill, Vice President, ExxonMobil; Nantenaina Rasolonirina, Acting General Manager, OMNIS; and Ernest Rubondo, Executive Director, Petroleum Authority of Uganda.

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NCDMB, Renaissance to Partner on Local Content Dev.

The Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), Felix Ogbe, has expressed support for the long-term plan of Renaissance Africa Energy Company Limited, a consortium that recently concluded acquisition of onshore oil assets of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in March 2025.

Addressing a delegation of the company in his office at the Nigerian Content Tower (NCT) in Swali, Yenagoa, Ogbe said indigenous oil and gas companies are ever assured of an enabling environment by the board.

A statement from the organisation quoted him as saying that the NCDMB management team would be willing to engage with their counterparts from the Renaissance Group whenever the need arose.

He commended the company's emphasis on Nigerian content and plans to establish a foothold in other countries across Africa, assuring the delegation that NCDMB would provide the company with "double enabling environment" in support of its growth in Nigeria and abroad.

The NCDMB boss noted that Renaissance Africa Energy Company has a promising future, given the competent hands in its employ who had held responsible positions in companies with track records of performance in the oil and gas sector.

Earlier the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the company, Dr. Tony Attah, assured him and the NCDMB management: "We are ourselves Nigerian content – we're wholly Nigerian."

On the company's long-term plan, he said: "We invest in Nigeria, but represent Nigerian content across Africa…. Our mission is to be the African leader in energy but most importantly to enable energy security, to enable industrialisation."

In his own remarks, the Chairman of the Renaissance Group, Dr. Layi Fatona, recalled that the NCDMB had been very supportive to the SPDC in the past, and that it was their expectation that the new company which has acquired the assets of the Anglo-Dutch giant would continue to enjoy the same relationship.

The General Manager, Corporate Communications and Zonal Coordination of the NCDMB, Dan Kikile, in a brief comment noted that the vision of the NCDMB aligned with that of Renaissance, and that the two organisations would be able to collaborate productively to advance local content.

FG Threatens to Blacklist Non-performing Housing Contractors

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Ahmed Dangiwa, has warned developers handling 'Renewed Hope Housing' projects across the country to ensure timely delivery and strict adherence to quality standards.

Speaking during a status review meeting with developers on ongoing housing projects in several states, the minister noted that the federal government will not tolerate negligence, substandard execution, or delays in project delivery.

"This administration is committed to doing things differently. Do not assume it's business as usual. It is not. If you signed a contract with the government, you must deliver accordingly," the Minister stated, according to a statement in Abuja by the Director, Press and Public Relations, Salisu Haiba.

Substandard structures which often lead to building collapse, have become alarmingly frequent in the last few years, especially in densely populated cities. One of the primary causes is the use of substandard materials, due to cost-cutting measures or outright negligence.

In some cases, developers use poor-quality cement, iron rods, and other materials that compromise the structural integrity of buildings, coupled with the failure to adhere to proper architectural and engineering standards.

But Dangiwa declared that non-performing contractors risk being blacklisted—not just from future housing projects with the ministry, but from handling all federal government housing and infrastructure contracts.

He also warned that any substandard structures discovered on project sites will be demolished while the contractors responsible will be sanctioned.

"We are not just building houses, we are building homes. If you collect government funds, you must deliver results. We will not fold our arms and allow incompetence or bad faith to derail the Renewed Hope Agenda," Dangiwa emphasised.

While expressing appreciation to developers who had shown commitment and professionalism, the minister reaffirmed the ministry's determination to honour all contractual obligations—provided that quality and timelines are respected.

In a related development, Dangiwa has tasked Federal Controllers of Housing in the states to intensify monitoring and supervision efforts on all project sites. He urged them to provide consistent guidance and ensure that construction activities proceed smoothly and in compliance with specifications.

The Renewed Hope Housing Programme is a flagship initiative of the President Bola Tinubu's administration, designed to expand access to affordable housing for Nigerians and drive inclusive development.

NNPC's Soneye Emerges NIPR Spokesperson for 2025

The Chief Corporate Communications Officer, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC), Mr. Olufemi Soneye, has emerged the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) spokesperson of 2025.

Announcing the award, the NIPR described Soneye as a "diligent" spokesperson, characterising him as "a strategist." Soneye's capacity to shape public opinion, also stood him out of the crowd of spokespersons, according to the Adjudication Committee, Chairman, Dr. Shaibu Hussein.

Represented by a member of the committee chairman, Lami Tuiaka, the chairman said the moment to the conclusion of the award was rigorous and demanding. He also predicated Soneye's victory on his communication skills, crisis management and overall impact.

"Our committee comprising communication scholars, Public Relations practitioners, and media personalities worked tirelessly to review the nomination, assess performances and deliberate on the winner. I must report that we carefully examined each nomination, considering factors such as communication skills, crisis management and overall impact," he said.

Presenting him the plaque at the National Spokespersons Award 2025, chairman of the event Deputy Chairman, House Committee on Power, Hon. Joshua Audu, said the institute would celebrate Soneye throughout 2025 as the current NIPR spokesperson award winner.

He said: " On behalf of the NIPR Award Night 2025, I have the honour and privilege to present the Spokesperson of the year 2025. Please join me to celebrate our latest spokesperson that we will celebrate throughout 2025 in the person of Olufemi Soneye."

Responding, Soneye attributed his recognition by the NIPR with its most exalted spokesperson's award to the dedication of the entire team at the NNPC.

Amid a standing ovation, he said: "We are all happy and I am deeply honoured to receive this award tonight from NIPR. This award reflects the dedication of our entire team and we want to thank NIPR for all they have been doing."

POLITICS

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Bamidele: Transforming Representation and Leadership in Ekiti Central

Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele, representing Ekiti Central Senatorial District at the National Assembly, is steadily redefining the essence of political representation, with a blend of legislative expertise and grassroots impact, both within the legislative chambers of the Senate and across the five local government areas of his constituency. **Raheem Akingbolu** reports.

Fifteen years ago, when Michael Opeyemi Bamidele first stepped onto the political stage in Ekiti State and announced his intention to represent Ekiti Central FederalConstituency 1, critics labeled him an outsider—"Ekiti abroad"—who would exploit the system and disappear. Their skepticism stemmed from his well-known track record of public service in Lagos, where he had spent a decade serving in various roles.

Since 2011, Bamidele has proven his dedication to Ekiti's progress through a series of meaningful interventions. Early in his first term, he quickly became a key figure at the National Assembly, known for his thoughtful and well-informed contributions. Ironically, the same Lagos experience that initially raised doubts turned out to be an asset, equipping him to offer Ekiti a strong voice at the center. For years, particularly between 1999 and 2011, many in the Ekiti elite worried that the state wasn't fielding its most capable representatives—especially when compared to states like Adamawa, which produced figures such as Jubril Aminu, Iya Abubakar, and Jonathan Zwingina.

Unshaken by doubts, Bamidele—popularly known as MOB—pressed on with resolve and a deep sense of his persuasive eloquence, he engaged his people, making a clear case that his mission was to come and serve, not to exploit. At a Senatorial District meeting in Aramoko Ekiti Civic Center in October 2010, he declared: "I am a true Ekiti son and proud of my roots. Born in Iyin-Ekiti and raised partly in Ilawe, my bonds with Ekiti run deep. I'm here to make a difference, not just in lives but in the broader development of our state." Six months later, in April 2011, he was elected into the 7th National Assembly as the representative for Ekiti Central Federal Constituency 1.

Bamidele's rise in national politics predates his current role as Senate Majority Leader. His grounding in law and extensive service in multiple governmental positions in Lagos shaped his ability to understand and manage the intricacies of legislative work with competence and foresight.

In 2023, Bamidele returned to the Senate just as his long-time political associate and former boss, Asiwaju Bola Tinubu, became President. Observers familiar with their close relationship quickly anticipated that this marked a turning point for Ekiti's political influence and development. That expectation gained traction with Bamidele's elevation to Senate Leader—a position no Ekiti senator has ever held. His emergence shattered a 25-year ceiling; the highest-ranking officer from Ekiti before him was Senator Abiodun Olujimi, who served briefly as Senate Minority Leader between 2018 and 2019, following Senator Godswill Akpabio's resignation.

There were key reasons behind Bamidele's success. He is a ranking lawmaker, having secured election to the National Assembly thrice—a rare achievement in Ekiti, where re-election is uncommon. He also maintains a wide political network that extends beyond Ekiti, strengthened by his years of service in Lagos. Naturally, the President found in him a trusted ally to ensure smoother coordination between the executive and the legislature.



Bamidele

As Senate Majority Leader, Bamidele is reshaping expectations and performance within the Red Chamber. Over the past 22 months, he has proven his readiness for leadership. His role has gone beyond lending vocal support to the administration—he has actively backed legislative reforms designed to attract investment and spur job creation. Working closely with the Senate President, he has embraced a research-driven approach to evaluate outdated policies and advocate for reforms that encourage economic progress.

Bamidele leads through action, not speeches. His leadership style is strategic, focused on aligning the Senate's efforts with broader goals of governance. He has played a key role in steering legislative backing for President Tinubu's reform agenda, highlighting the importance of the Senate in turning policy into practical results for the Nigerian people.

Coming to Ekiti, the story is the same. The ranking Senator has not only redefined representation; he has collaborated effectively with the state Governor, Biodun Oyebanji, to lift Ekiti and attract many developmental projects, including roads and a Federal University. In fact, many people are quick to declare that Bamidele's biggest contribution to Ekiti has been his cooperation with Oyebanji to jointly bring the best out of the 28-year-old state.

The mood and atmosphere at the ancient town of Iyin, the Senator's place of birth on March 27, 2025, captured the whole scenario. Few days before, news had gone round that the Senate Leader was coming to his base to inaugurate projects, receive awards at the Ekiti State University, and flag off his 'Renewed Mega Empowerment'.

Unknown to him, the people of the senatorial district had gathered at the Ekiti State International Agro-Allied Cargo Airport to receive him. In a motorcade, the people escorted their beloved representative out of the airport to the Ado Ekiti township, where artisans, market men and women, drivers, and commercial motorcycle riders had assembled on the new Iyin road to usher him into the waiting hands of his kinsmen.

With over 100 banners of different inscriptions and scores of groups in various uniforms adoring Bamidele's pictures, solidarity songs rented the air. On sighting the thousands of people waiting to receive him at Iyin, emotion gripped the celebrated Senator and he lost his voice. To say it was a joyous moment is like stating the obvious. Bamidele has done well to better the lots of his people and his people have no choice but to reciprocate in the same measure with a grand reception.

Organised by traditional rulers, community and religious leaders, students, artisans, hunters, and politicians from diverse backgrounds, the reception was a tribute to Bamidele's achievements and impact since assuming the role of Senate Leader.

At the forefront of these achievements was the recent approval of a new Federal University of Technology and Environmental Sciences for the benefit of Iyin community, Ekiti Central Senatorial District, the State and the country at large. The occasion also witnessed the inauguration of modern markets built by the Senator for the service of his people at various towns in the five local governments that made up the Ekiti Central Senatorial district.

