FG Secures €100m Concessionary Funding from French Treasury to Develop Creative Infrastructure

Denies moving ministerial briefing to London *Umahi: N2.2trn spent on repairs, construction of 289 roads in two years*

Olawale Ajimotokan and **Emmanuel Addeh** in Abuja

The federal government yesterday, disclosed that it has secured concessionary funding from the French Treasury for creative infrastructure projects in Nigeria, with potential funding expanded from €35 million to €100 million.

Minister of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, Hannatu Musawa, disclosed this at the eighth edition of the Ministerial Press Briefing Session, held in Abuja, while presenting the scorecard of the ministry established in November 2023, by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Also yesterday, the federal government scorned reports circulating in both traditional and online media suggesting that the Ministerial Press Briefing Session had been relocated from Abuja to

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Citing Rising Debt, Moody's Pushes US Out of Top Triple-A Rating Club... Page 5

THISDAY

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L-R: Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi; the Celebrant/ Publisher of Ovation Magazine, Dele Momodu; his wife, Mrs. Bolaji Momodu; former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, and Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke, at the Dele Momodu Leadership Lecture and 65th birthday celebration held in Lagos… yesterday

At Dele Momodu's Lecture, Obasanjo Urges Collective Action to End Poverty

Chuks Okocha in Abuja and **Dike Onwuamaeze** in Lagos

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday, declared that Nigeria could

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Tinubu Approves More Air Assets to Tackle Insurgency

Orders military to intensify counter-terrorism operations *Meets CDS, service chiefs*

Military warns against misinformation, recirculation of old footage

See story on page 5



NIGERIA'S SECURITY ON THEIR MINDS...

L-R: DIG Sadiq Idris Abubakar; Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Emmanuel Ogalla; Chief of Defence Staff, Gen. Christopher Musa; Minister of Defence, Mohammed Badaru; President Bola Tinubu; National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu; Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Olufemi Oluyede; Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Hassan Abubakar; Director General, Department of State Services, Mr Oluwatosin Ajayi; and Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI), Maj.-Gen. Emmanuel Undiandeye, during a security meeting, at the Presidential Villa Abuja… yesterday

How Igbo Apprenticeship System Can Unlock Nigeria's Economic Empowerment... Page 23



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Citing Rising Debt, Moody's Pushes US Out of Top Triple-A Rating Club

Conservatives block Trump's big tax breaks bill in stunning setback

Sunday Ehigiator with agency report

Moody's yesterday, downgraded its credit rating of the United States by a notch to "Aa1" from "Aaa", citing rising debt and interest, "that are significantly higher than similarly rated sovereigns."

The downgrade came as in a massive setback, House Republicans yesterday failed to push their big package of tax breaks and spending cuts through the Budget Committee, as a handful of conservatives joined all Democrats in a stunning vote against it.

Moody's had been the last among major ratings agencies to keep a top, triple-A rating for U.S. sovereign debt, though it had lowered its outlook in late 2023 due to wider fiscal deficit and higher interest payments.

"Successive US administrations and Congress have failed to agree on measures to reverse the trend of large annual fiscal deficits and growing interest costs," Moody's stated, as it changed its outlook on the U.S. to "stable" from "negative."

Since his return to the White House on January 20, President Donald Trump has pledged to balance the U.S. budget while his Treasury Secretary, Scott Bessent, has repeatedly said the current administration aims to lower U.S. government funding costs.

The administration's mix of revenue-generating tariffs and spending cuts through Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, according to Reuters, has highlighted a keen awareness of the risks posed by mounting government debt, which, if unchecked, could trigger a bond market rout and hinder the administration's ability to pursue its agenda.

"We do not believe that material multi-year reductions in mandatory spending and deficits will result from current fiscal proposals under consideration," Moody's said, while forecasting federal debt burden to rise to about 134 percent of GDP by 2035, compared with 98 percent in 2024.

Meanwhile, House Republicans yesterday failed to push their big package of tax breaks and spending cuts through the Budget Committee, as a handful of conservatives joined all Democrats in a stunning vote against it.

The hard-right lawmakers insisted on steeper spending cuts to Medicaid and the Biden-era green energy tax breaks, among other changes, before they would give their support to President Donald Trump's "beautiful" bill. They warn that the tax cuts alone would pile onto the nation's $36 trillion debt.

According to the Associated Press, the failed vote, 16-21, stalls, for now, House Speaker Mike Johnson's push to have the package approved next week. But the holdout lawmakers vowed to stay all weekend to negotiate changes as the Republican president is returning to Washington from the Middle East.

TINUBU APPROVES MORE AIR ASSETS TO TACKLE INSURGENCY

Deji Elumoye and **Linus Aleke** in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu has approved the acquisition of additional air assets to strengthen the fight against insurgency in the country.

The Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa, who disclosed this while briefing journalists in Abuja, after a closed-door meeting with Tinubu and the defence chiefs, yesterday, assured Nigerians that the military was committed to addressing the recent surge in insecurity.

Musa, also revealed that the additional equipment had already been procured to strengthen the fight against terrorists.

Also, yesterday, Tinubu ordered the military to intensify its counter-terrorism and anti-banditry operations to free all nooks and crannies of the country from criminal elements, terrorists, and bandits.

Tinubu gave this order while inducting the newly procured A109S Trekker Helicopters, tagged NAF 544 and NAF 545, into the Order of Battle of the Nigerian Air Force.

Represented by Vice President Kashim Shettima, the President revealed that the newly inducted platforms were acquired alongside others, like the Diamond-62 surveillance aircraft, the T-129 ATAK helicopters, and the King Air 360i aircraft, as well as others that will be delivered in the coming months.

Likewise, the President who also received a delegation of the Charismatic Bishops Conference of Nigeria led by its General Secretary, Archbishop Chivir Chianson at the State House, Abuja, yesterday, stressed his administration's resolve towards countering the insurgency in parts of the country, stressing that he will not condone any form of evil against the citizenry.

Represented by his Special Adviser on Policy Communications, Daniel Bwala, Tinubu said the security agencies were ready with renewed commitment to restore safety and security to every part of the country, stressing that the fight against insecurity will be holistic.

Speaking further at the closed-door meeting with Tinubu, which was also attended by Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Olufemi Oluyede; Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Hassan Abubakar; Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Emmanuel Ogalla; and the Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, among other top security chiefs, Musa said: "Mr. President has given a directive as to what to do next for us to intensify all efforts, collaborate with all our sister countries around us because it is the porous nature from there that is aggravating our issues on ground.

"And so all our theatres have been enhanced, equipment has been bought and Mr. President has given us much approval for air assets, and other aspects of security and as we said, it is not only the kinetic aspect, the non-kinetic aspect is most important.

"The President is also looking at discussing with governors for their own support by ensuring that dividends of democracy extend to the community to stamp down the issue of insecurity and we are working together."

Musa attributed the recent surge in insecurity in Nigeria to a global push by terrorists and jihadists across the Sahel region, noting that the pressure on Nigeria is largely due to the porous nature of its borders.

He stated that the meeting with President Tinubu was held to review the overall security situation in the country, adding that the President was deeply concerned about the current developments and is determined to see them resolved.

The Chief of Defence Staff also appealed to Nigerians not to get tired of supporting the security agencies in the fight against insurgency.

He also cautioned citizens to be wary of fake news, citing instances where videos from other countries are circulated on social media as though they depict events in Nigeria.

Tinubu further assured the military that he was committed in providing them with all the tools and armaments needed to carry out their duties as well as protect the territorial integrity of the country and imbuing the populace with confidence and safety.

He also urged the military to step up their efforts to conclusively end the multi-dimensional security challenges facing the country.

President Tinubu stressed that the efforts of the military in finally wrapping up its progressive onslaught against "the enemies of our collective progress are not only critical to the end-state but essential in giving people the trust and confidence they require to thrive and prosper."

He assured that his administration will continue to support the Nigerian Air Force and indeed other security agencies by giving due attention and priority to fleet modernisation, as well as training and welfare of men and women in uniform.

He stated, "You may recall that in my inaugural address, I was very emphatic that security shall be a top priority of our administration because neither economic prosperity nor justice can prevail amidst insecurity and violence. It was also my solemn promise to deploy the entire machinery of state power to ensure the security of our people and their properties in a just, free, and fair democratic society. Furthermore, I had pledged to put an end to the menace of terrorism, insurgency, kidnapping, and other forms of criminality that have blighted our country for so long."

He explained that the induction ceremony was not merely about adding new helicopters to the NAF fleet but a strategic statement of intent; a demonstration of collective resolve to strengthen the armed forces, defend the nation, and reinforce Nigeria's leadership role in Africa.

He expressed confidence that the deployment of the newly acquired platforms would add impetus to the combat power of the Nigerian Air Force in tackling contemporary security challenges, not only within the shores of the country but also in the West African sub-region.

Tinubu said: "As your Commander-in-Chief, I understand that a well-equipped military is essential not only for securing our nation but also for preserving our democracy. A democratically stable Nigeria is fundamental to our national progress and regional peace, and the defence of democracy requires a military that is well-prepared, well-trained, and well-equipped.

AT DELE MOMODU'S LECTURE, OBASANJO URGES COLLECTIVE ACTION TO END POVERTY

get rid of abject poverty and hunger if its leaders exhibit integrity, discipline and good governance, stressing that the country was much endowed in human and natural resources to be poor.

Obasanjo made this declaration yesterday in a lecture he delivered at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, during the Dele Momodu Leadership Lecture with the theme, "How to End Hunger and Poverty in Africa."

He said the problem of Nigeria and Africa was not relative poverty, where people are poor but could eat adequately, but abject poverty that deprives people food and keep them hungry with empty stomach.

According to him, security, education and good leadership are the three elements needed to make abject poverty a thing of the past in Nigeria and rest of Africa.

He, therefore, recommended that Nigeria must bring into its formal educational system over 44 million out-of-school children in order to develop their natural endowment and empower them for productive life.

Obasanjo said: "I was born and bred in a village. We were poor but were not hungry. I believe that those who planned this programme have in mind abject poverty, which is ignoble and extremely bad.

"We will differentiate abject poverty, which goes along with hunger, from relative poverty that may not go with hunger.

"We can agree that ending abject poverty will end hunger and ending hunger will have implications for ending abject poverty."

He traced the fundamental cause of poverty and hunger to how a society explores, exploits and distribute its resources.

He said that no human being was born without certain innate abilities that could be developed for personal, family, community and national enhancement.

"It is the ability to develop those innate abilities that determines whether one is poor or not," Obasanjo said, adding that education is the basic instrument for banishing poverty and hunger and is also the basis for individual cognitive development, skill acquisition, empowerment, employment, and wealth creation.

"Education is fundamental. It is the first and most potent instrument for banishing poverty.

"Where there is no empowerment in terms of education, you are handicapped as an individual. Where there is no education, invariably there will be poverty. And where there is poverty, there will be hunger," he said.

He added: "We must ensure that no child lacks access to education. Lack of education for a child gives that child a high probability of being abjectly poor and hungry."

Obasanjo also identified leadership, particularly in the political sector as the most potent instrument for tackling poverty and hunger.

"Leadership matters most and is the greatest weapon for ending poverty. There is no human organisation that thrives without leadership, especially political leadership. Like Jesus, a leader's life and history must be an open book," he added.

Obasanjo averred that, "with integrity, discipline, good governance, as well as elimination of corruption and waste, Nigeria can get rid of poverty within a decade and a half.