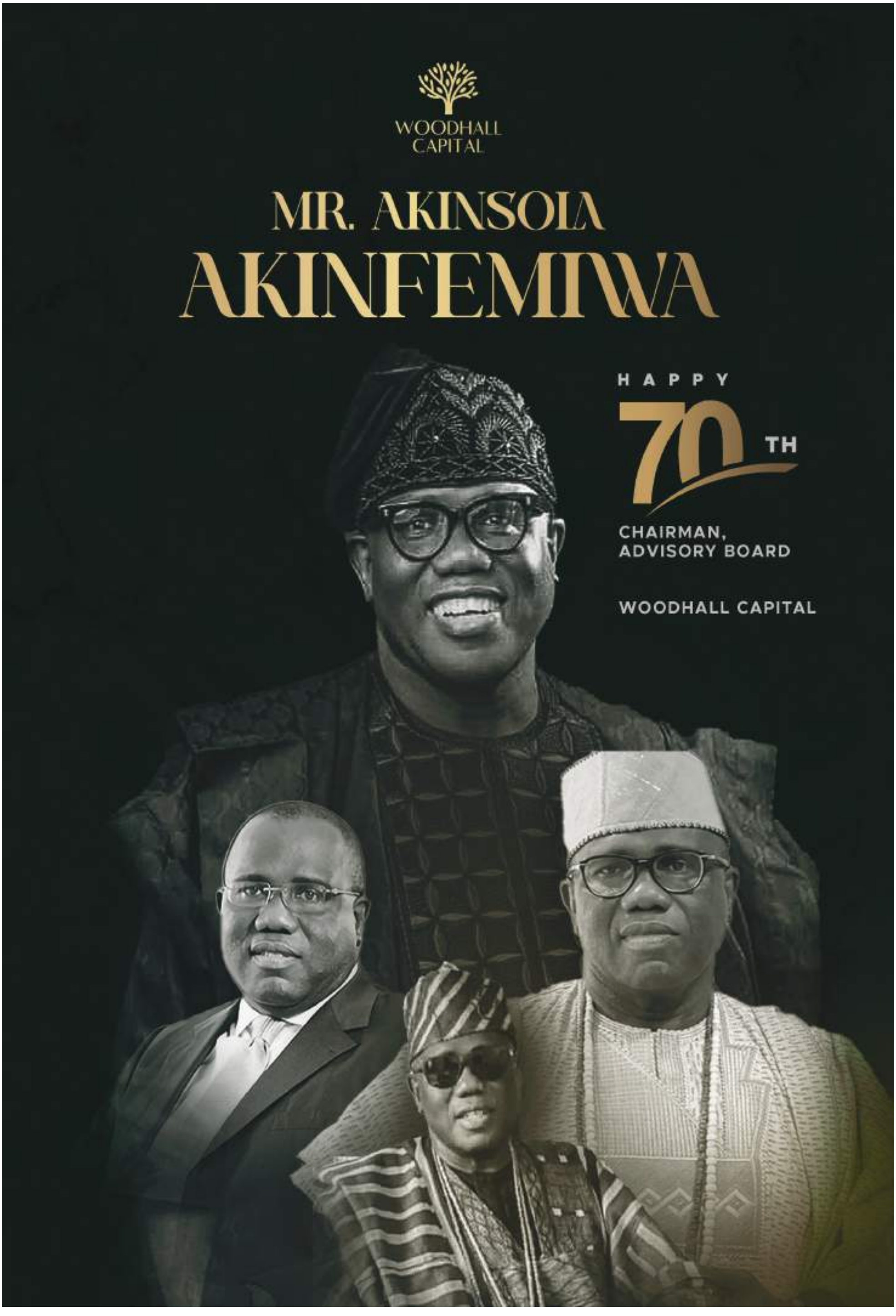
The occasion also provided an opportunity to reflect on his leadership qualities and commitment to community service. Oba Adeniyi Ajakaiye, the traditional ruler of Iyin-Ekiti, described Bamidele as a shining example of leadership rooted in love for one's people. According to Oluyin, "Senator Bamidele was shaped by values of community, hard work, and empathy, including principles that have guided his life's work. We, as a community that produced him, are glad to note that he has risen to national prominence not only as a politician but also as a servant-leader committed to improving the lives of the people,"

In Aramoko Ekiti where Alara's Market was inaugurated the following day, the town's monarch, Oba Adegoke Olu-Adeyemi commended the Senate Leader for his passion to impact his people. "Senator Bamidele has shown a good example and set a pace in quality representation. I urge all Ekiti politicians to borrow a leaf from him," Oba Adeyemi said.

As Senate Majority Leader, Bamidele is reshaping expectations and performance within the Red Chamber. Over the past 22 months, he has proven his readiness for leadership. His role has gone beyond lending vocal support to the administration—he has actively backed legislative reforms designed to attract investment and spur job creation. Working closely with the Senate President, he has embraced a research-driven approach to evaluate outdated policies and advocate for reforms that encourage economic progress.

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


MR. AKINSOLA
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70TH
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CHAIRMAN | MENTOR |
INSPIRATION
FROM:
VIAVO & MOJI HUNPONU-WUSU


WOODHALL
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ADVISORY BOARD
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The Maveric Mentor is 70

We celebrate and honour you at this milestone age. Your life has been a timeless legacy of excellence and commitment to mentoring people towards greatness. Thank you for your profound influence on our career.



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Bisi Oduba | Richard Inegbedion | Femi Ekwuyasi | Emeka Ogamba | James Osageide | Kola Fatunsi | Bayo Oduyemi | Tola Falana
Femi Ambode | Bola Ajayi | Koya Ayanwale

April 22, 2025

Mr. Akinsola Akinfemiwa, OON

Dear Sir,

Letter of Deep Gratitude and Birthday Felicitation

It is with the highest regard and utmost reverence that I extend this note of appreciation and warm felicitation to you on the occasion of your 70th birthday.

Sir, words remain insufficient to convey the depth of my gratitude for the extraordinary influence you have had on my life. You have been far more than a mentor. You have been a pillar of wisdom, a compass of discipline, and a model of humility and grace. Your unwavering support, benevolence, and commitment to my growth have been instrumental in shaping my personal and professional journey.

At every step, you have guided me with clarity and compassion, instilling values that continue to define my aspirations and conduct. I consider it a profound privilege to have been a beneficiary of your counsel and a witness to your exemplary leadership and character.

As you mark this significant milestone, I humbly join countless others in celebrating your life of immense impact, purpose, and distinction. May the Almighty continue to strengthen you in health, increase you in wisdom, and bless you with peace, longevity, and enduring fulfilment.



Happy 70th Birthday Sir.

With the highest esteem and
warmest regards,

Yours faithfully,

OLA OLABINJO
Managing Director/CEO
Skystone Finance Company Limited

PERSPECTIVE

Farooq Kperogi Erred About President Tinubu's Alleged Trubalism and 'Lagos-centric Yorubaization Of Nigeria'

Reno Omokri

Farooq Kperogi is an intellectual, and a person with a background in academia ought to write and form opinions based on empirical evidence rather than hearsay, especially things one reads online.

To write a piece about President Tinubu's so-called "Lagos-centric Yorubaization Of Nigeria" and base it solely on one set of appointments (a Census committee) does not give much credit to Mr Kperogi's credentials as an academic.

This is not the first time Mr. Kperogi is getting it wrong. He and I have been on opposite sides of the TInubu certificate imbroglio, where I went to Chicago State University on September 19, 2022, to verify the truth directly from the source, while he relied on what he read and heard and came out with a piece stating that the then Presidential candidate forged his diploma.

Fortunately for him, after I debunked that theory, the British Broadcasting Corporation did a fact-checking story and also agreed with me that there is no evidence that Asiwaju fuddled his certificate, forcing Mr. Kperogi to write a counter article indicating that his initial assessment was wrong.

The membership of one committee cannot establish tribalism. It is intellectually lazy and a hasty generalisation to make such a conclusion from just one alleged example, which is not even accurate. Before making that allegation, you ought to look at appointments holistically. Especially as Nigeria has an Order of Precedence list.

All of this started because of the appointments to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, but people like Farooq Kperogi fail to appreciate that Bayo Ojulari is not only a Northerner from the North-Central but also of mixed ancestry, as are many people from Kwara.

The Chairman, Ahmadu Musa Kida, is also a solid Northerner. It is very easy to cherry-pick positions in the Federal Government, such as the Chief Justice of Nigeria, over which the President has no control, and other civil service positions, which are not directly appointed by the President, to create a false impression that the President is favouring a certain section of the country.

But when you take appointments made by the President and weigh them according to their ranking on the National Order of Precedence of Public Officers and Other Persons, it becomes clear that President Bola Tinubu is perhaps one of Nigeria's most accommodating leaders, especially when you compare him with his immediate predecessor.

If you look at the National Order of Precedence of Public Officers and Other Persons, after the President and his vice, the President of the Senate and other Legislative leaders, the Chief Justice of the Federation and other judicial officers, and the cabinet, the top appointive position in Nigeria is the Secretary to the Government of the Federation.

Under General Buhari, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation was Babachir Lawal and later Boss Mustapha, who were both Northerners like Buhari. Under Tinubu, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation is Senator George Akume, a Northerner.

Next is the Office of the Head of the Civil Service. Buhari appointed Mrs. Folasade Yemi-Osan from the North-central, while President Tinubu named Mrs. Didi Esther Walson-Jack from the South-South to man that helm.

Then, you have the service chiefs and the heads of the various security and paramilitary agencies. Please find below a breakdown of these offices



President Bola Tinubu

National Security Adviser: Nuhu Ribadu NE

Chief of Army Staff: Major General Olufemi Olatubosun SW

Chief of Air Staff: Air Marshal Hasan Bala Abubakar NW

Chief of Naval Staff: Vice Admiral Emmanuel Ikechukwu Ogalla SE

Inspector General of Police: Kayode Egbetokun SW

Director General of the DSS: Adeola Ajayi SW

Director General of the NIA: Ambassador Mohammed Mohammed NC

Chief of Defence Intelligence: Major General Emmanuel Undiandeye SS

Comptroller-General of the Nigeria Immigration Service: Kemi Nandap NC (by marriage)

Comptroller-General of Customs: Bashir Adewale Adeniyi SW

Controller General of the Nigerian Correctional Service: Haliru Nababa NW

Chairman, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency: Mohammed Buba Marwa NE

Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission: Olanipekun Olukayode SW

Corps Marshal of the Federal Road Safety Commission: Shehu Usman Mohammed NW

Commandant General Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps: Dr. Ahmed Abubakar Audi NC

Chairman Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission: Dr. Musa Adamu Aliyu NW

CEO Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit: Hajiya Hafsat Bakari NE

Controller General of the Federal Fire Service: Engr. Jaji O. Abdulganiyu NC

Director-General National Youth Service Corps: Brig Gen YD Ahmed NW

From the above list, where is Lagos or the Southwest dominant?

You do not make comparisons in isolation. You make them in juxtaposition with what obtained in the past.

I will now compare and contrast these appointments with those made by President Tinubu's immediate predecessor:

	Under Buhari	Under Tinubu
Defence	North	North
AGF	North	South
AMCON	North	South
Airforce	South	North
Army	North	South
CDS	South	North
DIA	North	South
DMI	North	North
DSS	North	South
EFCC	North	South
FFS	North	North
FRSC	North	North
ICPC	North	North
Navy	North	South
NCC	North	North
NCS	North	South
NDLEA	North	North
NFIU	North	North
NHIS	North	North
NIS	North	North
NNPC	North	North
NPA	North	North
NPS	North	North
NSA	North	North
NSCDC	North	North
NTA	North	North
NUC	North	North
NYSC	North	North
PTDF	North	North
Police	North	South
UBEC	North	South

I have done for Mr. Farooq Kperogi what he failed to do, using the Order of precedence list to the best of my capacity.

The truth is that the Northwest has dominated President Tinubu's appointments precisely because it is the most populous geopolitical zone in Nigeria. When you read the enabling law setting up the Federal Character Commission, population is one of the factors you take into account when fulfilling the Federal Character principle.

27% of Nigeria's population is from the Northwest, and 20% is from the Southwest. In addition, the Southwest is by far the most educated part of Nigeria. Therefore, these two regions will dominate in any government built on merit and federal character.

Under General Buhari, you could rightly say that the Federal Government was Katsina-centric because Muhammadu Buhari was so brazen that his niece, Amina Zakari, was a Commissioner of the Independent National Electoral Commission, with over fifty key Federal Government top jobs going to the President's state under Buhari including:

CBN MPC:	Aliyu Rafindadi
Chairman NRC:	Usman Sandamu
Code of Conduct:	Murtala Kankia
DG DSS:	Lawal Daura
DG FRCN:	Mansur Liman
DG NHIS:	Prof. Usman Yusuf
DG NIA:	Ahmad Rufai
DG SMEDAN:	Dikko Radda
ES PPPRA:	Abdulkadir Umar
FAAN:	Salisu Nura
INEC Commissioner:	Amina Zakari
MD FERMA:	Nurudeen Rafindadi
MD FMB:	Ahmad Dangiwa
MD NIMET:	Prof. Abubakar Mashi
MD NPA:	Hadiza Usman
NIMASA:	Gambo Mahuta
Presidential Doctor:	Dr. Shuaib Rafindadi

Calling the Tinubu-led government a "Lagos-centric Yorubaization Of Nigeria" is a provocative falsehood that could unleash ethnic tensions and undermine democracy in a delicately fragile multiethnic, multicultural multi religious nation like Nigeria.

As virulently opposed to Buhari as I was, I never called his government a 'Fulani led' or 'Northern led' government, even though, for the first time in Nigeria's history, the Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary, with the President, Senate President and Chief Justice, as well as the Ministry of Defence, the National Security Adviser's office, Army, Airforce, Police, DSS, DMI, DIA, NIA and the EFCC were all headed by Arewa.

We did not call that administration an 'Arewa-led' junta even after General Buhari used duress to force the then Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Walter Onoghen, a Southerner, to step down for a Northerner, Justice Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad, who proved at his Senate screening that he did not understand what a legal technicality meant.

I, therefore, appeal to Farooq Kperogi to be measured and circumspect in his use of hyperbole to communicate his opinions.

•Reno Omokri - Gospeller. Deep Thinker. #TableShaker. Ruffler of the Feathers of Obidents. #1 Bestselling author of Facts Versus Fiction: The True Story of the Jonathan Years. Hodophile. Hollywood Magazine Humanitarian of the Year, 2019. Business Insider Influencer of the Year 2022. 21st Most Talked About Person in Africa, 2024.

NEWS

Keyamo Debunks Unfounded Reports on 80-year Concession of Enugu Int Airport

Chinedu Eze in Lagos and **Kasim Sumaina** in Abuja

The Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, has dismissed reports that the federal government has concluded plans to concession Akanu Ibiam International Airport, Enugu for a period of 80 years, stating these reports/stories are utterly baseless and untrue.

He noted that whilst it is true that the federal government is considering proposals for the concession of five major airports, which is a proactive measure to ensure these vital facilities meet and maintain international standards, given the increasing financial demands of their operations.

These five major airports are the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos, the Aminu Kano International Airport, Kano, the Port Harcourt International Airport, Omagwa and the Akanu Ibiam International Airport, Enugu.

His words: "Many of our airports are presently running at a loss, so they have to be subsidised each month by the federal government."

The minister stressed the initiative to concession the airports started from previous administrations, as the former Minister of Aviation under the Buhari administration, Hadi Sirika, continued to promise Nigerians that these major airports would be concessioned until the last breath of that administration.

Keyamo, in a statement by his Special Adviser on Media and Communication, Tunde Moshood, said: "At this stage, prospective concessionaires have indeed submitted various proposals, including different durations for the concession.

"It is important to emphasise that the Ministry of Aviation and Aerospace Development has not established any fixed duration."

"All submitted proposals are currently undergoing thorough evaluation that will eventually be reviewed by the ICRC before it is presented to the minister for conveyance to FEC for approval."

The statement further read: "We can confirm that this review process has not been concluded. However, for the sake of transparency, the Honourable Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, SAN, directed some months ago, that the aviation labour unions be included as part of the negotiating teams.

"Therefore, we must state unequivocally that the information suggesting a predetermined concession duration is false, unfounded, and intended to cause unwarranted disaffection and mistrust in this process by those with entrenched interests.

"Please be assured that the Ministry of Aviation and Aerospace Development is committed to a transparent process that adheres strictly to due process.

"With his training and track record, the minister will not allow anything untoward to happen under his watch.

"He has so far run the ministry in a transparent manner and will not fall into the same mistake of the past. We will ensure that all decisions are made in the best interest of the nation and the aviation sector."



LAGOS-BRAZILIAN FANTI CARNIVAL ON EASTER SUNDAY...
L–R: Lagos State First Lady, Dr. (Mrs.) Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu; Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu; Lagos State Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Mrs. Toke Benson-Awoyinka; and President, Brazilian Descendants Association, Dr. Kola Peregrino, during the Lagos Fanti Carnival, held at Remembrance Arcade on Easter Sunday

FG Collects N6.5bn Mining Fees, Registers 118 Buying Centres

Folalumi Alaran in Abuja

The federal government collected about N6,957,826,200billion mining fees and registered 118 new private mineral buying centres in the first quarter of this year.

Giving the details at the second Annual Mining Conference organised by Businessday newspaper in Abuja, weekend, the Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dele Alake, said the revenues reflected the outcome of the Ministry's efforts to raise awareness and attract investors.

The mining fees collected by licensing parastatal Mining Cadastral Office, MCO, came from 955 applications for title grants.

Six hundred and fifty-one were for exploration, 270 for small-scale mining, 49 for Quarrying, and 24 for reconnaissance permits. The Minister approved 867 applications, including 512 exploration licenses, 295 small-scale mining leases, 60 Quarry leases, and 5 mining leases.

The revenues were from paying various fees, including annual service fees, application processing fees, and renewal of titles.

MCO has also stepped up conflict resolution to reduce petitions arising from overlap and litigation over ownership.

Alake disclosed that the Ministry had recorded a lot of progress in plans to set up the Nigerian Solid Minerals Corporation to make its structure a veritable special-purpose vehicle that would catapult Nigeria into the league of global mining players.

Speaking on the theme, "Building A Resilient Mining Sector," Alake said the corporation would be globally competitive and rooted in Nigerian expertise and capital.

"We are finalising its structure in partnership with the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI). Nigerians will have the opportunity to invest through a public offer, with 25% equity reserved for citizens, 25% for the government, and 50% for the private sector," he stated.

He scored the ministry high on revenue generation, citing how it surpassed the 2024 projected revenue of N11 billion by N27 billion to N38 billion.

Highlighting the impact of international engagements, Alake revealed that the French government had committed to equip the laboratory of the Nigeria Geological Survey Agency (NGSA) and train young geologists abroad in modern mining technologies on the heels of the MOU signed by President Bola Tinubu and French President, Emmanuel Macron.

"The Government of Western Australia recently approved the regular training of Nigerian mining professionals, and the first batch of trainees are billed to depart next month. British and Saudi Arabian investors are coming together to invest across the mineral value chain, and just few days ago, we signed an MOU on capacity building in the geology field with South Africa," Dr Alake added.

Lagos Revives Afro-Brazilian Heritage, as Fanti Carnival Returns in Grand Style

Bennett Oghifo

Lagos Island came alive on Easter Sunday as the iconic Fanti Carnival made its much-anticipated return, rekindling the vibrant Afro-Brazilian heritage that has long been a cornerstone of the city's cultural identity.

Held at the historic Remembrance Arcade, the magnificent parade drew crowds of residents, tourists, cultural troupes, and community leaders - all united in celebrating a tradition steeped in rhythm, pride, and ancestral legacy.

This year's edition, themed "Heritage and Unity," shows the cultural preservation and community cohesion in Lagos State.

The event was made possible through the support of the Lagos State Government, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, and the Brazilian Descendants Association of Lagos Island, to rejuvenate the historical narratives of the Afro-Brazilian returnees.

The governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu, who attended the event alongside his wife, Dr. (Mrs.) Claudiana Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu, the Deputy Governor, Dr. Kadri Obafemi Hamzat, and his wife, Mrs. Oluremi Hamzat, reaffirmed his administration's commitment to community-led cultural events that drive economic activity and foster social harmony.

He described the event as "a celebration of who we are - a people bound by history and strengthened by diversity."

The Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Mrs. Toke Benson-Awoyinka, stated that the carnival's revival is a triumph of identity and resilience.

"The Fanti Carnival is more than a festival - it is a living memory of our Afro-Brazilian roots and a showcase of the cultural richness that defines us as Lagosians. The Ministry remains committed to initiatives that strengthen social ties, promote tourism, and keep our heritage alive."

Rooted in the 19th-century customs of Afro-Brazilian returnees - freed slaves who brought back samba rhythms, flamboyant costumes, and carnival traditions from Brazil - the Lagos Fanti Carnival had once been a major fixture on the Island's cultural calendar before slipping into dormancy. Its vibrant revival marks a significant milestone in preserving Lagos' multicultural legacy.

The lively procession kicked off from Remembrance Arcade, through Old Defence Road, TBS Arena, J. Randle Road, Onikan Roundabout, Military Street, and Catholic Mission Street with parade of colours, music, and dance.

There were performances by Afro-Brazilian descendants adorned in glittering regalia, expressing their stories through dance and music that captured the themes of resilience, migration, and cultural fusion.

With the renewed support of the Lagos State Government, the Fanti Carnival is set to reclaim its place as a key cultural event, not just as a celebration, but as a reminder that culture is a living, breathing force for unity, education, and sustainable development.

Adeleke Condemns Burning of Ilesa High Court, Orders Probe, Seeks Extra Security

Yinka Kolawole in Osogbo

Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke, has condemned the burning of Ilesa High Court 2 building by yet to be identified criminals, describing the arson as "an unjustifiable attack on the state judiciary"

The incident, which happened overnight led to the destruction of court sensitive documents and exhibits with the entire building largely burnt to the ground.

The state fire service was mobilised to the scene but the havoc was already over by the time of their arrival. Reports indicated that files relating to sensitive court cases were destroyed.

Adeleke, in a statement, directed thorough investigation into the incident as well as beefing up security across all court premises in the state.

"Thorough investigation must be conducted by the security agencies to apprehend the suspects and ensure they face the consequences of their actions. I further direct security agencies to beef up surveillance across the various court buildings.

"Additionally, the Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice is to join hands with the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure for the immediate rehabilitation of the burnt down building." the statement noted.

The governor, who described the attack as a threat to democracy said the judiciary remained the stabilizer and critical arbiter of the democratic process, urging support rather than attack.

DESPITE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES, 10 BANKS GRANTED N65.6 TRILLION LOANS TO CUSTOMERS

Analysts at S&P Global Ratings forecasted that loan growth will average 25 per cent-30 per cent in 2025, stressing, "Increased refinery capacity will support lending to the oil and gas sector, while the recapitalisation of the banking sector will increase banks' lending firepower.

"Nigeria's household and corporate leverage metrics are among the lowest of the country's peer group. Low wealth levels per capita and a large informal economy contribute to low financial intermediation."

The global rating agency said it expected the banking sector to remain in a net external debt position well below 10 per cent of system-wide loans through 2026.