"We have 44 million that should be in school but are not. If we are going to eliminate hunger we must get all those children into schools.

"I believe that if we do it well, within 15 years we can get our population almost 100 per cent educated. But to do that we need the right leadership.

"If we have that and with the elimination of corruption and waste, Nigeria can get rid of abject poverty and hunger within a decade and half.

"We have human and non-human material to banish poverty and hunger and what that applies to Nigeria applies to other countries in Africa."

Obasanjo also warned that Nigeria is sitting on a keg of gunpowder by not taking "the responsibility of educating the uneducated and integrating them into constructive, productive and gainfully engage them within the society, the uneducated and unemployed will take care of us all a unpleasantly as they can make it.

"To be forewarned is to be fore armed. We should create no room for the poor and the hungry because in desperation their fury will be uncontrollable.

"The good news is that God has endowed us with adequate resources and I believe that we should pray God who has endowed us with all the resources that He should also endow us with leadership for a great leap forward for Nigeria and Africa."

In his goodwill message, the Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, said ending poverty and hunger was in the hands of every Nigerian citizen and that it was about time for us to be serious.

He said: "I am used to think is there anything fundamentally wrong with the black man?"

Speaking in the same vein, the Governor of Osun State, Senator Ademola Jackson Adeleke, attributed bad leadership to people not having the fear of God.

He said: "If you have the fear of God you will do the right things. If you have the fear of God and you know what you are doing is not the right thing you will change your mind and do the right thing."

Meanwhile, former Governor of Anambra State and the presidential candidate of Labour Party in the last general election, Peter Obi, has reiterated his belief that Africa has no business with poverty.

He restated that what Africa needs at the moment to uplift the people out of poverty was a citizen-led governance that prioritises the welfare of its people,

Obi who took to his X account to narrate his discussions with the publisher of the Ovation magazine, Momodu as he marked his 65th birthday said, "In my discussion with Chief Dele today (Thursday), my position on the hunger and poverty of Africa remains that Africa should have nothing to do with hunger, but should actually be a powerhouse for the supply of food in the world."

According to Obi, "Early this morning, I had the honour of visiting my very dear elder brother and committed patriot, Chief Dele Momodu, at his house in Lagos.

"This visit was in celebration of his 65th birthday and to discuss the forthcoming birthday leadership lecture titled "How to End Hunger and Poverty in Africa" to be delivered by former revered President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and former President and committed democrat Goodluck Jonathan as guest of honour.", Obi stated.

He continued, " In my discussion with Chief Dele today, my position on the hunger and poverty of Africa remains that Africa should have nothing to do with hunger, but should actually be a powerhouse for the supply of food in the world.

"Africa is the second biggest continent in land size, with over 30 million square kilometres of land, and also has the highest population of young people, with over 1 billion young people.

"Africa also has the highest uncultivated arable land of any continent, with about 60 percent of arable land in Africa being uncultivated.

To give more examples why Africa should have nothing to do with hunger or poverty,

"Africa's rice production is about 26 million tonnes, while Bangladesh, with less than 0.5 percent of Africa's land (148,000 square km of land), produces over 55 million tonnes of rice. Similarly, India, with about 10 percent of Africa's size, produces about 5 times more rice than Africa.

"From these scenarios, it is evident that Africa needs to have room to increase its agricultural production, and produce more food to be able to feed its citizens, it's factories and for export purposes.

"All Africa needs is to have a citizen-led governance that prioritises the welfare of its people, by investing in the critical areas of development," Obi stressed.

FG SECURES €100M CONCESSIONARY FUNDING FROM FRENCH TREASURY TO DEVELOP CREATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

London.

Speaking further, Musawa said the collaboration with the French Treasury on funding for creative infrastructure projects in Nigeria, was one of the key drivers with public-private partnerships.

Musawa added that the establishment of the Creative and Tourism Infrastructure Corporation (CTICo), approved by the Federal Executive Council, with projected investment of $100 billion, has a potential to create over two million jobs by 2027.

She stated that the ministry had already created 500,000 jobs in the music sector, which has 49 sub-sectors, as part of the target to provide two million jobs by next year.

According to Musawa, a mapping indicated that the sector would continue to thrive through self-employment and micro-enterprise pathways, with regional hubs like Edo, Delta, and Plateau playing key roles alongside Lagos.

She added: "257,745 jobs have been created in the entertainment sector. This is information that you can find at the NBS. And it is an increase of employment across the full spectrum of not only the creative sector, but the cultural and tourism sector as well-300,000 to 577,754 in 2024.

"And additionally, 23,221 jobs were created in 2024 as a result of the establishment of over 20,000 new start ups under the cultural and creative industries. Now, you must understand that when we talk about job creation, it is really across the full planning chain."

Meanwhile, the federal government yesterday scorned reports circulating in both traditional and online media suggesting that the ministerial press briefing session had been relocated from Abuja to London.

The claim was dismissed by the Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, in his opening remarks at the ministerial press briefing.

Aside Musawa and Idris, others who featured at the briefing were the Minister of Water Resources and Sanitation, Prof. Joseph Utsev, and the Minister of Works, Senator David Umahi.

Idris said: "This is your answer to the insinuation that the press briefing session is relocating to abroad. We have our responsibility first to the Nigerian nation and that's why we invite these ministers to come here and address Nigerians and those outside this country directly from nowhere but the National Press Centre here in Abuja.

"So, if you think that the ministerial press briefing, for those who are already making the insinuation that it's being moved outside this country, is false. The platform that the Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation is providing, is what is happening here in the country."

The minister said the benefits of reform, though gradual, were real and measurable.

He stated that one of the major drivers of inflation - food prices - had also been brought under control through President Tinubu's significant interventions, leading to a noticeable reduction in the cost of food items.

"One of the key indicators of relief is the food inflation rate. While food prices remain an important concern for many Nigerians, the year-on-year food inflation rate eased to 21.26 per cent in April. On a month-on-month basis, it slowed to 2.06 per cent, down from 2.18 per cent in March. This positive movement has largely been driven by price reductions in staple items such as maize flour, wheat grain, yam flour, okro, soya beans, rice, and beans.

"We acknowledge that we are not yet where we desire to be. But these latest figures give us every reason to be hopeful. They show that the hard decisions are beginning to bear fruit. And as inflation eases, we expect to see corresponding improvements in consumer purchasing power and living conditions," he stated.

Idris assured that the Tinubu Administration will sustain the momentum of economic improvement by prioritizing people-centered policies aimed at providing relief, restoring economic stability, and promoting shared prosperity for all Nigerians.

The view was corroborated by Umahi, who was reported to be among the ministers scheduled to unveil President Tinubu's achievements at a press briefing in London.

NEWS

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NEWLY CROWNED ALAAFIN OF OYO VISITS PRESIDENT...

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (middle); Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Akeem Abimbola Owoade (4th from left); his Wife, Abiwumi Owoade (3rd from left); Chief of Staff to the President, Femi Gbajabiamila (4th from right), and other delegates of the Alaafin, during their visit to the President at the Presidential Villa, Abuja…yesterday GODWIN OMOIGUI

FAAC Shares N1.681trn April Revenue, Federation Account Grosses N2.848trn

April revenue rises by N103bn

Ndubuisi Francis in Abuja

The Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC), yesterday disbursed the sum of N1.681 trillion to the three tiers of government as Federation Allocation for the month of April 2025 from a gross revenue of N2.848 trillion posted.

The shared amount translates to a N103 billion increase over N1.578 trillion disbursed in the preceding month of March.

The rise was also attributed to a significant increase in Petroleum Profit Tax (PPT), Oil and Gas Royalty, Value Added Tax (VAT), Electronic Money Transfer Levy (EMTL), Excise Duty, Import Duty and CET Levies, although Company Income Tax (CIT) recorded a decrease.

The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun who chaired the May meeting of FAAC in Abuja, yesterday, thanked the Committee for their resilience in the discharge of their duties

The minister explained that domestic revenue mobilisation was a critical component of Nigeria's long-term path to sustainable development financing.

Citing a communique issued at the end of the meeting, the Director, Information and Public Relations, Ministry of Finance, Mohammed Manga, said the total distributable revenue of N1.681 trillion disbursed to the various tiers of government comprised Statutory Revenue of N962.882 billion, Value Added Tax (VAT) of N598.077 billion, N38.862 billion from Electronic Money Transfer Levy (EMTL) and the sum of N81.407 billion from Exchange Difference.

From the amount, the federal government received N565.307 billion, the states received N556.741 billion, local government councils got N406.627 billion, while the oil producing states received N152.553 billion as 13 per cent derivation for mineral revenue.

The cost of collection gulped N101.051 billion, while N1.066 trillion was allocated for Transfers, Interventions and Refunds.

The communique also showed that the gross revenue available from VAT for the month of April, was N642.265 billion as against N637.618 billion distributed in the preceding month, an increase of N4.647 billion.

From that amount, the sum of N25.691 billion was allocated for the cost of collection and N18.497 billion for Transfers, Interventions and Refunds. The remaining sum of N598.077 billion was distributed to the three tiers of government.

The federal government got N89.712 billion, states received N299.039 billion and local governments got N209.327 billion from VAT.

As has been the practice in recent months, no mention was made by FAAC on the balance in the Excess Crude Account (ECA).

The last disclosed balance was put at over $400, 000.

Akume: Why We Must Patronise Made-In-Nigeria Goods

Sunday Ehigiator

The Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Senator George Akume, has harped on the need for Nigerians to patronise Made-In-Nigeria goods not just as an economic strategy but also something that should be seen as national pride.

Akume, who made the observations in Abuja yesterday when a delegation of the Innoson Group of Companies led by its Chairman, Chief Innocent Chukwuma, paid a courtesy visit to his office, noted that the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu government is fully committed to creating an enabling environment where indigenous businesses can thrive.

Noting the importance of strengthening Nigeria's industrial base and scaling up local manufacturing across key sectors of the economy, Akume said the government's Renewed Hope Agenda encapsulates every aspect needed for Nigeria's dream of realising a one trillion dollar economy in the foreseeable future.

The SGF, therefore, called on Nigerians not just to support the government's programmes for economic development and growth but also to make conscious efforts to patronise products made-in-Nigeria as they can compete favourably with any other products made elsewhere.

He commended Chief Chukwuma for his efforts in the Nigerian car manufacturing industry, adding that the government will continue patronising the products made by the company and encourage other people to do so in order to grow the local manufacturing sector.

2027: Political Parties in Akwa Ibom United Ahead of Elections, Akpabio Declares

The Senate President, Godwill Akpabio, yesterday, declared in Akwa Ibom State that political parties in the State have united ahead of the 2027 general elections.

He also taunted the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), saying the party's umbrella had been torn into shreds and could no longer protect the people.

Akpabio, said during his midterm empowerment briefing held at Ikot Ekpene township stadium.

Akpabio said, "As I speak with you, there is nothing like a political party in 2027 in Akwa Ibom State again. For the Senate of Ikot-Ekpene Senatorial District, all political parties have collapsed to vote for Senator Godswill Akpabio. For the office of the Governor in 2027, all political parties have agreed to vote for Governor Umo Eno. Akwa Ibom has moved to vote for President Bola Tinubu, The Peoples Democratic Party is in shreds and the umbrella can no longer protect."

The Senate President described Eno as a man of peace and one who professes God in his heart.

He said: "Umo Eno is a man of peace. Umo Eno is a man of God. I'm not talking about those who professed God with their lips. I'm talking of those who practice God in their heart. Umo Eno has brought all of us together."

The senate president appreciated his wife, Unoma Akpabio for empowering the people of the State.

He said: "She does it because she knows hunger has no political party. My wife, please feed my people whether I am around or not. Keep on sharing. Akwa Ibom people will show you love soon."

Items distributed during the empowerment included 30 minibuses,67 passenger tricycles, cassava processing machines 50, 347 Deep Freezers, 247 generating sets, truckloads of 50 kg bags of rice, cash grants, and others.

Tinubu Canvasses More Collaboration Between Govt, Traditional Rulers

Meets 46th Alaafin of Oyo

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu has stated that traditional institutions remain integral to the country's development and called for more support in implementing policies that directly impact people's livelihoods.

The President spoke yesterday when he received the 46th Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Abimbola Abdulhakeem Owoade I, his wife, Abiwumi, and a delegation of other traditional rulers from Oyo State at the State House in Abuja.

President Tinubu said his administration will continue working with traditional institutions to implement policies to protect and prosper citizens.

"The peace and stability of our nation requires inclusiveness. This job is not one you can do alone. We have to pull ourselves together to build a nation of prosperity.

"Our priority is still education and medicare. We want to uplift education and cultural values. Our door is open for participation," he stated.

President Tinubu congratulated Alaafin for his ascendancy to the historic throne, assuring the royal father of his prayers and support.

He said, "It is a great joy for me and a great honour. Your ascendancy to the throne of your fathers is historic. It is the will of God and the heart of the people.

"I am following up on your foresight for development, your humility, and the fact that you uphold the traditions of your people.

"The inherited tradition is the making of the Almighty God. Your ascendancy to the throne – like my becoming a president is the divine will of the Almighty God," he said.

President Tinubu noted that the "hurdles, processes, and anxiety" along the way were part of the preparation for the position.

The President commended the traditional council for the ease in nominating and crowning the 46th Alaafin following Oba Lamidi Adeyemi's passing on April 22, 2022.

"I am happy that you have shown character and discipline and uplifted your people's name, values and culture, even when you were in Canada. I am glad you have become a hope of sustaining the Yoruba race," he added.

President Tinubu told the king that the sons of the Oyo kingdom serving in his office have done exceptionally well, including State Chief of Protocol, Ambassador Victor Adeleke; and the Aide-de-Camp, Colonel Nurudeen Alowonle Yusuf, the king designate of Ilemonaland in Oyun local council, Kwara State, which traces its ancestry to Oyo kingdom.

In his remarks, Alaafin assured the President of the traditional council's support in delivering his mandate to the people.

According to him, "Today, I speak not just as the custodian of culture and tradition but as a voice for my people, who are deeply honoured by the audience you have granted us here at the heart of the national leadership.

"Your gracious reception is more than protocol. It is a mark of your character, statesmanship and enduring regard for the traditional institutions. The people of Oyo remember your journey as a man who rose through the crucible of political struggle with unmatched courage and charity. You won many hearts as an activist, strategist, bridge builder and now as the nation's foremost leader."

The monarch said Nigerians look up to the President for a new direction.

"Nigeria looks up to you, not only for leadership but for restoration. For a new vision rooted in justice, equity and inclusive progress. It is in that spirit that I have come to seek your collaboration. Oyo is ready, Yoruba are ready, and Nigerians are ready," he added.

The king commended the President for bold economic reforms, infrastructural development, instituting social welfare, youth empowerment, and improvement in security and investments in agriculture.

"We understand that national transformation is not by government alone. It is built when ancient wisdom meets modern governance. When institutions, old and new, work hand-in-hand," he said.

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NEWS



TOUR OF CAVERTON MRO FACILITY...

L-R: Chief Operating Officer, Caverton Offshore Support Group (COSG), Mr. Rotimi Makanjuola; Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), Engr. Felix Ogbe; receiving a souvenir from the Chairman, COSG, Mr. Aderemi Makanjuola; Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Olabode Makanjuola, and Managing Director/Accountable Manager, Caverton Helicopters, Captain Ibrahim Bello, during Ogbe's tour of Caverton Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility located at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Ikeja…recently

NHRC: Over 261,400 Human Rights Violation Complaints Received in April

Michael Olugbode in Abuja

Over 261,400 complaints of human rights abuses were received by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in the month of April 2025, the Executive Secretary of the Commission, Dr. Tony Ojukwu, has revealed.

Ojukwu, who disclosed this yesterday during the presentation of the April 2025 Human Rights Situation Dashboard, called for Independent, impartial, and prompt investigations into all reported killings and displacements reported across the country.

He also called for "comprehensive support services for survivors, with particular attention to the needs of women and children.

"Accountability for all perpetrators, including state and non-state actors; and sustained investment in peace building, justice mechanisms, and community-based reconciliation efforts."

He explained that presentation is not merely a data exercise; it is a call for collective conscience, adding: "The figures we share reflect the live experiences of our fellow citizens. They demand not only our attention but our urgent action."

He pointed out that the country's "Human Rights Situation in April was the grimmest we have seen in almost a year. The killings in Plateau and Benue states as well as the resurgence of the attacks by Boko Haram and ISWAP in Borno State have left hundreds of citizens dead and injured.

"Nigeria is a signatory to international human rights instruments and have also enacted constitutional provisions and laws protecting the human person. In particular, Section 14(2)(b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that 'the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government'. This immutable constitutional injunction and governance imperative has come under series of violations over the course of April 2025.

"The crisis in the Middle Belt of Nigeria is not new. It has persisted for decades. Yet the bloodshed continues, and our national discourse too often treats these atrocities as commonplace. This must not be allowed to continue. We must collectively resist the normalisation of the horrors that play out when families are slaughtered in their sleep, when children are laid to rest in shallow graves, when survivors are left without shelter, support, or justice. Nigeria must honour its national and international obligations to protect and fulfil the right to life and the right to the dignity of human person.

"Silence in the face of injustice is complicity. Every failure to name these violations, to investigate them, and to hold perpetrators accountable represents a betrayal of our national and moral responsibilities. It is reneging on our national, regional and international obligations to protect human rights.

"As an institution mandated to protect and promote human rights in Nigeria, the National Human Rights Commission urgse governments at state and national levels, including our legislatures, the Nigerian Armed Forces and law enforcement agencies to prioritise security of lives as a fundamental obligation of governance and human rights.

"The National Human Rights Commission reiterates our unwavering commitment to ensuring that these atrocities are not treated as routine incidents, but as the urgent human rights emergencies that they are.

"The National Human Rights Commission restates that the right to life is inherent, inalienable, and non-negotiable and that the state has a responsibility to protect the right to life and dignity of all Nigerians.

JAMB Unveils Emergency Counselling Centre for Candidates

Ali hails Oloyede over system glitch admittance

Sunday Ehigiator

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) yesterday announced the establishment of a Candidate Counselling Emergency Support Centre to provide additional support to candidates with urgent concerns.

In a statement posted on its X handle on Friday, the examination body said the new centre would complement its existing ticketing platform, which remains the preferred and most efficient means of communication with the Board.

"In addition to our usual and preferred ticketing platform for Candidates Support, JAMB has now opened a Candidate Counseling Emergency Support Centre (CCESC).

"Members of the public, particularly Candidates with genuine concerns can reach out to any of these officials: a. Gbenga b. Yusuf c. Dubem d. Tony e. Ogbonna and f. Emma on 07002200016," it stated.

JAMB, however, pointed out that its ticketing platform was still the most reliable option for candidates seeking assistance.

Meanwhile, the Kuliya Ngeri of Ilorin, Prof. Yusuf Ali, yesterday, defended the Registrar of JAMB, Prof. Ishaq Olanrewaju Oloyede, amidst his recent admission to a system glitch that affected over 300,000 students who sat for the 2025 JAMB examination.

In a statement yesterday, titled, 'Prof Is-Haq Olanrewaju Oloyede, The Uncommon Person', Ali noted that Oloyede's decision to own up to the mistake and show empathy to the affected candidates was a rare occurrence in Nigeria's public service.

The statement read: "Let me confess that Prof. Ishaq Olanrewaju Oloyede the Registrar and Chief executive of Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has been a personal Friend of about 50 years, I need to make this disclosure, so that no one will accuse me of writing this testimonial, without the disclosure of our affinity.

"Prof. Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede is one of the very few individuals for whom I can swear with the Holy Quran about their honesty, integrity, transparency, incorruptibility, Human empathy and selflessness.

"It was unfortunate that a technical glitch engendered by 3rd parties negatively affected the conduct of the 2025 JAMB examination in some places in the South East and Lagos. This unfortunate incident has led to the decision to conduct a new examination for about 300,000 candidates out of the over 1.5 million candidates who wrote the examination.

"Many of the commentators seem to forget the clime in which Oloyede operates, that he decided not to take the path of most public servants in our country by treating the complaints about the examination with impunity, has led a few of the commentators to ask for his head.

UBA Opposes Alleged Unauthorised Sale of IBEDC Stake, Seeks to Join Lawsuit

Wale Igbintade

The United Bank for Africa (UBA) has approached the Federal High Court in Lagos to join an ongoing lawsuit filed by 86 Gardens Limited against Archlight Nigeria Limited and others, over the alleged unauthorised transfer of shares in the Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC).

Justice Musa Kakaki has scheduled July 16, 2025, to hear UBA's joinder application.

The second and third defendants in the suit are Abiodun J. Owonikoko (SAN), representing Synergy Attorneys, and the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), respectively.

At the proceedings yesterday, Seni Adio, SAN, appeared for the plaintiff.

Babatunde Ogala, SAN, and Victor Okpara represented the first and second defendants, respectively. Temilolu Adamolekun, alongside Temple Anyanwu, appeared for the proposed intervener, UBA.

Adio informed the court that the CAC had been duly served but failed to appear.

He acknowledged receiving preliminary objections and motions from the first and second defendants, which the plaintiff intends to address.

He also questioned UBA's interest in the matter, arguing that the issue of the "preferred bidder" in the IBEDC transaction had already been settled.

Ogala confirmed receipt of all filings, including the joinder motion filed by a lender to the original mortgagor, whose debt was later assumed by AMCON.

Okpara stated that the second defendant had filed a conditional appearance and motions to regularise its processes and had received the proposed intervener's documents.

Adamolekun, representing UBA, argued that the joinder application is crucial to protect the bank's interests.

He denied claims that UBA had sold its stake to AMCON and insisted that the joinder should take precedence over other pending motions.

Counsel to the defendants, however, maintained that jurisdictional issues must be addressed first.

Adamolekun countered that joinder motions can, in some cases, take priority.

Justice Kakaki adjourned the matter to July 16 for hearing of all pending applications.

In a supporting affidavit deposed by Afamefuna Ogbonna, UBA explained that the plaintiff's suit concerns a 50 per cent equity stake in the first defendant, allegedly transferred under a Custody Agreement, Share Sale Agreement, and other related documents.

Renaissance Energy Halts Production into Trans Niger Oil Pipeline

Gas explosion destroys eight vehicles, buildings in Rivers

Blessing Ibunge in Port Harcourt

Nigerian oil firm, Renaissance Energy, has halted production into the country's Trans Niger oil pipeline, a major oil artery transporting crude from onshore oilfields to the Bonny export terminal, following an operational incident, it disclosed yesterday.