The report stated, "The sector has low reliance on external debt, while banks continue to grow their foreign assets through subsidiaries in the U.K., U.S and France. The financial sector is, however, vulnerable to investor sentiment, as U.S. dollar scarcity persists and the country remains on the FATF's grey list.

"Nigerian banks' funding largely comprises customer deposits, which account for more than 80per cent of their funding base. Our loan-to-deposit ratio assumes that only half of corporate deposits are core deposits. We expect the loan-to-deposit ratio to remain stable, ranging between 95per cent and 100per cent."

In 2024, the average prime lending rate to bank customers in Nigeria closed at 18.56 per cent, the highest point since 2010, as interest rate or Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) last year gained momentum.

Data showed that average prime lending rate that opened 2024 at 13.82 per cent, gained 474 basis points to close 2024 at 18.56 per cent amid an increase in MPR from 18.75 per cent to 27.50 per cent.

The rate's highest peak was 18.74 per cent in February 2010, when MPR was at six per cent.

The prime lending rate is the interest rate that banks charge their most creditworthy customers, usually large corporations and it serves as a benchmark for many other loans, including personal and business loans.

In Nigeria, the prime lending rate in the banking sector is influenced by monetary policy, inflation, liquidity in the banking system and economic conditions.

THISDAY checks revealed that Nigeria's average prime lending rate reached an all-time high of 19.66 per cent in November 2009 and a record low of 11.13 per cent in March 2021.

The steady increase in MPR reflected in the average prime lending rate last year as Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) intensified its effort to tackle inflation and stabilise the local currency at the foreign exchange market.

The first hike in MPR was from 18.75 per cent to 22.75 per cent, the second to 24.75 per cent, the third to 26.25 per cent, the fourth to 26.75 per cent and recently 27.25 per cent in the September 2024 Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting.

MPR moved to 27.50 per cent in November 2024, with the average prime lending rate jumping to 18.39 per cent in November 2024 to eventually close last year at 18.56 per cent.

The increases, totalling 875 basis points in MPR since Mr. Olayemi Cardoso's appointment, had been driven by efforts to tackle the country's persistent inflation challenges, which included high core and food inflation.

An investigation by THISDAY showed that the increase in MPR impacted on banks average prime lending to their customers late year.

Analysts attributed the increase in average prime lending rate to the hike in MPR and severe macroeconomic challenges.

Investment banker and stockbroker, Mr. Tajudeen Olayinka, stated that banks reviewed their lending rates on regular basis, subject to their respective cost of funds and the direction of MPR, not necessarily using MPR as a distinct value.

According to Olayinka, the MPR signals to them the direction of interest rate in the market and the price they will pay if they have to borrow from or lend to CBN.

He stated, "Therefore, their deposit mix, which includes idle customers' deposits, determines what their weighted average cost of funds would be. They then factor in the signal from MPR, to enable them to arrive at their various prime lending rates, which are usually reserved for their prime customers.

"But with all these recent circulars from CBN concerning idle deposits and foreign exchange windfalls, the market should prepare for a prolonged high interest rate regime.

"CBN doesn't seem to have a good understanding of its recent destructive policies."



SANWO-OLU SPONSORS FREE MEDICAL SCREENING FOR 1,400 INTENDING PILGRIMS...

Member, Central Working Committee for Hajj 2025 and the Chief Missioner, Jejewiyyat Muslim, Prof. Paramole Kabir Olawale (third left); Commissioner for Home Affairs, Hon. Ibrahim Layode (middle); Secretary, Central Working Committee 2025, Alhaji Abdul Hakeem Ajomagberin (third right) and others at the Lagos State government free medical screening for intending pilgrims for Hajj 2025

POPE FRANCIS DIES AT 88: TINUBU, TRUMP, PUTIN, MACRON, KING CHARLES PAY TRIBUTES

a place of deep humility.

"Pope Francis was a pope for the poor, the downtrodden and the forgotten. He was close to the realities of human fragility, meeting Christians around the world facing war, famine, persecution and poverty. Yet he never lost the faith-fuelled hope of a better world.

"That hope was at the heart of his papacy. His determination to visibly live out his faith inspired people across the world to see afresh the church's teachings of mercy and charity. With his death, we are reminded once more of his call to care for one another across different faiths, backgrounds, nations and beliefs," Starmer stated.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy: Francis Gave Hope

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote on X: "He knew how to give hope, ease suffering through prayer, and foster unity. He prayed for peace in Ukraine and for Ukrainians.

"We grieve together with Catholics and all Christians who looked to Pope Francis for spiritual support. Eternal memory!"

Modi: He Was Beacon of Compassion

Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, said he was "deeply pained" by his loss and offered his "heartfelt condolences to the global Catholic community.

"Pope Francis will always be remembered as a beacon of compassion, humility and spiritual courage by millions across the world. From a young age, he devoted himself towards realising the ideals of Lord Christ. He diligently served the poor and downtrodden. For those who were suffering, he ignited a spirit of hope.

"I fondly recall my meetings with him and was greatly inspired by his commitment to inclusive and all-round development. His affection for the people of India will always be cherished. May his soul find eternal peace in God's embrace," he wrote.

Macron: He Sided with Most Vulnerable

French President, Emmanuel Macron, wrote: "Throughout, his pontificate Pope Francis had always sided with the most vulnerable and the most fragile, and that he did this with a lot of humility. In this time of war and brutality, he had a sense for the other, for the most fragile."

Olaf Scholz: Church Has Lost an Advocate

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz wrote on X: "With the death of Pope Francis, the Catholic Church and the world lose an advocate for the weak, a reconciling and warm-hearted person.

"I greatly appreciated his clear view of the challenges we face. My sympathies go out to the religious community worldwide."

Ruto: It's Big Loss to Catholic Faithful

The Kenyan President mourned the late Pope Francis, praising his strong ethical and moral convictions.

"This is a big loss to the Catholic faithful and the Christian world. Pope Francis will be remembered for a life dedicated to serving the Lord, the Church, and humanity. His strong ethical and moral convictions inspired millions across the world, regardless of faith or background," he stated.

Jonathan: Late Pontiff Stood for Vulnerable

Former President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan has extended his condolences to the Catholic faithful in Nigeria and Christians around the world on the passing of His Holiness, Pope Francis who died on Monday.

In a statement by his media aide, Ikechukwu Eze, Jonathan described the late Catholic Pontiff as an advocate of peace and justice, and defender of the vulnerable. He further noted that his demise a day after offering the Easter sermon spoke of his exceptional dedication to faith and service.

The former president stated: "I offer my deepest condolences to the Nigerian Catholic Church and the Christian community around the world on the passing of His Holiness, Pope Francis, who was the head of the Catholic Church.

"Pope Francis was a religious leader whose impact transcended the pulpit to many other spheres of humanity. He was an advocate for peace, justice and equality around the world.

"Pope Francis' death, a day after offering Easter sermon, speaks of his dedication to service and commitment to faith and service. Even in his struggling moments he stayed true to his faith and commitment to his purpose of preaching peace and justice and love across the world.

"As we reflect on the vacuum created by his departure, may his life of faith, dedication and service to God continue to inspire us all."

Buhari: Poor, Migrants Have Lost a Friend

Ex-President Muhammadu Buhari also joined Christians across the globe in mourning the demise of the head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis.

In a reaction to the news of the pontiff's demise on Monday, the former president said Christians in Nigeria and all over the world would miss the exemplary leadership of the church by a pope who served the poor and the weak, and cared much about migrants and refugees.

According to Buhari: "He was a Pope who strove to build a beneficial, complementary relationship between the followers of the world's two greatest religions-Islam and Christianity.

"Just hours before his demise, he made a call for an end to the war in Gaza. I hope Israel and Hamas will heed this call as a final respect to the Pope who had the distinction of bringing climate change to the Vatican and recognising the Palestinian State."

The ex-president wished for a new leader of the Catholic Church who would build on the inspiring legacies of Pope Francis.

Atiku, Mbah, Soludo, Obi, Obaseki, Omokri, Catholic Bishops, CAN Mourn

Governors of Enugu State, Dr. Peter Mbah; Chukwuma Soludo of Anambra State; former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, former Governor Peter Obi, ex-Governor Godwin Obaseki, Catholic Bishops and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in the North, yesterday joined the rest of the world to mourn Pope Francis.

Mbah described the late Pontiff as a man full of humanity, a reformer, and humble leader.

In a statement, he personally signed on Monday, the governor also described the Pope's demise as a heavy loss, not only to the Catholic Church, but equally to the entire world.

"His Holiness, Pope Francis, was full of humanity and lived as an epitome of meekness. A highly spiritual Pontiff, he chose a modest life over the glamour and privileges intrinsic in the papacy.

"The first Jesuit Pope championed a number of liberal reforms, including the review of the Vatican constitution that accorded the lay Catholic and women a foothold on the central administration of the Mother Church

"Importantly, His Holiness will be remembered for the promotion of global peace, one of his most outstanding legacies being the 'Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together,' which he co-signed with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, on February 4, 2019.

"Therefore, I am of the strong belief that a peaceful resolution of the raging conflicts around the world will stand as the greatest monument in honour of the Holy Father.

"On behalf of the Government and good people of Enugu State, I join the over 1.4 billion members of the Catholic Church across the world to mourn His Holiness and pray for the peaceful repose of his kind soul," he stated.

Anambra State Governor, Professor Soludo, expressed sadness at the passing of the Pope.

In his condolence message signed on his behalf by his Press Secretary, Mr Christian Aburime, Soludo extended his solemn condolences to the Catholic Church in Anambra State, Nigeria, the Vatican, and the global Christian community.

He said: "The loss of Pope Francis, a globally respected icon of faith, humility, and compassion, has indeed grieved the hearts of Catholics and all humanity as his lifelong dedication to championing the cause of the poor, fostering interfaith unity, and advocating for peace and justice has left the world a better place.

"Pope Francis was a shepherd whose legacy transcended borders. His teachings on love, mercy, and solidarity touched base with the people of Anambra, inspiring the government to build a society rooted in dignity and hope.

"Indeed, the Holy Father's passing on Easter Monday, a day symbolising Christ's triumph over death, is deeply instructive and a reflection on the enduring power of resurrection and hope," Soludo said

Soludo assured that he stands in solidarity with the global Catholic community during this period of mourning, and the celebration of a life extraordinarily lived in service to God and humanity.

Peter Obi, a former Governor of Anambra State, and 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party, also expressed sorrow at the passing of Pope Francis, describing the late pontiff as "a moral compass in a troubled world."

In his tribute, Obi reflected on the profound impact of Pope Francis' life and leadership on the global community, particularly in championing peace, justice, and human dignity.

"I received with profound sorrow the news of the passing of the Holy Father, Pope Francis. His death marks the end of another era in the spiritual and moral leadership of the Catholic Church and the wider world," Obi wrote.

Recalling his personal encounters with the Pope, Obi noted that he had the honour of meeting Pope Francis on three separate occasions. He praised the late pontiff's unwavering commitment to the core virtues of faith, hope, and compassion, and his tireless efforts to bridge divides and foster global solidarity.

"Pope Francis led with humility, spoke with wisdom, and acted with moral courage. He constantly strove to draw humanity closer to the ideals of peace, justice, and love," Obi said.

"As a member of the Scholas Occurrentes Foundation, a global initiative for youth and education established by Pope Francis, Obi highlighted the Pope's strong belief in the transformative power of education, dialogue, and youth empowerment in shaping a better future.

"His deep concern for the poor, his steadfast advocacy for moral leadership, and his defence of human dignity earned him the admiration of people across all faiths and nations," he added.

Atiku, while expressing shock over the death of the Pope, described him as a shepherd for the most vulnerable who worked for a better and united world.