This was as over eight vehicles and two buildings were burnt due to cooking gas explosion that occurred yesterday at a filling station in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

An environmental rights group said on Thursday that the pipeline burst on May 6 and spilled oil into the local B-Dere community in Ogoniland, the second such incident affecting the pipeline in two months.

Nigerian oil consortium Renaissance Group, which now owns Shell's former onshore subsidiary that operates the pipeline, "immediately isolated the pipeline and halted production into the line," Michael Adande, Reuters quoted spokesperson for Renaissance to have said.

"With co-operation from the B-Dere community, our experts accessed the site, clamped the pipeline and recovered spilled oil, with clean-up preparations now underway," Adande added.

Renaissance said a team of investigators had confirmed that the incident was an operational one.

The Trans Niger Pipeline (TNP), with a capacity of around 450,000 barrels per day, is one of two conduits that export Bonny Light crude from Nigeria, Africa's biggest oil producer.

Meanwhile, THISDAY gathered that the fire incident which occurred at Nobpet Filling Station opposite Air Force Base on Aba Road, destroyed about eight vehicles parked at the Ebonyi State Transport Corporation space, next to the filling station and injured about five persons.

An eyewitness revealed that the incident also partially burnt a church building and a lounge beside the station

It was further gathered that an eruption allegedly occurred at the gas plant which is within the fuel station. According to the witness, "There was fabrication work going on by staff of the gas plant which might have ignited the fire."

It was also gathered that it took combined efforts of the Federal Fire Service, Rivers State Fire Service, Nigerian Air Force Fire Service, Renaissance Fire Service, and others to finally put off the fire.

Mr. Anthony Ofoke, the supervisor of Ebonyi State Transport Corporation in the state, said two of their vehicles were destroyed in the incident.

Describing the explosion as devastating, Ofoke said "It was a big calamity, and unexpected thing that just happened, I have never experienced such. After loading three vehicles, by the time I came back from the office, I heard the sound of the explosion, it was a bomb.

"I didn't know what to do, but to run for my life. I injured on my leg. My vehicles were affected, one of my buses and a Sienna were badly destroyed in the blast. As I speak, I am still shaken from the incident. The fire service people dressed the injury for me."

NEWS



22ND NATIONAL SPORTS FESTIVAL UNITY TORCH...

L-R: Director General, Lagos State Sports Commission, Mr. Lekan Fatodu; National Sports Commission Team Lead of the Unity Torch Delegation to Lagos, Mrs. Mbora Ikana; Secretary to the Lagos State Government, Bimbola Salu-Hundeyin; Southwest Zonal Coordinator, National Sports Commission, Mrs. Fabunmi Evelyn; Chief of Staff to the Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Tayo Ayinde; and Deputy Chief of Staff to the Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Sam Egube, during the presentation of the Touch of Unity for the 22nd National Sports Festival to Lagos Governor in Lagos…recently

Osinbajo: Corruption, Ethics Violations Hurting Nigeria's Legal System

Benin NBA warns against violation of rights of suspects in cultism fight

Olusegun Samuel in Yenagoa and **Adibe Emenyonu** in Benin City

The immediate past Vice President of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, SAN, yesterday lampooned the judicial system in Nigeria and asserted that the legal profession is crumbling under the weight of corruption, ethical violation and poor standings.

Also, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Benin Branch, yesterday issued strong warning over what it described as worrying violation of human rights in the ongoing clampdown on cultists in Edo State.

Prof. Osinbajo spoke during the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Yenagoa Branch, 2025 Law Week Plenary Session, themed, 'Setting The Pace: Law, Leadership and Transformational Development ' held at the Nigerian Content Monitoring and Development Board (NCDMB), Nigerian Content Tower, Swali, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State capital.

The former Vice President said that stories of lawyers acting as a conduit for the giving of bribes to judicial officers are rife, lamenting that the perception that the country's system of justice is corrupt and the bar and the bench are culpable is enough damage.

He lamented that the integrity of the justice system over the years in Nigeria has been consistently been eroded by corruption and sharp practices even at the Supreme Court which inconsistencies in judgements has not help its case

According to him, "Legal profession is crumbling under the weight of corruption, ethical violation and poor standings. Stories of counsel acting as conduit for the giving of bribes to judicial officers are rife.

"The perception that our system of justice is corrupt and the bar and bench are culpable is enough damage."

Speaking on a sub-theme, 'The Legal Profession: A Vision for a New Era', the former Vice President said the legal profession is in a radically new dispensation — a dispensation created by the most consequential advancement of new technology, perhaps the most turbulent and uncertain times in living memory.

He asserted, "The pace of technological advancement today, rise of globalisation, the democratisation of information has already transformed every profession. Yet in the legal profession, we are bound by precedents and traditions and some bad habits have remained stubbornly resistant to change.

"Our profession needs a new vision, a new set of tools in a new era and that is so whether we like it or not. We are in a vastly different era, that when the tools we used today were designed will not work."

On what the legal practice looks like today and what it would look like in the next five years, Osinbajo stated that it was scary that a lot of the work lawyers do or used to do could now be done much faster and much more accurately by technology.

He noted, "The systems don't get tired, don't go on leave and do not ask for extra pay, these tools are becoming much cheaper and like mobile phones they will be available everywhere and to every one very soon.

Depression Rising Among Tertiary Students in Lagos, Govt Cries Out

Segun James

Lagos State government has expressed concern over depression becoming more prevalent among students of state-owned tertiary institutions.

The government lamented that 22.5 per cent of Lagos State University (LASU) and 21.6 per cent of Lagos State Polytechnic (LASPOTECH) students were on the verge of committing suicide.

Special Adviser to Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Dr. Oreoluwa Finnih, made the disclosure during ongoing ministerial press briefing to mark the second year of the second term in office of the governor held at Alausa, Ikeja, yesterday.

Finnih explained that the discovery was made almost four years ago and that an agency was working towards addressing the disturbing trends.

She added that out of 17 goals on SDGs, the Lagos government is focusing on 10 which include, no poverty, quality education, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, responsible consumption, climate action, peace, justice and strong institutions and partnership for the goals.

Finnih said, "Students across Nigerian tertiary institutions face stresses from academic pressures, social isolation, adjustment to university life, etc.

"A research on students in Lagos State University (LASU) and Lagos State Polytechnic revealed the prevalence of depression and suicidal ideation being ~22.5 per cent and 21.6 per cent respectively."

She added, "The office is working with LASU, LASUCOM and other tertiary institutions in Lagos towards creating permanent centres for counselling of identified students."

Lottery: Licences Granted by Defunct NLRC Remain Valid in FCT

Dike Onwuamaeze

In a bold move to streamline and invigorate the gaming industry in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), the Director General of the newly established FCT Lottery Regulatory Office (FCT-LRO), Mr. Lanre Gbajabiamila, has declared that licences granted by the defunct National Lottery Regulatory Commission (NLRC) still remained valid in the FCT until their expiry dates.

Gbajabiamila, made this declaration during the official launch of a new office for the FCT-LRO in Abuja this week.

He also frowned at the decision of Google Ads to exclude operators not authorised by Lagos State Lotteries and Gaming Authority from advertising online, which Google had promised to reverse.

He also announced the LRO's readiness to begin full regulatory oversight of all lottery and gaming operations within the FCT and urged operators to begin submitting applications for new licenses.

He explained that the FCT-LRO came to effect following a recent Supreme Court's judgment in the AG Lagos & Ors vs AG Federation & Anor SC/1/2008, which clarified that the FCT has the constitutional right to regulate gaming and lottery activities within its boundaries.

He noted that Google Ads had made explanations to his office and has promised to remove such restrictions, adding that the Supreme Court did not impose any restrictions on online operations by any licensee.

Gbajabiamila, therefore, promised a regulatory environment that is built on clarity, stability, and global best practices.

According to him, the aims of the FCT-LRO included unlocking the economic potential of the gaming sector, boosting investors' confidence and increasing internally generated revenue (IGR) for the FCT.

He said, "Our top priorities include collaboration with the Office of the FCT Minister and the FCT Internal Revenue Service (FCT-IRS) to ensure proper oversight, fair practices, and prompt revenue remittance."

Tinubu, Jonathan, Gowon, Mutfwang, Others Eulogise Prof. Lar at 90

Oghenevwede Ohwovoriole in Abuja

President Bola Tinubu, former President Goodluck Jonathan, one-time Head of State, Gen. Yakubu Gowon (rtd), and Governor Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State, among others have eulogised Prof. Mary Lar on her 90th birthday and book launch titled: 'Walking with my Best Friend'.

Lar is the wife of the pioneer National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the first civilian governor of old Plateau State, late Chief Solomon Lar.

Speaking at the event in Abuja through Senator Simon Lalong, President Tinubu eulogised the virtues of Prof. Lar for her great virtues and for being a source of inspiration to her female folks, describing her as a "woman of virtue, grace, and quiet strength."

"At 90, Her Excellency remains a symbol of dignity and devotion. As one of the first female professors from northern Nigeria, she has inspired generations of women and girls across the nation.

"Many of her students are here today, continuing to apply her lessons for the good of society," Tinubu said.

Former President Jonathan described Prof. Lar as an Amazon who has greatly impacted society.

He said, "You are a great Amazon who has diligently served your nation in various capacities to the best of your abilities.

"Your journey has been one of breaking barriers, nurturing minds and serving Nigeria and humanity with unwavering commitment, for which God has shown you mercy with long life in good health.

Quantity Surveyors Seek Central Regulatory Body in Construction Industry

Emmanuel Addeh in Abuja

President of the Quantity Surveyors Registration Board of Nigeria (QSRBN), Obafemi Onashile, has called for the establishment of a central regulatory body to be known as the Building and Engineering Commission (BEC) to sanitise the construction market.

Speaking in Abuja at the 2025 Annual Quantity Surveyors Assembly and induction of newly registered members, Onashile emphasised the urgent need for the federal government, professionals and regulatory bodies to jointly set up the proposed organisation to curb the current challenges.

Onashile spoke on the theme: "Enhancing the Quantity Surveyors' Capacity in Building, Engineering and Infrastructure Development Contracts, Dispute Management and Resolution."

He argued that the creation of the commission had become imperative to save the sector from further unwholesome practices, especially the activities of quacks. Onashile suggested that the membership of the proposed agency will be nominees from each of the existing regulatory bodies in the sector.

According to him, the Federal Minister of Housing and Urban Development and Minister of Works, will also have nominees in the proposed commission, lamenting that the construction market is currently open, with all sorts of quacks.

He said: "There are quacks in the market, doing all other duties. Quacks as contractors, quacks as professionals or designers, and quacks also as surveyors.

NEWS



MEDIA BRIEFING...

Director General, FCT Lottery Regulatory Office, Mr. Lanre Gbajabiamila (left) and Acting Chairman, FCT Internal Revenue Service, Mr. Michael Ango, at a press conference in Abuja…recently



COURTESY VISIT...

Chairman, Innoson Group of Companies, Chief Innocent Chukwuma (left) and Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume, during a courtesy visit to the office of the SGF in Abuja…yesterday

Agbakoba: Western Democratic Model Has Failed Nigeria

Boluwatife Enome

A Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Dr. Olisa Agbakoba, yesterday, declared that Nigeria's adoption of the Western democratic liberal model was fundamentally flawed and failing the nation.

In an interview on 'The Morning Show' on ARISE News Channel, he called for a radical rethink of Nigeria's democratic system following the House of Representatives' rejection of the bill proposing rotational presidency among the country's geopolitical zones—a move he believed could help address long-standing marginalisation if properly constitutionalised.

He argued that the underlying issue was not merely power-sharing but the fundamental failure of the Western democratic liberal model imposed on Nigeria.

"The basic problem is that the Western democratic liberal model has failed Nigeria," Agbakoba said.

"It's not inclusive. It's divisive. It's full of fighting. It's a winner-take-all. People want power. Nobody wants to be in the opposition. You see the opposition people all jumping into the APC. The process is not working."

He stressed the urgent need to "rethink and reimagine our democratic experience," pointing to the lack of inclusivity as the core flaw. "I would advocate something homegrown, autochthonous, what I call consociational democracy, where we build our institutional democracy around our institutions."

Agbakoba cited examples from other countries, including Belgium's power-sharing arrangement between the Walloons and Flemings, as a potential model for Nigeria.

"If you do that here, and you include people, I know that I'm from the South-east, and that I have a process, a voice in what plays out in the executive system, then I don't feel as if I'm a loser," he added.

He supported the idea of constitutionalising inclusivity as a way to curb the "winner-take-all" mentality currently harming Nigeria. "That's the building block for Nigeria. And the reason is clear. The evidence is clear. Why not move it forward?"

In addressing the rejected rotational presidency bill, he emphasised that such a system could alleviate marginalisation. "It happens in Belgium. They share power. They rotate it. So, inclusivity needs to be properly constitutionalised."

On the role of traditional rulers in this reimagined democracy, Agbakoba made a strong case for their inclusion, drawing parallels to the United Kingdom.

"I am a very strong person for finding a role for traditional rulers. King Charles is the constitutional monarch of the United Kingdom and he has a role to play… So, I think our constitutional process should include the traditional rulers."

However, he acknowledged the challenges posed by Nigeria's political culture, including corruption and manipulation.

"We're in a very bad way, at a point of despair… But if we are all at the table, in the game, if we're all holding cards, then it will remove the incentive to be corrupt. That's just a theory I have."

Agbakoba also dismissed the notion that the ruling party, APC, wants a one-party state, instead blaming the flawed democratic system for driving opposition members to switch allegiances. "It's the opposition… I don't blame the APC. They want to win power. And the reason why this is so is because it's a winner-take-all."

Turning to economic governance, he critiqued the Western liberal economic model as one that "enables only a few to extract," questioning the incentive to develop Nigeria if returns on capital exceed returns on development.

Yiaga Africa Opposes Jail Sentence for Not Voting During Elections

Chuks Okocha in Abuja

A pro democratic election group in Nigeria, Yiaga Africa, has opposed the bill that will send Nigerians who do not vote during elections to jail.

The said bill conceived as a legislative intervention to address the abysmally low voter turnout, currently is undergoing legislative processes at the National Assembly.

A statement by the Executive Director, Yiaga Africa, Samson Itodo, said "Yiaga Africa unequivocally rejects the proposed bill under consideration in the National Assembly seeking to introduce compulsory voting in Nigeria and prescribing a six-month jail term on eligible voters who refuse to vote at elections. "

According to Itodo, "While the rationale for the bill is plausible because it aims to address one of the biggest challenges in Nigeria's electoral system, the strong-arm approach adopted by the bill is draconian and it constitutes a gross violation of constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights. Indeed, the right to abstain from voting is itself a legitimate form of political expression protected under domestic and international human rights law.

"Voter turnout in Nigeria has fluctuated significantly over the years, reflecting a complex interplay of political and systemic factors that influence electoral participation. In 1979, turnout stood at 34.6 per cent, increasing slightly to 38.9 per cent in 1983 and holding at 35 per cent in 1993," he explained.

According to Itodo, "A notable surge occurred in 1999 with a turnout of 52.3 per cent, followed by a peak in 2003, when 69.1 per cent of registered voters participated. However, this upward trend reversed in subsequent elections: 57.5 per cent in 2007, 53.7 per cent in 2011, 43.7 per cent in 2015, 34.7 per cent in 2019, and a historic low of 27.1 per cent in 2023.

"This sharp decline positions Nigeria as the largest democracy in Africa with the lowest voter turnout. Democracy thrives on freedom, which includes the choice to participate or abstain from voting. Compulsory voting undermines this democratic freedom and the punitive sanctions for not voting erodes the foundational principles of voluntary democratic engagement.

"The bill in its entirety fails to address the drivers of voter apathy such as distrust in the electoral process, election manipulation and poor governance," he stressed.

The executive director of Yiaga Africa said that, "Rather than compel voting, the National Assembly should prioritise electoral reforms that rebuild public trust, improve election integrity, and remove structural and systemic barriers to participation. These include reforms that guarantee mandatory electronic transmission of results, review of the mode of appointments into INEC, early voting, diaspora voting and improved transparency in the management of elections.

Anambra First Lady Launches Community Garden Programme in Schools

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

Wife of the Governor of Anambra State, Dr. Nonye Soludo, has launched school community gardens in schools across the state, as an initiative to encourage agriculture among students.

Mrs. Soludo who is also the founder of Healthy Living with Nonye Soludo, said the community garden project is aimed at helping people cultivate what they eat in sacks, even right inside their compounds, so as to eat healthy.

During the launch, the First Lady distributed sanitary materials to female students to enhance sanitary health among them.

She said, "I would be unhappy to find out that any female student is stained while in school. Such can demoralised students while in school."

Speaking on the community garden project, "Healthy living must be our culture and way of life. When you eat natural, healthy food, you reduce your chances of sickness.

"Students sleeping in class are often reacting to the synthetic food we feed them. Grow vegetables in your school gardens. We must eat healthily and avoid consuming what we don't understand. Don't eat what you don't know.

"Guide the children to maintain gardens in your schools. Grow green pepper, vegetables, and other crops around your school environment. The children will benefit from selling the produce, and part of the proceeds can be used to support the less-privileged in society. We must also teach our children the importance of charity," she said.

Tinubu Appoints Disun Holloway to Oversee National Theatre, Lagos

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has approved the appointment of Mr. Disun Holloway as Chairman of Theatre Partners, the entity charged with overseeing the operations and revitalisation of the iconic National Theatre, Lagos, renamed the Wole Soyinka Centre for Culture and the Creative Arts.

Holloway, who formerly served as Lagos State Commissioner for Tourism and Intergovernmental Affairs, brings to the role decades of leadership in culture, governance, and the creative economy. A respected advocate for the arts, he has consistently championed initiatives that bridge cultural preservation with economic opportunity.

This appointment comes at a pivotal time for the National Theatre, which has recently undergone a landmark transformation into a world-class cultural facility. The renovation, undertaken by the Bankers' Committee under the leadership of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), represents a N68 billion investment aimed at restoring the historic venue to its former glory and unlocking its future potential.

Originally expected to take nine months, the renovation ultimately spanned six years, due to a significant underestimation of the scale and complexity of work required, as well as interruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The result was a rejuvenated National Theatre that stands ready to serve as a premier destination for the performing arts, cultural exchange, and creative enterprise.

As Chairman of Theatre Partners, Holloway will lead efforts to ensure the sustainable management of this national asset, working closely with government agencies, the private sector, and creative industry stakeholders to fully activate the Theatre's potential as a hub for artistic innovation and economic development.

This appointment marks a renewed commitment to Nigeria's cultural renaissance and the power of creative industries to drive inclusive growth.

Simon Ekpa Charged with Terrorism Offences

Sunday Ehigiator

Finland-based separatist agitator, Simon Ekpa, has been charged with terrorism offences.

This was disclosed by Yle News. Ekpa, a 40-year-old Nigerian-born entrepreneur, is still listed as a member of the city's public transit board, representing Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's National Coalition Party. He had formerly served on three other local administrative boards.

The Deputy Prosecutor General decided to charge Ekpa with public incitement to commit a crime with terrorist intent and participation in a terrorist group.

According to the prosecutor, the charges related to his activities aimed at re-establishing an independent state in Nigeria.

The charges were part of a larger investigation during which the Finnish National Bureau of Investigation detained five people. Four of them were suspected of providing financing for terrorist offences. The four were released during the preliminary investigation.

The charges were filed yesterday. The case would be heard in Päijät-Häme District Court in Lahti. A hearing date has not yet been set.

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MRS BENEDICTA FOLASHADE SANYAOLU

It is 5 years today since you left us without bidding us good bye.
Needless to say here that your vacum is still being felt.
May your Gentle Soul continue to Rest in Perfect Peace, Amen.

By: The Husband & Children

Dated 17th May, 2025

INSIGHT



What went wrong?

TO OUR READERS

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

Bene Madunagu: Secular Funeral Without Ifs and Buts

In January I attended the funeral of Prof Bene Madunagu (Nee Benedicta Afangide) in Calabar, Cross River State. Madunagu, born on March 21, 1947 died on November 26, 2024. She was the wife of the Nigerian author and prominent socialist, Edwin Madunagu. Bene was a foremost feminist and leftist, co-founder of Girl's Power Initiative, and a professor of Botany at the University of Calabar. I have known Bene for decades and have admired her work promoting the rights of women and girls. Her death was a huge loss to the feminist, and human rights movements. Those who knew Bene closely said she was nonreligious. I was not surprised because feminism and strict religiosity are strange bedfellows. So, I was curious to know what would be the nature of her funeral. Would she be given a religious or secular funeral? For nonreligious Nigerians, a secular funeral is never guaranteed. When a humanist colleague, Patrick Naagbanton, died some years ago, his religious relatives were literally up in arms. They vehemently opposed a proposal for a secular funeral. They threatened to beat up secular celebrants who showed at the event. While on his sick bed and dying, the Pentecostal arm of the family pressured my father, who renounced Christianity and theism, to profess and reembrace religious and theistic beliefs. From these experiences, I thought that a secular funeral in the case of Bene, might not happen.

So when a friend who is close to the family called to inform me about her funeral, I tried confirming again the type of funeral being planned. He emphatically said it was secular and would definitely be secular. He noted that Eddie, the widower insisted that a secular funeral aligned with Bene's outlook. I looked forward to attending the event, not only to pay my last respects to this woman whom I admired so much from a distance but also to condole with the Madunagu family on the passing of this revolutionary activist and feminist icon. Particularly I looked forward to attending this secular funeral of a kind.

In most cases when nonreligious people pass away, religious members of the family hijack the funerals. They bury atheist, humanist, or nonreligious relatives in a religious, Christian, or Islamic way even when they know very well that these persons did not profess religious or theistic beliefs. Cross River is predominately Christian. And Madunagu family has Christian family members and relatives. Will Bene secular funeral be hijacked?

I decided to attend to witness how Eddie would contain, and withstand the pressures; manage, and stave off interference, and intrusions from Christian/religious relatives and friends. But my worries and concerns were misplaced. Everything went on well, smoothly and serenely secular.

I arrived Calabar on January 16, 2025, and went straight to the Metropolitan Hotel where the first event for the funeral was held. It was a conference titled: Feminist: NO IFs, NO BUTs: THE LIFE & TIMES OF AN ICONIC FEMINIST. At this program, different panelists explored Bene's theory and practice of feminism and the making of future Benes; they paid glowing tributes to Bene for her contributions to the feminist movement in Nigeria, nay in Africa.