"It is with a heart heavy with sorrow that I extend my deepest condolences to the Holy See, the Catholic Church in Nigeria and across the world, and the entire Christian faithful on the passing of His Holiness, Pope Francis.

According to the former vice president, late Pope Francis "was a trailblazer who "dared to walk where no one has gone."

"Pope Francis was a Pontiff who walked among the people, whose voice echoed the cries of the poor and whose hands reached toward those cast aside by the world. His papacy was a bridge of compassion in a time of division, a balm of grace in a wounded world.

"That his soul should be called home on a sacred day of Christians is a solemn and divine punctuation — one that reminds us that even as the earthly journey ends, a new and glorious dawn awaits those who have lived for others," Atiku stressed.

In his comments on the passing of the Pope, Obaseki said he was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of the revered head of the Catholic Church, His Holiness, describing him as a great shepherd of the weak and downtrodden, a beacon of hope, a voice for the voiceless, and a tireless advocate for peace, compassion, and human dignity.

"Throughout his distinguished papacy, he spoke courageously for the poor, the marginalised, and the oppressed, always reminding us that true leadership lies in service to others.

"An advocate of love and social justice, he walked the path of peace in a world so often divided by conflict, and his unshakable faith in the power of dialogue and reconciliation made him a defining moral compass for our time.

"He will be remembered for his forthrightness, devotion, legacy of love, humility and hope and a relentless commitment to global peace. He will be sorely missed," he wrote.

President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), Most Rev. Lucius Ugorji, has also expressed sadness over the death of Pope Francis, the 266th Pope of the Catholic Church.

While reacting to the death of Pope Francis, the Bishops described him as a tireless advocate for the marginalised and vulnerable.

A statement by the Head of Media Unit at the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) in Abuja, Fr. Michael Nsikak Umoh said: "This brings an end to a pontificate which commenced on March 13, 2013, when he was elected to succeed Pope Benedict XVI, who had resigned on February 28, 2013. Jorge Mario Bergoglio, as he was born, chose Francis as his papal name in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi.

"The reign of Pope Francis is characterised by his tireless advocacy for the marginalised and vulnerable, emphasizing the importance of serving the poor and promoting social justice".

Commenting on the life and times of Pope Francis, CSN said that the late octogenarian implemented significant reforms within the Church, including changes to the liturgical books and the establishment of new departments in the Vatican Office.

In the area Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue, CSN said Pope Francis fostered greater understanding and cooperation between different Christian denominations and faith communities, promoting a culture of dialogue and mutual respect.

"Additionally, Pope Francis' encyclical "Laudato Si'" highlighted the urgent need for environmental protection and sustainable living, sparking global discussions on climate change and care for creation.

"Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis was revered for his humility, compassion, and commitment to serving others. His legacy will continue to inspire millions around the world," it said.

According to CSN, the Pope's funeral will follow the updated liturgical book for papal funeral rites, which he approved in April 2024.

The simplified and solemn ceremony will reflect his desire for a more austere and faith-focused celebration.

"Archbishop Ugorji urges all Catholics and people of goodwill to pray for the happy repose of Pope Francis and for the Catholic Church at this period. May God grant Pope Francis eternal rest in His Kingdom. Amen," .

Similarly, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in the 19 Northern States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) joined the global Christian community in mourning the passing of Pope Francis.

In a statement, Chairman of the Northern Association, Rev. Yakubu Pam, described the late religious leader as "a spiritual father and global voice of conscience whose life embodied humility, service, and tireless advocacy for peace and justice."

He said the Pope's "transition during the sacred Easter season is profoundly symbolic, calling us all to embrace the message of hope, sacrifice, and resurrection." Pam said, Easter is a season of renewal—a call to rise above pain and darkness into a new dawn.

"Pope Francis lived out this calling through his relentless pursuit of compassion for the poor, dialogue

Continued on page xx



THE WINNER OF INSURE AND WIN PROMO...

L–R: Head, Corporate Affairs, Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC), Mr. Henry Ukason; Chief Information Officer, Coronation Insurance Plc, Mr. Nelson Madu; Executive Director, Technical, Coronation Insurance Plc, Mr. Adewale Adeneye; Managing Director/CEO, Coronation Life Assistance Ltd, Mr. Adebowale Adesona; Grand Prize Winner, Gold Imao Njy; Zonal Coordinator, South West Zone, FCCPC, Mrs. Margaret Aboluwade; and Head of Operations, Coronation Insurance Plc, Mrs. Nneka Nath-Ude, at the official handing over ceremony of the brand new car to the winner of the "Insure and Win" promo in Lagos… recently

Expert: Tariff War Trump's Ploy to Dismantle WTO, Birth US Isolationism

Foresees limited impact on Nigeria because of exemption of oil, gas exports

Dike Onwuamaeze

Professor of Economics and former member of the Monetary Policy Committee of the Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN, Professor Mike Idi Obadan, has stated the current tariff war launched by US President Donald Trump is a plot to dismantle the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and move the US toward isolationism.

Obadan, who is the chairman, Goldmark Education Academy, Benin City, and former director general of the National Centre for Economic Management and Administration, Ibadan, asserted these in his essay titled "The Trump Tariff War: Implications for Nigeria and the Global Economy."

He said: "What seems clear is that President Trump is using the tariffs as an instrument of power to coerce other countries to enter into deals that favour the US.

"But then, why has the US shied away from negotiating with his targeted countries within the framework of the WTO?

"Mr. Trump probably wants to gradually dismantle the WTO and unwittingly move his country towards isolationism. The gains from the gravitation towards autarky are not clear."

According to him, Trump probably neither understands the basic economic theory relating to the impact of a tariff war nor allows trained economic advisers to speak truth to him. Otherwise, he would not have initiated the war as international trade is an acknowledged engine of growth.

His words: "A general equilibrium analysis of tariffs shows that a sustained tariff war successively reduces the volume of trade of the countries involved and the global economy.

"As the trade volumes shrink, economic growth dips, scarcities of goods prevail, inflation rises, consumers' purchasing power reduces, welfare diminishes and hardships prevail.

"Countries lose and virtually none gains. Already, there are apprehensions that if a tariff war is sustained, a global recession is most likely."

The professor of economics stated the tariff war would have implications for Nigeria because trade is contributing significant proportion of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and global economic shocks are easily transmitted to the Nigerian economy.

He however believes it might have limited direct impact on Nigeria's economy but would provide opportunities for Nigeria to strengthen its production and trade facilitation capacity, as well as diversify products and markets, add value to export products, and help to make ECOWAS intra-regional trade schemes and AfCTA work.

Obadan said: "The US 14.0 per cent tariffs on Nigeria's exports, as it is, may have both direct and indirect impacts on Nigeria's economy.

"The direct effects may derive from increased prices of the exports in the US markets and reduction of export volumes and foreign exchange income.

"The indirect effects may be felt in foreign exchange volatility, the country's budget, macroeconomic stability, among others.

"And if the economies of the other trading partners of the US are hurt by the reciprocal tariffs, the negative impact on them may be transmitted to the Nigerian economy through reduced demand for our exports and high prices of our imports from them."

He however noted that two factors - the volume and nature of the exports - might mitigate the impact of the tariffs on Nigeria's economy.

His words: "First, the volume of Nigeria's exports to the US is relatively small; an average of $5.28 billion in 2023 and 2024. In 2023, for example, Nigeria's exports to the US accounted for about 8.0 per cent of the country's total exports out of which 90 per cent is comprised of oil and gas products, mineral fuels, distillation products.

"The second factor is the reported decision of the US government to exempt Nigeria's major exports, crude oil and natural gas exports from the tariffs. This aligns with the successive US presidents' policy of ensuring cheap oil imports for their industries and consumers.

"However, non-oil exports, many of which were previously exempted from tariffs under AGOA may now be tariffed as the future of AGOA, which is expected to end in September, 2025, remains uncertain."

POPE FRANCIS DIES AT 88: TINUBU, TRUMP, PUTIN, MACRON, KING CHARLES PAY TRIBUTES

among nations, and reconciliation among peoples. His passing during this season invites us as a nation to pause and reflect on our moral direction and the need for national rebirth," the statement said.

Pam also lamented that at this critical time, Plateau, Benue, Borno, and several other states have continued to endure the devastating effects of insecurity, violence, and terrorism.

"Let the memory and legacy of Pope Francis inspire us to reject indifference and apathy. Let us rise together—Christians, Muslims, and people of all faiths and backgrounds—to heal our land and restore the dignity of every Nigerian citizen," the statement said.

An author, Reno Omokri, in his contribution, expressed his condolences to the Catholic Church and community, stressing that the late spiritual leader of the church was a friend of the poor—a most commendable trait in his view.

He wrote: "But this is also a teachable moment. Please learn a lesson from his death. The man has not been dead up to 24 hours, and already, the discussion has shifted from his death to his successor.

"In fact, the names of favourites are now trending. Campaigning is ongoing as we speak. The Catholic Church is moving on. But the Bergoglio family in Argentina cannot move on. His sister, Maria Elena Bergoglio, is inconsolable. While Cardinals of the Catholic Church are jostling to replace her brother, she has been under the care of a physician for fear of the worst.

"If that is the case with someone as prominent as the Catholic Pontiff, why do you think your case will be different? If you die at 12 noon, by 12.01 pm, your boss and office will shift focus from mourning to replacing you. Work goes on. Life goes on."

What Happens When a Pope Dies?

The death of Pope Francis who was TIME's 2013 Person of the Year, has kickstarted a leadership transition period at the Vatican known as the interregnum, during which there is no Pope in power (referred to as sede vacante, or the "vacant seat").

After the Pope dies, the Vatican's traditional nine days of mourning called the novendiales begin.

The election of a new Pope begins between 15 to 20 days after the death. The camerlengo, a cardinal in the Catholic Church, is in charge of organizing the election in a process known as the conclave, which was recently dramatised in the Oscar-nominated film Conclave.

The actual election, however, is preceded by general congregations that are called both to discuss the growing challenges facing the Catholic Church. The general congregations must be attended by all cardinals who "are not legitimately impeded," according to the Apostolic Constitution, Time wrote.

MUTFWANG TO STAKEHOLDERS: LET'S UNITE TO RECLAIM OUR LAND FROM BANDITS, TERRORISTS

Other stakeholders in attendance were serving and former Senators, members of House of Reps, traditional and religious leaders, government officials, youth and women groups, among others.

Meanwhile, the protesters, dressed in black, red, and white were led by the Plateau State CAN Chairman, Rev. Fr. Polycarp Lubo; the President of the Church of Christ in Nations (COCIN), Rev. Amos Mohzo; the Plateau State Chairman of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Pastor Dunga Gomwalk; and the President of the Gideon and Funmi Para-Mallam Peace Foundation, Rev. Gideon Para-Mallam. They demanded an end to the recurring attacks and killings in the State.

Benue Under Siege, Governor Alia Laments

Governor Hyacinth Alia of Benue State, has revealed that Benue State was currently under siege by armed herdsmen. The governor said the death toll in the Holy Thursday and Good Friday attacks in Ukum and Logo Local Government Areas, LGAs, of the state had risen to 72.

The attack on the two LGAs came a few days after similar attacks on Ikobi, Asa 2, Otobi-Akpa, Emichi, Okpomaju and Odudaje communities in Otukpo LGA, which claimed about 30 lives, while many sustained severe injuries as the rampaging herders razed several properties.

The governor, who was giving an update on the attacks, urged the federal government to step into the situation and end the activities of the killer herders in the state.

He said, "Last night we got wind again that three dead bodies were recovered from the Katsina-Ala axis of the state, which means that the entire space out there is under siege again.

"We are under siege as a state. We are under attack, and those who are attacking us must have a face, must have an aim, and must have a drive. They come, they drag people out, they kill to occupy. This is extremely unacceptable.

"Barely three weeks ago, we had attacks in Otukpo, Benue South District; 13 dead bodies were recovered from that attack.

"This is a siege. Barely one and a half months ago, we did not have it easy to repel the terrorists in Kwande axis. So, if this is not a siege, what is it?

"The federal government must up its game in our support and in fighting this insurgency. It is targeted. I mean, it is planned, and religiously, it is being executed.

"They are terrorists, they are terrorists period. And we strongly believe that their aim point and aim is to land grab. A terrorist is a terrorist irrespective of his ethnicity or his religion. Criminality is criminality period."

The governor appealed for support, assuring of his determination to end insecurity in the five worst-hit Local Government Areas, LGAs, of the state within the shortest possible time.

Jigawa Gov to Danjuma: Telling Citizens to Defend Themselves Can Cause Anarchy

Jigawa State Governor, Umar Namadi, has faulted recent remarks by a former Chief of Army Staff, General Theophilus Danjuma, who urged Nigerians to defend themselves in the face of growing insecurity.

Speaking on Channels Television's Sunrise Daily, yesterday, Namadi warned that such a statement could lead to lawlessness.

"He (Danjuma) is a very senior security person, and should be respected. But if he says that citizens should be allowed to defend themselves, I think you are causing anarchy. His words need to be analysed carefully," Namadi said.

The governor stressed that the government was making efforts to improve the country's security architecture, andpointed to his state as an example of how community engagement and strategic planning could help reduce violence.

His words: "When we assumed office, we employed a lot of strategies and brought in experts. We also engaged traditional rulers and established standing committees to communicate with the people. Now, they understand that fighting or killing each other is not the solution.

"We have not reached the level where people need to defend themselves," the governor said, even as he also backed the establishment of the State Police, describing it as a viable solution to Nigeria's security problems.

"The idea of State Police is still very much alive. Many states have indicated interest. At the level of the National Economic Council, discussions are ongoing, and I believe it will eventually be implemented," he stated.

Danjuma, speaking at a public event in Takum, Taraba State, urged Nigerians to defend themselves against bandits and criminals, warning that relying solely on the government for protection was no longer realistic.

"The warning I gave some years ago is still as valid today as it was then. Nigerians must rise and defend themselves. We cannot continue to sit and watch while bandits, terrorists, and criminal gangs massacre our people unchecked," Danjuma said, referring to his earlier warnings.

NcoS: Reported Explosion at Maiduguri Custodial Centre False

The Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) has described as untrue, the reported incident of bomb explosion at the Maiduguri Custodial Centre.

Public Relations Officer of NCoS, Umar Abubakar, a Deputy Controller of Corrections, in a statement, yesterday, said, "the attention of the Nigerian Correctional Service has been drawn to an online report of a purported bomb explosion in Maiduguri Custodial Centre. The report is not true and misleading as the situation at the custodial centre is calm and stable.

"The inmates are continuing their treatment regime of rehabilitation programmes without disruption. No security breach at any of our Custodial centres across the country. The fake report should be disregarded."

An online news outfit had reported that an explosion rocked the Maximum-Security Custodial Centre (MaSCC) in Maiduguri on Sunday night, April 20, 2025, around 9, sparking a fire in the solitary confinement where Charles Okah, a prominent detainee, had been held since mid-March.

The report claimed that initial reports from within the prison stated that an object, likely a bomb, was lobbed into Okah's cell through the open window bars.

The report further claimed that eyewitnesses said heavy smoke billowed from the cell, where Okah was kept.

NEWS

Bauchi Governor Mourns Death of Four Workers of Gubi Water Treatment Plant

Segun Awofadeji in Bauchi

Bauchi State Governor, Senator Bala Mohammed, has expressed deep sadness over the tragic death of four workers of the Gubi Water Treatment Plant, who were said to have been carrying out official duties.

The governor's condolences were conveyed in a statement signed by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Mukhtar Gidado, and made it available to journalists in Bauchi yesterday.

According to the statement, "It is with deep sadness that His Excellency, Governor Bala Mohammed, on behalf of the government and the good people of Bauchi State, extends heartfelt condolences to the families, friends, and colleagues of the four dedicated staff of the Bauchi State Urban Water and Sewerage Corporation who tragically lost their lives during routine maintenance work at the Gubi Farm Water Treatment Plant.

"This devastating incident has cast a shadow over the entire state, as we mourn the loss of these hardworking and committed public servants who died in the line of duty while contributing to the essential task of ensuring water supply for our people.

"Their sacrifices and services will never be forgotten, and their legacy will continue to inspire all those working tirelessly to build a better Bauchi State.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with their immediate families during this time of grief. We pray that the Almighty grants them the strength to bear this great loss and comforts their hearts with His divine mercy.

Ekiti to Upgrade State Tourism Destinations to World-Class Standards

Gbenga Sodeinde in Ado Ekiti

Ekiti State Governor, Mr. Biodun Oyebanji, has restated the commitment of his administration to transforming the state tourism destinations into world-class attractions

Governor Oyebanji stated this yesterday during the 7th edition of Hike Ekiti Mountain Safari which took place at Sagbonke Mountain (Aka Mountain of Cloud) in Efon Alaaye Ekiti.

Describing tourism as a vital sector of the economy, the Ggovernor said if properly harnessed, they could significantly enhance the state revenue base, adding that his administration remains committed to prioritising the renovation and modernisation of the sites to attract both local and international visitors.

Expressing his amazement at the breath-taking natural beauty of the Sagbonke Mountain, Governor Oyebanji described the location as a hidden treasure with immense potential to attract global attention.

He directed the state Commissioner for Industry, Trade, Investment and Cooperatives; Commissioner Arts and Culture, as well as the Director-General of Bureau of Tourism Development to develop a comprehensive investment plan for the mountain.

While expressing optimism that Ekiti State would soon take its pride of place among Nigeria's leading tourist destinations, the governor urged stakeholders, including investors and cultural custodians, to collaborate with his government to achieve the vision of making Ekiti State a global tourism hotspot.

St. Gregory's College Old Boys Elect New Executive Leadership

The St. Gregory's College Old Boys Association (SGCOBA) held its highly anticipated elections for new executive officers at the school's South West Ikoyi campus, drawing a dynamic and diverse mix of alumni, both senior and junior, from across generations.

The election was conducted with remarkable transparency and order, under the vigilant supervision of Chairman of the Electoral Committee, Mr. Akin Ajayi.

According to a statement, esteemed members of the association, including a member of the Board of Trustees, Steve Bamidele Omojafor, and former General Secretary of SGCOBA, Mr. Abiola Sapo, played crucial roles in ensuring the fair and smooth execution of the electoral process. Mr. Francis Oluwole Kudayah was elected as the new president, while Fred Ijewere and retired AIG Tunji Alapini were elected first vice president and second vice president in that order.

Others elected members are: Jude Ezeobi (Legal Advisor); Anthony Akpala (General Secretary); Edozie Olunwa (Assistant General Secretary); Moses Nwanze (Membership Secretary); Rotimi Williams (Financial Secretary); Mr Kayode Situ (Treasurer); Ayodele Adewale (Publicity Secretary); Fouad Gafar (Social Secretary); Mike Adande (Ex-officio); Remi Awuneba (Ex-officio); Olabamibo Akindahunsi (Ex-officio); Ganiyu Johnson (Ex-officio); Prince Bimbo Olashore (Ex-officio);Ben Grant (Archivist) and Francis Danmola (Auditor).

Obasanjo Advises on Decolonisation as Otusheso Leads Documentary Premiere

Former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo underscored the need for Africans to adopt a renewed mindset to truly achieve decolonisation and claim their place on the global stage.

He made these remarks at the African premiere of The Decolonisation of Africa, a landmark documentary hosted by Accelerate Media Group in Lagos, under the executive production of its CEO, Colette Otusheso.

In her remarks, Otusheso reflected on the origin of the project, inspired by a profound conversation with Chief Obasanjo and rooted in the late Dr. Herbert Wigwe's vision of empowering Africans to tell their own stories through their own lens.

"This project began with a deep sense of purpose. Meeting former President Obasanjo opened my eyes to how important it is that this story be told—and told properly. Dr. Herbert Wigwe believed in the power of storytelling to shape identity and preserve legacy. That belief continues to guide us," Otusheso said.

As Executive Producer, Otusheso spoke to the careful and deliberate process of assembling the right team to bring the vision to life.

CODAF's Methane Reduction, Green Project Excites in Lagos Community

Residents of Epe Community in Lagos State, comprising local government officials, households, farmers, waste pickers and market officials have expressed delight at the methane reduction project that has culminated in the sitting of a waste materials recovery facility(MRF) in Epe.

The project was unveiled at the presentation of a baseline report on Multi-Solving Action for Methane Reduction in Nigeria (MAMRN) by the Community Development Advocacy Foundation (CODAF), a member of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) at the Epe Council Headquarters.

Chairman of the Council, Princess Surah Animashaun, who was represented by the Vice Chairman, Hon. Sikiru Adeniyi Owolomose, commended the CODAF team comprising its Executive Director, Richard Benin, Programme Manager, Environment, Melody Enyinnaya, Onyeka Venath and Jeru Ubrei-Maimoni for the initiative in the area.

He said: "Waste to wealth initiative remains crucial for a better environment and sustainable future and as such, organisations, institutions, groups, communities and individuals should be encouraged to embark on projects targeted at gathering wastes (including plastics) for recycling, which will improve the environment."

Speaking, Benin stressed the importance of green and sustainable agricultural practices, adding that Epe was chosen for the MAMRN project due to its high methane generation activities as an agricultural and fishing hub in Lagos State.

'Dangote's N31bn Food Programme Bolsters Food Security in Two Years'

For committing N31 billion to its food programme for the second year in a row, Governor Mai Mala Buni of Yobe State has said that the Aliko Dangote Foundation's (ADF) Annual Food Intervention Programme has bolstered Nigeria's food security.

The Foundation had committed N15billion and N16billion to its Annual Food Intervention Programme in 2024 and 2025 respectively.

Only last week(April 15, 2025) President Bola Tinubu declared an emergency on food security, while calling on stakeholders to join the fight against hunger and deprivation in the country.

Speaking last weekend at the flag-off of the distribution of 30,000 bags of 10Kg rice to vulnerable persons in Yobe State, Governor Buni said the ADF's food programme has played a significant role in alleviating hunger, and complemented government's efforts toward achieving food security in the country.

Speaking at the event in Damaturu, the state capital, the governor said the gesture would support government's ongoing humanitarian efforts.

"It is with great pleasure that we are here today for yet another humanitarian assistance. This is the flag-off of the distribution of 30,000 bags of 10Kg parboiled rice to further support our people, specifically the less privileged and vulnerable persons," he said.

Adamawa Prepares for New Farming Season

Daji Sani in Yola

The Adamawa State Commissioner for Agriculture, Prof David Finchiwa Jatau, has reviewed the preparations being made by the state government for the upcoming farming season.

While speaking in his office yesterday in Yola, the state capital, the commissioner's assessment aimed to ensure that the state is well-prepared to support farmers and boost agricultural productivity in the new season.

He said the government has focused on key areas such as the availability of high-quality seeds, adequate fertilizer supplies, and access to sufficient land for farming.