This event was followed by a funeral conference at the Academic Staff Union of Universities(ASUU) Secretariat, University of Calabar. ASUU organized it to honor Bene, who was the first female chairperson of the union. The event featured a reading of Bene's biography, some cultural performances, and a lecture. Later in the day, there was a social/funeral wake also at the ASUU secretariat, University of Calabar featuring tributes, cultural performances, and solidarity songs.

On Friday, January 17 was the interment. The body arrived at the compound of the Girl's Power Initiative and lay in state for a couple of hours. During that period there were tributes from family and friends. The body was later taken to the graveside and interred. I looked at the program of events I did not see any item on praise and worship. Throughout the event, I did not hear anyone say: Let us pray. I didn't see anyone speak in tongues and made some sudden pious rendition or ministration urging the gods, Jesus, angels, or saints to meet up with her and receive her soul in paradise. I never heard any person utter even a word of intercession or supplication.

Leo Igwe, a humanist and secular celebrant,

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Deliver Us from Darkness

We need your help Sir, Hon Moshood Abiodun.Igbogbo II,Igbe laara,Banana Estate located in Bayeku LCDA had not seen electricity supply for over seven months due to a bad transformer.Please intervene on our behalf Sir. Help us use your good office to deliver us from darkness.

Feyisetan Akeeb Kareem, Lagos

The Real Boss

I and millions of others, have always liked Bruce Springsteen and have listened to his words for decades and today I am even more appreciative of his words.

His full diatribe on Trump can be read elsewhere but some quotes "America is in the hands of a corrupt and incompetent administration" reflect the views of so many Americans and citizens of the world but few have the opportunity to voice this to so many. He is just one voice, a clear supporter of previous democratic Presidents, but a voice we should listen to.

The Boss has spoken!

Dennis Fitzgerald, Melbourne, Australia

ADVERTORIAL

JOINT REACTION OF THE IJAWS AND URHOBOS OF WARRI FEDERAL CONSTITUENCY

ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS RELATING TO THE SUPREME COURT ORDERED FRESH DELINEATION OF ELECTORAL WARDS AND POLLING UNITS AND THE DISTORTED ACTIONS OF THE ITSEKIRI NATION

MAY 15, 2025

It is no longer news that the Supreme Court was clear in its unanimous judgment of 2nd December 2022 that INEC should delineate afresh all the electoral Wards and polling units in Warri North, Warri South and Warri South West Local Government Areas that made up the Warri Federal constituency of Delta State without which there should be no subsequent election in the area. The order is a condition absolute and a prerequisite for future elections. The implication of this is that, in the eyes of the law and in actual fact, no electoral wards or polling units exist in the Warri Federal Constituency currently. Failure of INEC to complete the process of the fresh delineation portends grave danger and risks of no election in the federal constituency in 2027 and beyond. This will have cascading effects on the 2027 elections in Delta South Senatorial District and by implication Delta state in general.

The recent actions of the Itsekiri Nation in seeking to influence the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, by casting insinuations and putting undue pressure on his wife, Her Excellency, Senator (Mrs.) Oluremi Tinubu is not only highly inappropriate but also a gross misrepresentation of the unity and integrity of our national politics. The Itsekiri's attempts to leverage the maternal lineage of the First Lady to coerce the President into making certain political decisions is a blatant and unjustified move. It should be seen for what it is, an opportunistic move and crass attempt at ethnic baiting. We believe the President and the First Lady with solid democratic credentials will not fall for this ill-conceived and mischievous lure to reduce them.

We are confident that the President will not lean to their mischief as that would be paramount to a total disregards for the Constitution. Mr. President should understand that everyone matters. This same scenario played out when the first ill fated delineation exercise was conducted with ruthless regards for the true picture of what was on ground, the then government was very quick to adopt it but now that the error is being corrected, the government is dragging its feet because of family ties. This will be bringing yourself down Mr President. We are a very law abiding and peaceful people and we have patiently followed the rule of law up to this time. When the Ijaws approached the court in the suit leading to the Supreme Court judgment in 2011, an Ijaw man, Goodluck Jonathan was the President, but the Ijaws did not put undue pressure on him to subvert national institutions for ethnic gain. Therefore, be rest assured that we will not fold our hands and be bullied as we watch a replay of what happened before. That an unfair delineation was being used all these while does not mean we should allow it to continue. Nobody sits and watch while their house is on fire.

It is important to recognize that H.E. Senator (Mrs.) Oluremi Tinubu, the wife of the President, holds the esteemed position of the Mother of the Nation and should be respected as such. She should not be seen to be bias in the issue of fresh delineation in Warri because of her maternal ties as that will be abuse of office. And it would be tantamount to been seen as mother of some persons instead of mother of Nigeria.

Her role transcends ethnic and regional politics, embodying the collective aspirations and dignity of all Nigerians. Any attempt to exploit her maternal origins for political manipulation undermines the sanctity of her office and the unity of the Nigerian people. It is a reckless and dangerous move incubated in the bowels of tribal chauvinism. It should be seen as a crude attempt to burden the amiable first lady and mother of the Nation.

We are also watching with keen interest how the Itsekiris are clandestinely working with Mrs. Daisy Danjuma, the wife of General T.Y. Danjuma to coerce the NSA and Mr. President, to help them achieve their selfish agenda of nullifying the painstaking work of INEC and frustrate the implementation of the Supreme Court judgment. This ill-conceived effort to manipulate the implementation of a Supreme Court order through personal and familial connections must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. It is anti-democratic and a recipe for political unrest and conflict, which may plunge the entire Niger Delta into anarchy.

On the issue of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the recent fieldwork in the Warri Federal Constituency, we want to unequivocally state that, the INEC's fieldwork is an accurate reflection of the demographic and electoral realities in the federal constituency between the different ethnic groups. Though, the Itsekiris got more than what they deserve.

It is in the interest of democracy, national stability, and growth that, we must adhere to the principles of democratic norms, highlighted by certain key determinants that cannot be sacrificed - chiefly amongst others - An inclusive and equitable society, where everyone is free and rights respected. Responsiveness to the marginalization of others with a view to make them heard. Implementation of citizens' rights to vote and participate in democratic governance and the rule of law.

In fact, contrary to claims made by certain elements, the population of the Itsekiri within the Warri Federal Constituency is not more than 10,000 people, as any thoroughly implemented head count will show. INEC's decision to allocate them 21 wards across the three Warri local governments is an over generous and magnanimous acknowledgement of their minority presence. This allocation should be seen as a demonstration of the commission's commitment to inclusiveness, not a compromise of the INEC delineation process.

It is important to state that the federal government should not be intimidated by the threats of the Itsekiri in shutting down a 28,000-barrel-per-day facility in Ogidigben. This should not be a reason for their illegal demands to be given undue attention. The Federal Government must recognize that, the Ijaw and Urhobo people of Warri Federal Constituency, host far more extensive oil facilities. We want to state in clear terms that, we have the capacity to shut down 30 oil facilities within a day and simultaneously, but are only threading the path of peace. We should not be pushed to the wall.

Our strength is not to be underestimated, and it is our resolve to engage reasonably within the confines of the laws. However, we will not stand idly by while attempts are made to manipulate or undermine our economic and political rights. The Ijaw and Urhobo people will not be pushed into a corner or cowed by intimidation.

We are using this medium to draw the attention of the National Security Adviser that our peaceful resolve should not be taken as weakness. The recent invite by the NSA office for a round table discussion with the Ijaws, Itsekiris and Urhobos of Warri must be done with caution, as Chief Ayiri Emami, a self acclaimed Ologbotsere of Warri had earlier boasted openly in a press conference that he has the ears of the NSA and true to his talk our people have been invited. We do not want to preempt any possible outcome of this meeting, but we strongly warned that those who will be attending the said meeting must not compromise on anything that will subvert the genuine decision of INEC. In any case, what does the office of NSA have to do with INEC, we hope this is not a ploy to aid a particular nationality over others. That would not be in the interest of Nigeria and our democratic journey.

Recently, an Itsekiri gun runner, Mr. Micah Polo, a former British Soldier, who acted on the instructions of the Itsekiri Monarch, was arrested alongside other of his cohorts by DSS with a well over 57 Ak 47 riffles and pump action guns. However, information at our disposal is that the Itsekiri Monarch who in connivance with top security brass had earlier freed the same gun runner who was caught training Itsekiri's militias is still making frantic efforts to sweep the matter under the carpet. It is open secret that, Chief Brown Mene acted on the instructions of the Olu to take the said Micah Polo on bail from the security agents during his first arrest. Today, the same Traditional ruler, who is supposed to be under the bars, is walking freely and riding on scooters as if nothing happened. Is he above the law? We are watching to know, if the DSS and other Security agencies will fail to take appropriate actions on this matter involving the Olu and Micah Polo and others.

Finally, We strongly urge all concerned parties, especially the office of the NSA to respect the independence and impartiality of INEC and to refrain from any further attempts to manipulate or distort the delineation process ordered by the Supreme Court.

The Nigerian people deserve a transparent and democratic delineation system that reflects the true will of the electorate, free from coercion, intimidation, or undue influence. INEC as a constitutionally independent and unbiased umpire, let her decision on this matter be final and Mr President must not involve himself with this. It is a known practice that, whoever that is not satisfied with the decision of INEC should go to court, just as the Ijaws did and pursued their case for more than ten years.

Mr. President, a stitch in time, as they say, saves nine! Let the right actions be taken and not the other way round in the interest of peace.

Signed:

MR SUPER KAMBOH
Egbema Kingdom

CHIEF MONDAY KEME,
Principal Secretary to HRM Monbene III,
The Amakosu of Ogbe-Ijoh Warri Kingdom

CHIEF OGUGU MOSES
Isaba Kingdom

OGBEWEI MATHEW
Diebiri Kingdom

CHRISTOPHER WURUYAI
Gbaramatu Kingdom

ARHOR OMENA RICHARD
Ogunu community, Agbarha - Warri Kingdom

Gratulerer med dagen, Norge!

Today, we celebrate with joy and admiration as Norway marks her National Constitution Day — a day rich in history, pride, and tradition.

From all of us at **Marine Platforms**, home of the Royal Norwegian Honorary Consulate in Lagos, we send our warmest wishes to the people and government of Norway.

Here's to friendship, shared progress, and beauty of partnership. Wishing you a day filled with unity, celebration, and happiness.

Happy Syttende Mai!



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NEWS XTRA



PUBLIC LECTURE...

L-R: Prof. Jimi Kayode; Dean, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, LASU, Pof. Jide Jimoh; Head, Department of Broadcasting/Celebrant, Dr. Omolade Sanni; former Head of Journalism Department/Celebrant, Prof. Tunde Akanni; Executive Director, International Press Centre/Guest Speaker, Mr. Lanre Arogundade, and Head, Public Relations and Advertising Department, Dr. Adeyemo Julius, during the public lecture to mark the 60th birthday of Akanni and Sanni held at LASU, Ojo Campus...recently

FG Warns Tertiary Institutions against TETFund Misuse, Moves to Curb Brain Drain

Funmi Ogundare

The federal government, yesterday, warned heads of tertiary institutions in Nigeria who failed to comply with the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) guidelines, underutilising funds, or breaching procurement protocols risk losing their beneficiary status.

Speaking at a one-day strategic engagement organised by TETFund and attended by heads of institutions, bursars, and procurement officers, in Lagos, the Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa, explained that unrestrained institutional expansion and replication of mandate are no longer acceptable.

According to him, "Institutions must demonstrate responsibility, capacity and adherence to guidelines. Any institution that consistently underperforms in fund utilisation, violates procurement protocols or has less than 2,000 students risks being delisted from TETFund funding. This is not punitive; it is necessary to maintain integrity and ensure equity."

He emphasised the need to redirect focus toward high-impact training programmes within Nigeria, underscoring the government's commitment to fostering local academic excellence.

He also disclosed that the suspension of the foreign component of the TETFund Scholarship for Academic Staff (TSAS) effective from January 1, 2025, was due to escalating costs and increasing incidents of scholars absconding, saying it marks a pivotal shift in the country's approach to academic staff development.

In line with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, the minister reiterated that the education sector must become globally competitive, inclusive, and innovation-driven.

He stressed that all investments must yield measurable outcomes, with greater emphasis placed on accountability and impact.

Alausa disclosed that there is significant increase in funding for research initiatives such as the National Research Fund, Research and Innovation Fund, and the Triple Helix programme which aim to tackle challenges in agriculture, healthcare, technology, and industry through practical and commercialised research.

He listed some reforms of the administration including the deployment of the TERAS digital platform to boost transparency, prioritisation of ongoing infrastructure projects, and the formation of two committees that will resolve campus energy issues and focus on enhancing facilities in medical colleges.

"Eighteen universities are set to benefit from the new Special High Impact Projects (SHIP) initiative targeting healthcare education, part of a broader strategy to bridge Nigeria's healthcare workforce gap," the minister stated.

He called for increased public-private partnerships and institutional resourcefulness. "Government cannot bear the full burden alone. The future of tertiary education must be driven by innovation, responsibility, and sustainability," he said.

Earlier in his remarks, the Executive Secretary of TETFund, Sonny Echono, revealed that under President Tinubu's directive, the entire allocation for TETFund's 2025 Special High Impact Programme (SHIP) for universities has been dedicated to strengthening medical and allied health education across the country.

The initiative will focus on enhancing facilities and equipment to enable more universities to increase student intake in fields such as medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and dentistry.

Count Us Out of Proposed Orlu State, Says Ohaji Group

The Ogbako Ohaji People's Forum has rejected the plan to include no fewer than 25 communities under the Ohaji nation in Imo State in the proposed Orlu State from the South-east region of the country.

The group in a statement jointly signed by the National President, Ogbako Ohaji People's Forum, Fidelis Enya, and the Chairman of Ogbako Ohaji Committee on State Creation, Johnbosco Ben, alongside other stakeholders, noted that the communities were autonomous.

The statement which was addressed to the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, acknowledged the necessity for the creation of a new state in the South-east region to ensure balance with other regions.

The statement read: "For so long, the people of South-east have not left anyone in doubt that at least an additional state is needed to be carved out from this geopolitical zone. This move would not only correct the atrocious imbalance among the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria but would go a long way to assuage, placate, and give them an equivalent sense of belonging.

"However, the Ohaji Nation, which is bigger than four local government areas in some parts of Imo State, is regrettably merged with Egbema.

"Ohaji Nation, which has almost 400,000 population, is made up of 25 recognised autonomous communities and seven INEC political wards that unanimously, unequivocally, and vehemently reject any attempt to include us in the creation of Orlu State or any other geopolitical contraption so named.

"It is even more egregious and insulting that, even as we write, none of the promoters of such phantom proposals have thought it necessary to reach us as they have taken us for granted that we must acquiesce to their plans."

It added that the documented history of the communities had shown that their inclusion in the Orlu senatorial district was an 'aberration' and an 'inconvenient political marriage' stressing that the inclusion "was merely driven by greed, selfishness, annexation, conquest, bribery of a few leaders who acquiesced to this aberration."

The communities concluded by reiterating their stance to remain part of Imo State.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, formerly known and addressed as OLUWATOYIN AJOMALE now wish to be known, called and addressed as OLUWATOYIN BABATUNDE AJOMALE. All former documents remain valid. The general public should take note.

I, formerly known and addressed as OBEREZUIKE JOY ONYEDIKA, now wish to be known and addressed as OFFIA JOY ONYEDIKA All former documents remain valid. The general public should take note.

US Singer, Chris Brown Remanded in Custody by UK Court over Alleged Assault

United States singer, Chris Brown was remanded into custody when he appeared in an English court yesterday, charged with inflicting grievous bodily harm in what prosecutors said was an "unprovoked attack" in a London nightclub in 2023.

Brown was charged over an incident on February 19, 2023, when the singer allegedly attacked a music producer with a bottle at the Tape nightclub in central London.

According to Reuters, the 36-year-old was arrested at a hotel in Manchester, northern England, and appeared at Manchester Magistrates' Court yesterday morning, when prosecutor Hannah Nicholls said Brown committed an "unprovoked attack with a weapon in a nightclub full of people."

The R&B star, known for hits such as "Loyal", "Run It" and "Under the Influence", was set to kick off a global tour next month, including shows in Manchester.

Brown, a two-time Grammy Award winner, was set to debut his "Breezy Bowl XX" tour on June 8 in the Netherlands.

Judge Joanne Hirst remanded Brown into custody ahead of his next appearance at London's Southwark Crown Court on June 13.

Ijebu Boys Association to Empower Entrepreneurs, Provide Health Insurance at Inaugural Convention

Sunday Ehigiator

The Ijebu Boys Association (IBA) has revealed that it shall be empowering no fewer than 300 entrepreneurs and providing 500 indigenous members of Ijebuland with health insurance coverage, at the maiden edition of its convention scheduled to hold from June 2 to June 6, 2025.

Speaking at a press conference held in Lagos to announce activities earmarked for the convention, the President of the association, Olagbuyi Oduniyi, noted that the event would double as the official inauguration of the association, as it would also be launching its secretariat building in Ijebu Ode.

According to him, "This is our first ever convention, which we will be having this year. The association came into existence in December 2016. It consists of boys who grew up together in Ijebuland in the 70s.

"The association was established with the consciousness of looking after the well-being and healthy living of Ijebu residents, empowering the community economically, and being an instrument to promote the socio-cultural development of Ijebuland.

"We are starting the convention on June 2, 2025. It's on a Monday. It begins with the commissioning of our secretariat. Also, on the same day, we would be starting the trade fair and exhibition. That would last from Monday to Friday in Itoro.

"But the official opening of the trade fair will happen on Tuesday because on Tuesday, we will all converge at the main hall in Itoro and have the economic forum.

"We will have the conversations, and after that, we will launch the Ijebu Boys Association formally, and we will then go out with the Chairman of the Occasion, Dr Kunle Hassan, Founder, The Eye Foundation, to declare the trade fiesta formally opened.

"On that same Tuesday, we are going to be issuing 500 health insurance policies. We are working in partnership with the Ogun State Health Insurance Scheme. They would make a customised card bearing our Association Name.

"Also, we would be giving all the 6 LGs I. Ijebuland, free pharmaceutical drugs as well. Then, on Wednesday, we would have the debate in the Ijebu dialect. That is a cultural day.

Nigerian Authors Lead as W' Africa Dominates BCA African Business Book of Year Shortlist

The Business Council for Africa (BCA), in collaboration with BrandComms and African Business, yesterday, announced the shortlist of the BCA Business Book of the Year Awards.

This annual competition, which is now in its third year, was dedicated to illuminating the compelling business narratives that promote Africa's socio-economic development.

In recognising the stories reshaping Africa's business landscape, the BCA African Business Book of the Year awards brings together key figures in African publishing and business while honouring the talented authors and publishers responsible for bringing these stories of African entrepreneurship and resilience to life.

This year's shortlist, according to a statement, features an interesting mix from biographies of business leaders to a focus on manufacturing and capital market reforms, African economics and infrastructure, intra-Africa travel and the economics of skit making, gas as alternative feedstock for industry and Africa's response to COVID-19.

The judging panel was made up of respected African business and thought leaders as well as media executives: Arnold Ekpe, Chairperson of BCA, and chair of the Judging Committee; Chris Ogbechie, former Dean of Lagos Business School; Moky Makura, CEO of AfricaNoFilter; Terhas Berhe, Managing Director and Founder of Brand Communications; Omar Ben Yedder, Publisher of African Business and New African magazine and Anver Versi, Editor of New African and African Banker magazine.

Commenting on the awards, Ekpe still thinks Africans need to get better at telling their stories: "We have seen research that has quantified the cost of the risk premium we are paying. This is because we are simply not good at telling our stories, and more importantly our business stories.

NEWS XTRA

Shettima: FG Working to Improve Access to Healthcare Services

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

Vice President Kashim Shettima has stressed the federal government's commitment to improving access to ear, nose, and throat (ENT) healthcare services across Nigeria.

He called for urgent action to upgrade Nigeria's healthcare infrastructure, with a specific focus on ENT care to address the rising cases of hearing loss and shortage of specialised medical personnel in the field.

Shettima stated this when he played host to a delegation from the Otorhinolaryngological Society of Nigeria (ORLSON) led by its President, Prof. Aliyu Mohammed Kodiya, at the State House, Abuja.

The Vice President specifically told the team that President Bola Tinubu is determined to tackle key challenges in the ENT sector, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of equipment, and a growing wave of medical brain drain.

According to him, "A huge chunk of our population suffers from hearing ailments, but due to social stigmatisation, many are reluctant to come forward for treatment. The challenges you are highlighting are real, and the government is committed to going beyond cosmetic interventions."

Shettima acknowledged the critical shortage of ENT specialists nationwide, saying there may not be up to 500 ENT surgeons in this country if immediate action is not taken.

His words, "That is the reality we face today. Even our young doctors are migrating to Europe and other regions, but we are working to create an enabling environment for them here."

He emphasised that government support will not only focus on acquiring equipment but will also prioritise the training, welfare, and retention of medical professionals in the field.

"The problem goes beyond equipment. Procuring medical devices without the manpower to operate them would amount to nothing," the Vice President added, urging ORLSON to continue investing in the training of new specialists.

APC Receives PDP Defectors in Osun, Vows to Unseat Adeleke

Yinka Kolawole in Osogbo

Hundreds of members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) officially joined the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Osogbo, yesterday.

They were received by the National Secretary of the APC Senator Surajudeen Ajibola Basiru, and executive members of the party in the state led by the Secretary, Alhaji Kamoru Alao.

Senator Basiru in his speech underscored the party's unity and reaffirmed its commitment to good governance as he welcomed the new members into the fold.

He took a swipe at the current administration of Governor Ademola Adeleke, describing it as "directionless and a clear failure", particularly in the critical sectors of agriculture, healthcare, and education.

He condemned the sacking of thousands of teachers employed by former Governor Gboyega Oyetola, calling it a retrogressive step.

Basiru confidently stated that in the 2026 gubernatorial election, he would contest and defeat Governor Adeleke, thereby reclaiming the state's leadership for the APC.

He also counselled party members and supporters on the need for cohesion within the rank and file, cautioning them against misrepresenting his words or dropping his name.

He stressed that when he has anything to say or someone to address, he will do so with a sense of purpose and sincerity.

The APC Scribe, on behalf of the National Chairman of the party, Dr. Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, officially presented the party's symbols to the new members.

He welcomed the decampees into the APC, urging them to contribute actively to the party's growth and success.

In their responses, Alhaji Tajudeen Adekunle and Mr. Ismail Adisa known as Adogan, said they felt fulfilled joining APC.