Prof Jatau said the government has reportedly allocated a significant number of hectares of land for cultivation, and plans are underway to provide farmers with the necessary inputs, including seeds and fertilizers, to enhance crop yields.

According to him, "The government's efforts to enhance food security and promote agricultural development in the state are crucial, especially given the importance of agriculture to the livelihoods of many Adamawa residents.

"By providing farmers with the necessary support, the state government hopes to increase agricultural productivity and improve the lives of its citizens.

"The review also likely touched on access to credit facilities and the provision of extension services to farmers.

"The government's proactive approach to addressing the needs of farmers will help to maximize the potential of the agriculture sector and contribute to the overall economic development of Adamawa State."

CASCADE ATBU Model Farm Holds Farmers Field Day

Segun Awofadeji in Bauchi

A group, Catalysing Strengthened Policy Action for Healthy Diets and Resilience (CASCADE), through its farmers field and business school project, is focused on empowering women towards addressing malnutrition at the community and household level.

It is also advocating greater government engagement for sustainable food systems.

The Program Manager of CASCADE, Mr. Isaac Ishaya Audu, who stated this in his remarks during the farmers field day held at the CASCADE Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU) model farm at Gubi campus in Bauchi, added that the organisation is empowering women through nutrition sensitive agriculture so that they can grow nutritious crops to address the menace of malnutrition in the states of Bauchi, Jigawa, kebbi and Nassarawa.

According to him, "I want to use this opportunity to establish a brief as to what CARE International is doing on the CASCADE programme together with the university. We signed a 10 million euros intervention together with Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) to target 1.1 million women of reproductive age with children under -13 across the states of Bauchi, Jigawa, Kebbi and Nasarawa mainly to strengthen efforts in addressing malnutrition through a multi-sectoral approach."

He added that CASCADE employs multiple advocacy strategies, from sub-national to national and global levels, to strengthen policy implementation of nutrition-related policies. It draws on CARE's and GAIN's approaches, focusing on social accountability, good governance, health system strengthening, multi-sectoral coordination, resource mobilisation, private sector engagement and climate-resilient agricultural practices.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR ABIDEMI AJAYI: A Pillar of Innovation and Community Impact

In a remarkable achievement that highlights the intersection of science and community, Abidemi Ajayi has been recognized for his unwavering commitment to innovation and public service. This recognition comes as a result of his impactful contributions during a seminal workshop in 2017, hosted by the National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA) and the Federal Space Research and Development Agency at the Centre for Space Transport and Propulsion.



An Unforgettable Workshop Experience

The 2017 workshop gathered some of Nigeria's foremost scientific minds, creating a platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange in aerospace and propulsion technology. Abidemi Ajayi emerged as a standout participant, showcasing not only his technical skill but also a fervent passion for the mission at hand.

Photographs from this historic event vividly depict Abidemi engaging with peers, including a proud moment standing in front of the Sounding Rocket NG-1 prototype. These images encapsulate his enthusiasm and his unwavering commitment to enhancing Nigeria's capabilities in the space sector.

A Lasting Impact on Future Generations

Since the workshop, Abidemi's legacy has continued to flourish, particularly evident in his role as a mentor to new staff at NASRDA. His innovative methodologies have been seamlessly integrated into the agency's training regimen, transforming them into best practices that empower the next generation of scientists and engineers.

His tireless efforts in mentoring are a testament to his belief in the potential of others, reinforcing his status as a forward-thinking leader in the field.

A Beacon of Dedication and Excellence

Abidemi Ajayi embodies the ethos of what it means to be a public servant. His dual contributions to scientific advancement and community development position him as a role model for aspiring innovators and leaders.



As we reflect on his journey, we are filled with gratitude for his ongoing service and the profound impact he has made on both science and society.

Looking Ahead

As we celebrate Abidemi's achievements, we eagerly anticipate the future projects and progress that will unfold under his stewardship. His story is one of resilience, brilliance, and steadfast dedication, making a remarkable difference in our nation.

TUESDAYSPORTS

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Awoniyi in Action as Nottingham Forest Beat Spurs to Reclaim Third Spot

Duro Ikhazuagbe

PREMIER LEAGUE

Taiwo Awoniyi came on as a 76th minute substitute for Chris Wood last night as Nottingham Forest defeated Tottenham Hotspur 2-1 to reclaim the third spot on the English Premier League table.

The other Nigerian in Nottingham, Ola Aina, was not dressed as he has been sidelined by calf injury.

With this win in North London, Nottingham Forest's dream of a Champions League spot is becoming getting brighter as the season winds to the home stretch.

For the hosts Spurs, their qualification for the UEFA Europa League semi final did little to make difference as Forest as early as the opening 20 minutes were the dominant team and took the commanding lead of the clash with two goals.

Their opener came after Guglielmo Vicaro parried away a searing drive from Morgan Gibbs-White, with the resulting corner from Anthony Elanga being headed away. But Elliot Anderson's long range shot deflected past wrong-footed Vicaro for the first goal in the fifth minute.

It was the same Anderson 10 minutes later who played a great ball over the line to Chris Wood who poked it beyond Vicaro in goal for the second goal.

Before that second goal, the London team was saved the blushes as VAR ruled the goal scored earlier in the 10th minute by Wood as coming from an offside position.

Brazilian Richarlison however scored a face-saving goal for Spurs two minutes to the regulation time.



SERIE A HONOURS LATE POPE FRANCIS...

FILE PHOTO: The late Pope Francis meeting late Diego Maradona during an audience with the players of the 'Partita Interreligiosa Della Pace' at Paul VI Hall before the Interreligious Match For Peace at Olimpico Stadium on Sept. 1, 2014. Pope Francis who passed away at 7.35 of Monday April 21 in Rome, was a man with vision and he always tried to fight for real peace. He was on the side of the people who have less and need help. He was also a great fan of sport as a tool of friendship, culture and inclusion. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Serie A Games Postponed after Death of Pope Francis

Monday's four scheduled matches in the top flight of Italian football have been postponed following the death of Pope Francis.

The Vatican announced on Monday morning that Pope Francis had died at the age of 88,having recently been discharged from hospital following five weeks of treatment for an infection.

Four Serie A matches - Torino v Udinese, Cagliari v Fiorentina, Genoa v Lazio and Parma v Juventus - had been scheduled to be played on Easter Monday, which is a national holiday in Italy.

The matches will instead be played on Wednesday, 23 April and kick off at 17:30 BST.

Pope Francis was elected to lead the Catholic Church in 2013, replacing Pope Benedict XVI.

The 88-year-old was a known football fan and had supported Argentine side San Lorenzo since he was a child.

A tribute from the club read: "Our hearts ache. Pope Francis has left this world, but he will never leave our hearts.

"An honorary member of our club, his passion for San Lorenzo always moved us especially, and unites us in a constant prayer for his soul.

"He celebrated every achievement with us with enormous generosity, receiving the delegations that visited him in the Vatican during his papacy."

A number of Serie A clubs also posted tributes to the Pope following his passing.

"A loss that deeply saddens our city and the entire world," a Roma statement read.

"His faith, his humility, his courage and his dedication have touched the hearts of millions of people, making him a moral reference of our time."

Alake of Egbaland Endorses SouthWest Games, Offers Royal Blessings to Organisers

The Alake of Egbaland, His Royal Majesty, Oba Adedotun Aremu Gbadebo Okukenu IV, has given his royal endorsement to the SouthWest Games 2025, describing it as a "brilliantly envisioned and masterfully executed sporting festival" that promises to be a revolutionary force for youth development and communal solidarity across the region.

Oba Gbadebo offered his commendation while receiving the Chairman of the SouthWest Games, Dr. Olanrewaju Alfred, and members of the Organising Committee at his Ake Palace in Abeokuta.

The revered monarch extolled the organisers for conceptualising a platform that not only nurtures athletic excellence but also strengthens cultural bonds and fosters discipline among young people.

"I extend my heartfelt commendation to you, Dr. Alfred, and your dedicated team," Oba Gbadebo declared. "The South West Games is a profound affirmation of the power of sports as a tool for uniting our people, engaging our youth meaningfully, and instilling the values of excellence, camaraderie, and healthy rivalry. Your efforts are praiseworthy and inspirational."

Beyond his warm commendation, the Alake of Egbaland offered fervent prayers for the success of Dr. Alfred and his team, assuring them of the unwavering support of the Egba people and his royal court.

"May the Almighty continue to guide your steps and crown your labours with enduring success," the monarch prayed. "Know that Egbaland stands firmly behind you. You are not walking alone, we are with you at every milestone of this noble journey."

Oba Gbadebo, celebrated for his commitment to youth empowerment and regional advancement, further encouraged the organisers to scale their initiative beyond the South West, envisioning the Games as a template for national sports development and grassroots integration.

"This noble venture should not be confined to the South West alone," he counselled. "It has the potential to spark a nationwide movement, structured, inclusive, and far-reaching, designed to harness and elevate the boundless talents of Nigerian youth."

The Alake's royal blessing adds significant momentum to the South West Games, which successfully debuted in Lagos, featuring the six states of the region. The tournament drew wide participation from young athletes and garnering support from political, corporate, and traditional stakeholders alike.

In response, Dr. Alfred expressed profound gratitude to His Royal Majesty for the royal endorsement, describing it as "a sacred charge and a call to even greater diligence."



Alake of Egbaland, His Royal Majesty Oba Adedotun Aremu Gbadebo Okukenu IV (left) and the Chairman of Southwest Games, Dr. Lanre Alfred during the visit of the Games organising committee to the Ake Palace... recently

Flying Eagles in Cairo to Play Young Pharaohs Today

Nigeria's U20 boys, Flying Eagles, will square up to host nation, the Young Pharaohs of Egypt this evening as part of their build-up to the Africa U20 Cup of Nations billed to take place 27th April and 18th May.

A delegation of 24 players and nine officials led by Head Coach, Aliyu Zubairu touched down at the Cairo International Airport aboard Egypt Air flight on Sunday evening.

The team is lodged at Jewel Sports City and Aqua Resort, and had their first training session on Monday evening.

The match is slated for 5pm local time (4pm Nigeria time) at the Cairo International Stadium.

The Flying Eagles who are seven-time African champions will get their campaign underway against Tunisia at the 30 June Stadium in Cairo on Thursday 1st May.

The Africa U20 Cup of Nations serves as a qualifying tournament for the FIFA U20 World Cup finals scheduled for 27th September – 19th October in Chile.

All four semi-finalists at the tournament in Egypt will represent Africa at the FIFA U20 World Cup finals..

Government, Sports, Business Leaders to Convene on Abuja for 2025 'Sports Meet Nigeria' Conference

Olawale Ajimotokan in Abuja

Key industrial, sports, business professionals, government officials, marketers, broadcasters, media and PR experts and administrators will gather for the inaugural Sports Meet Nigeria Conference at Cubana Hotel Jabi, Abuja on April 26 for 2025.

The high-impact gathering will feature panel discussions, keynote presentations, networking sessions and deal-making opportunities aimed at unlocking the commercial and developmental potential of sports in Nigeria.

The event is at the instance of a sports business advisor, FIFA Player's and Match Agent, and boxing promoter and matchmaker, and Chief Executive Officer, CEO ESEM-Group, Akeola Lukumanu Ayinde.

Also, a book entitled "Beyond the Game- Unveiling The Potential of Sports in Nigeria",would be launched at the occasion.

Ayinde described "Beyond the Game" as more than a book, but a call to action.

"Nigeria's sports industry holds immense potential, but we must shift from mere participation to strategic investment and structured growth. "Sports Meet Nigeria" is where ideas meet action, where stakeholders across sectors will converge to shape the future of sports as a tool for economic and social transformation," he said.

The book explores the untapped opportunities within Nigeria's sports ecosystem.

The Event Director, "Sports Meet Nigeria", Ms. Halima Imam, said the conference is a first-of-its-kind platform where sports professionals and industry leaders from other sectors will engage in solutions-driven conversations.

"We are creating a space for meaningful partnerships that will drive innovation, investment, and sustainable development in Nigerian sports," she said.

The Creative Director, Sports "Meet Nigeria", Musa Sunusi Ahmad, remarked that: "The creative and business sides of sports must work hand-in-hand to elevate Nigeria's global sports standing. Sports Meet Nigeria will blend insightful discourse with engaging experiences, ensuring participants leave inspired and equipped to make a difference."

BACK PAGE LEAD PHOTOGRAPH



GUALA CLOSURES OPENING CEREMONY...

L-R: Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Lagos Free Zone, Adesuwa Ladoja; the Consul General of Italy in Nigeria, Ugo Boni and the Chief Executive Officer, Guala Closures, Andrea Lodetti, during the tape cutting at the inauguration ceremony event of Guala Closures factory at Lagos Free Zone ... recently

TUESDAY WITH REUBEN ABATI

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Pope Francis (1936 – 2025)

Pope Francis who died yesterday morning, April 21, at the age of 88 was a trailblazer in more than one respect and definitely one of the most influential figures of the 21st century: the first priest of the Jesuit Order (Society of Jesus) to occupy the Throne of St. Peter as sovereign of the Vatican State, Bishop of Rome, and leader of all Catholics worldwide (1.4 billion of them across the world). He was the first Pope from the Americas and the Southern Hemisphere, and the first Pope to have been raised outside Europe since Pope Gregory III in the eighth century. It may be said that Pope Francis' death was not shocking, but it was unexpected at the time it happened, the suddenness of it was more telling, He was 88, and at that age, it is common opinion that anything could indeed happen, mortality being a fact of existence, and death, a debt that all living things owe.

Besides, the Pope had been ill since February. He spent five weeks in the hospital - the Gemelli Polyclinic Hospital in Rome (February 14 – March 23) where his doctors treated him for a case of double pneumonia, which later resulted in other complications: bronchitis, respiratory issues and aneamia. His doctors discharged him in March, and advised him to take a two months' rest from duty, to convalesce properly. Since his return, there had been hope that the Pope was on the mend. On Easter Sunday, he greeted crowds at the St. Peter's Basilica. He was seen without the nasal casula, a breathing aid that his doctors had given him. He wished the about 35, 000 Catholics that had gathered "Happy Easter" and blessed the crowd, including children. His Easter message – Urbi et Orbi ("To the City and the World") was delivered on his behalf, a message striking the same notes of concern that formed a major plank of his papacy: peace, humanism and love. On Easter Sunday, he also met with the American Vice President who visited him. J.D. Vance is now recorded in the history books as one of the very last world leaders and diplomats to have spent some time with Pope Francis in his last hours on earth, a great privilege, that is. For a man, a once upon a time evangelical Christian, and an atheist, who converted to the Catholic faith in 2019, Vance may well read more than an ordinary meaning into that last encounter.

The Holy Father has now gone to be with the Lord, and the tributes have been pouring in from virtually every part of the world - a testament to the impactful tenure of the 266th Pope of the Catholic Church, and of the force of his character and leadership. The symbolism and the significance of the time of his passing – right at the end of the Holy Week, on Easter Monday, seem imbued with deeper meaning. The Catholic Church is now in mourning as the Church slips into an interregnum, that is the time between the death of one Pope and the emergence of another. The Holy See has already declared the Novendiale, nine days of mourning, and daily prayer services and requiem masses have already begun at Catholic churches worldwide, as the Church prepares for the burial of Pope Francis. Within the next 15 - 20 days, the Sacred College of Cardinals from all over the world (136 of them currently – those under the age of 80 are eligible to vote) will convene at the Sistine Chapel of the Vatican City to choose a new Pope. During that period, marked by secrecy, ritual and tradition, there will be rounds of voting by the Cardinals until a candidate wins two thirds of the vote, and a white smoke emerges from the chapel to herald the emergence of a new Pope to the shouts of "Habemus Papum!" among the faithful. The secrecy and the politics of this process are well dramatized in a movie titled The Conclave (2006), and also in another movie of exactly the same title, that is- The Conclave (2024), (adapted from Robert Dennis Harris's 2016 novel still of the same title) - winner of the 97th Academy Award for Best Writing and the BAFTA Award for Best Film. The period of the burial and the emergence of a new Pope should be a season of reflection and introspection for the Catholic Church, and an appreciation of the legacy and example of Pope Francis.



The late Pope Francis

When Jorge Mario Bergoglio (real name of Pope Francis) ascended the Throne of St. Peter on March 13, 2013, following the resignation and retirement of Pope Benedict XVI who died later in 2022, the new Pope had chosen the name Francis in honour of St. Francis of Assisi, the Italian mystic and poet who founded the Order of the Franciscans. This gesture was meant to underscore the 266th Pope's commitment to a life of poverty, chastity and the defence of the interest of the poor, the powerless, and the underprivileged members of the community. Pope Francis was a transformative leader who modernized the Catholic Church, an Outsider with a liberal disposition who dispensed with convention. He inherited a papacy that was mired in controversy, doubt and debate. He provided greater clarity with his humility, kindness, concern for the poor, commitment to inter-religious dialogue and continuous emphasis on the supremacy of God's mercy. Born on December 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the eldest child of Italian immigrants, Jorge Bergoglio came to the papacy well prepared within the Church and in the world of practical experience. He once had a girlfriend – Amalia Damonte – who did not marry him. He also once worked as a bouncer in a night club! He loved football. But as fate would have it, he joined the Jesuit Order in 1958, and was ordained a priest in 1969, armed with a philosophy degree from the Catholic University of Buenos Aires. He rose through the ranks within the Catholic priesthood in Argentina, becoming coadjutor archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1997, and eventually Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998. He was quite a controversial figure in the Catholic Church in Argentina, and in the politics of the country especially during his term as provincial superior in the late 70s, and his fierce criticism of the government of the country, although he was criticized for not doing enough to oppose military dictatorship in Argentina. It is instructive that after becoming Pope, he never went back to that country. He had become famous by 2001 when Pope John Paul II elected him to the College of Cardinals. In 2005, his name had come up at the Conclave as a potential Pope, but it was not until 2013 when Benedict XVI resigned that he became Pope.

His papacy was characterized by the courage with which he stood up to the Conservative wing of the Church who resisted his attempts at reform, and insisted that he was not "a true Pope" having not arrived at the position by way of tradition, rather through the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI. This did not deter Pope Francis. He also boldly confronted his critics including American Cardinal Raymond Burke whom he had to demote twice. The church is probably one of the most political organizations in the world. The Catholic Church is not an exception in this regard. What endures however is Pope Francis' commitment to service – his projection of the ideal of servant leadership, and the view that the church is for the poor who needed to be saved. He shunned luxury and preferred the common touch. He was willing to walk with the poor, live among them and fight for social and economic justice. He shunned the palatial residence of the Pope, any form of ostentation, and lived instead in humble surroundings of his choice, a small room in a guest house at the Vatican – the Casa Santa Maria. He was interested in service and making an impact, and he proved this again and again in the course of his 12-year papacy. His liberalism and belief in inclusive humanity could be seen for example in his defence of the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. He argued that even gay persons deserved the blessing of the church, because like everyone else they are the children of God. As he put it: "if a person is gay and seeks out the Lord and is willing, who am I to judge that person?" Pope Francis also supported climate change initiatives, and the urgent need to save the Earth. He also defended the plight of migrants and refugees in his support for refugees in Lampedusa, and the Greek island of Lesbos. He had the common touch either when seen identifying with the homeless in Washington DC, or the migrants in Lampedusa or washing and kissing the feet of South Sudanese war mongers. He was an apostle of peace, and unity, on the questions of South Sudan, Iraq, Egypt, Myanmar and every other troubled spot in the world. It was most instructive in his last Easter message this past Sunday, that the Pope condemned the deplorable situation in Gaza, anti-Semitism and the worrisome state of the world. Two years earlier, he apologized for the role played by the church in "cultural genocide" especially in Canada. He was also the first Pope to address a joint session of the US Congress, and on that occasion, Thursday, September 25, 2015, he defended the rights of immigrants "to travel North". He was in the forefront of the campaign for vaccination during the COVID pandemic in 2021. He initiated reconciliation with the Eastern Orthodox Church, the first time since the schism of 1054. He reached out to Muslims and persons of other faiths as well. He was the "Pope of the peripheries". He was the "Pope of Peace."

Pope Francis did his best to reform the Vatican curia, but he did not succeed in every endeavour. His effort for example to promote women in the Church to the diaconate and the Bishopric level was widely questioned by the conservatives. When he tried to change the rules about divorced couples, he caused another threat of schism in the Church. He wanted divorced couples to take the Holy communion without the formal annulment of marriage. He had tried to address the challenge of sexual abuse in the church and among the priesthood – the Dirty Dozen affair- but he did not make any progress with that either, what he got instead was a rebellion within the church. Whatever may have been his omissions, however, Pope Francis was all things considered a traditionalist. He upheld the position of the Church on euthanasia, abortion, death penalty and celibacy. He also projected a positive vison of the Church, and was loud and articulate in defending peace and human progress. He leaves behind a message of hope, humanism and simplicity. Other Popes before him were buried in style, he has left word that he should be buried very simply – in one coffin made of wood and zinc. He wants to be buried as an ordinary pastor not as a powerful figure in the world! That should happen within the next six days according to tradition.

Pope Francis was a moral exemplar about the vanity of all things. He will certainly be remembered kindly and positively for his evangelism, his support for the poor, marginalized populations of the world. He will also be remembered for his projection of the Church as a prophetic church, and for his exhortations and encyclicals which raise fundamental questions about the place of the Church in a modern world as in these writings - "Lumen Fidei" (2013), "Evangelii Gaudium" (2013) "Amoris Laetitia" (2016), "Laudato Si" (2015), "Fratelli Tutti" (2020), "Laudate Deum" (2023) and "Dilexit Nos" (2024). For ordinary folks, there is perhaps an additional lesson here about the importance of health. The same ailment that has now resulted in the death of Pope Francis first showed up in 1957 when he was 21 years old. He had pneumonia then, and he had to undergo surgery. Doctors removed one of his lungs, and throughout his life, he struggled with respiratory illnesses. But with the grace of God, and with spartan self-discipline, paying attention to his health condition, he lived to the ripe age of 88, and has left a remarkable legacy.

It is now up to the Sacred College of Cardinals to elect a new Pope, and this obviously would be a question of whether the Cardinals would choose a liberal Pope who would extend Pope Francis' modernization of the church or a hardline Conservative whose emergence would be a return to the authoritarianism of the Church, or perhaps a moderate who would unite all sides. There is also the question about age. In 2013, Bergoglio was 76. But despite the fact that the election of a new Pope is shrouded in secrecy until the Cardinals decide, this has not stopped the media and pundits from speculating about likely successors, and the big question has been: are we likely to have a Pope for the first time from Asia or from Africa? A certain Cardinal Adeyemi almost made it to the papacy in the movie, The Conclave (2024), but Africa happened to him. As the Catholic Church prepares for a post-Francis papacy, may the good Lord choose his own Bishop for the Throne of St. Peter. Farewell, Franciscus…Our Heavenly Father, we bow in submission to Thy Will…

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