SON Urges Collective Commitment to Quality, Standardisation

Daji Sani in Yola

The Director General of the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), Dr. Ifeanyi Chukwunonso Okeke, yesterday emphasised the critical role of standardisation in driving the nation's economic development.

Speaking at a sensitisation workshop in Yola, the Adamawa State capital, Dr. Okeke called on stakeholders from various sectors to commit to a culture of quality and standardisation.

According to the SON boss, standardisation is the bedrock of industrial growth, consumer protection, innovation, and international trade.

He stressed that without strong, applicable, and enforceable standards, there can be no sustainable economic advancement.

The SON Director General highlighted the importance of integrating standards into business practices to promote innovation, improve product quality, and enhance global competitiveness.

He explained that the workshop aimed to sensitise stakeholders on the significance of standards in achieving collective goals, improving product quality, and enhancing safety and efficiency.

According to him, standardisation is not a burden but a bridge to competitiveness, prosperity, and national pride.

"To achieve its vision, SON is expanding its Product Identification Scheme (PIS) to strengthen traceability, combat counterfeiting, and empower Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to grow with integrity.

"The organisation is also enhancing its laboratory and metrology infrastructure to support local industries with accurate testing and certification services," he said

Methodist Church Synod to Focus on Spiritual Upliftment of Members

Bennett Oghifo

The spiritual upliftment of members will be the focus of the 2025 Annual Synod of the Methodist Church Nigeria, Diocese of Lagos West.

This was disclosed in a statement issued by the Public Relations Adviser, Methodist Church Nigeria, Diocese of Lagos West, Abiona Babarinde.

The three-day event, which is holding at Methodist Church Nigeria, Idimu, Lagos, began yesterday, with both the Ministerial and Lay Sessions.

The Lay President of Methodist Church Nigeria, Archdiocese of Lagos Mainland, Olusola Adu, is expected to declare the Synod open today, while the Synod programme will be rounded off with a thanksgiving service tomorrow at the same venue during the 10.00am service.

The annual Synod brings together all the leaders of the federating Circuits that make up the Diocese, namely, Palm – Avenue Circuit, Odi – Olowo Circuit, Oke – Afa Circuit and the host, Idimu Circuit, to both review the past activities and likewise preview the future of the Diocese.

According to the statement, the Chief Host of the Synod, the Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Revd. Ezekiel Akande, said, "This year's deliberation will be unique in all ramifications as both the ministerial and the Lay leaders of the Diocese shall focus more on the evangelism aspect of our doctrine as Methodist towards the growth and development of all the unit Churches that make up the Diocese.

NOA Bayelsa State Director Pays Familiarisation Visit to Muslim Community

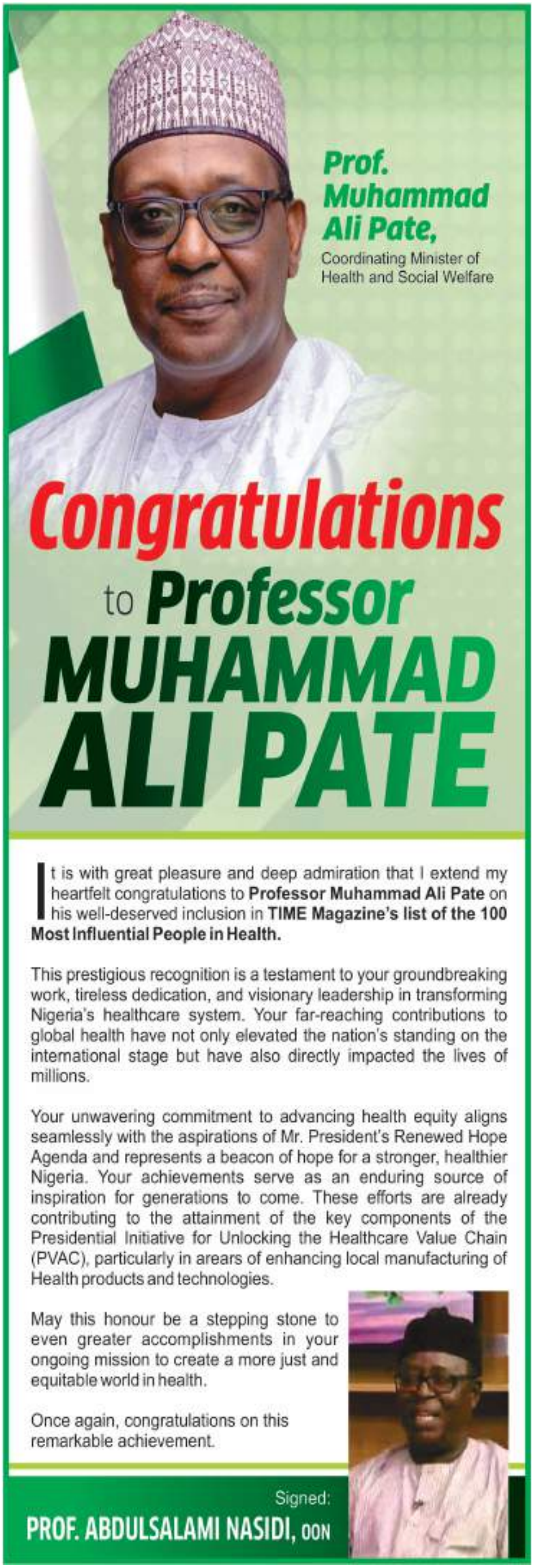
In a bid to strengthen ties and foster inclusive stakeholder engagement, the new State Director of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) Bayelsa State Directorate, Mrs. Olobio Grace, led a high-powered delegation on a familiarisation visit to the Muslim community in Bayelsa State.

The visit was part of the directorate's efforts to reinforce collaboration with all key groups in the state. Mrs. Olobio, while addressing the Muslim community, described them as "critical stakeholders in the pursuit of national unity, peace, and development."

"It is only proper that I formally introduce myself to you as the new State Director of NOA Bayelsa," she said. "The Agency is committed to engaging with all communities and ensuring that our programs and initiatives reflect the inclusiveness and diversity of our society. The Muslim community in Bayelsa is a valued partner, and we will continue to work closely with you in promoting the values of patriotism, peaceful coexistence, and responsible citizenship."

Olobio was accompanied by members of her management team, who were warmly received by the leadership of the Muslim community.

In his remarks, the Chairman of the Muslim community in Bayelsa, Alhaji Yakubu Otobo, expressed appreciation for the visit and welcomed the new director.



Ferdinand Ekechukwu - **08035011394**
Email: **ferdi_adthisday@yahoo.com**

Moses Inwang: Distribution Still Major Challenge in Movie Industry

Filmmaker Moses Inwang is not your run-of-the-mill producer. As an active player in the industry, Inwang has earned his stripes with over two decades' experience. To his credit are critically acclaimed movies like 'The Last 3 Digits', 'Alter Ego', 'Stalker', 'Body Language', 'Cold Feet', 'Merry Men 3', and 'Blood Vessel'. Inwang takes **Ferdinand Ekechukwu** through his journey as a filmmaker/director; reflects on his craft, and offers tips on what drives movie's commercial success. Excerpt:

Can you briefly take us through your journey as a filmmaker/director with over two decades in the industry?

My journey as a filmmaker started in 1998; I started taking an interest in writing scripts. Even though I didn't have any professional training at that time, I just found myself writing stories and trying to do screenplay. I wanted to get these screenplays into the hands of whichever producers I could reach. So I tried to reach out to Zeb Ejiro. I went to his office, but that didn't work out. They threw me out (burst into laughter). Then I went to the ECOWAS Hotel, where I met with Frank Ubaka. That was the first guy I met in the industry and he just put me through the happenings in the industry. He encouraged me to take an acting class, which I tried to, but I realised I had zero interest. I took an acting class, went for an audition, scaled through to the top, and was good for the role. But I didn't show up to take the role. They were looking for me. At the time, there were no mobile phones. The following year, 1999, Frank and I made a film titled, "Two Good Men" starring Tony Umez, Steph Nora Okere, Ernest Obi, and it was a good film at the time. That was really how I stepped into the industry.

Can you talk about your experience and understanding of the industry with regards to the impact on your works?

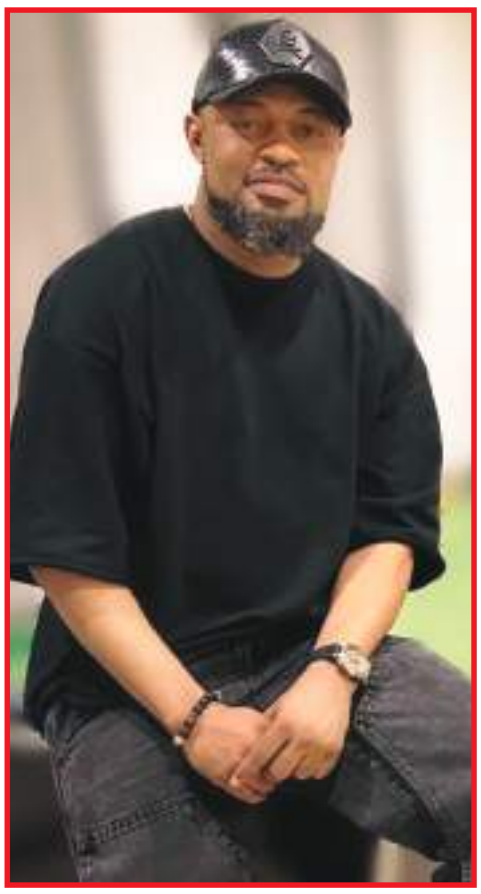
This is a bit technical. My experience and understanding of the industry from the point of an industry practitioner and our local audience, largely, I think, from the audience perspective, they care more about the hype you give to a film than the actual quality of the film. Because for me, I have chosen my titles, my films, the productions I have worked on based on how impactful I thought it would be on the audience, how socially relevant, how incredible I thought the genre was how entertaining I thought it was. But in my journey in this industry, 25 years of being a filmmaker, I have seen that it's not even what you put into the film that gives you that commercial success, it's not the how well you've made the film, it's how much you've made noise about the film which is fair to be honest because everything needs promotion for it to go big. But it's a little bit over the top in Nigeria because they don't care about the quality of the film as long as you can dance, make noise, that's what attracts them to the film rather than just putting out your trailer and let people see how interesting this film promises to be and they go see it, no. They want something extra, they want that hype. I don't think it's fair to have to put filmmakers through that. Not every filmmaker can descend so low to that level - extra stuff just to attract the audience. That's from the audiences' perspective. I don't think genre or quality of a film has anything to do with their interest. I'm not talking about everybody. I know there some people who want to watch quality films, you know but the rest of them when they see quality films they ignore it because it doesn't come with the right hype. They want the one that has more hype. It's rather an unfortunate situation. From the industry perspective, my experience has also been a lot of us want to dwell on our inadequacies as an industry and as individual filmmakers. Yes, we don't have the right budget to make the right kind of films that we should be making to compare with the likes of Hollywood and Bollywood and other industries. But we've seen a lot of us being comfortable with that. Because I have seen filmmakers who got very good budget to make films, they still made low-quality films because they have gotten so comfortable with the small-scale films that they weren't even prepared to make large-scale films. That's that. We've gotten used to mediocrity. And it's so bad that when you are trying to get things right, they tag you a time-waster. All of those incredible films you see from Hollywood and from Bollywood and from wherever they didn't rush to shoot those films, they didn't shoot them in six days. They took their time in preproduction, in prepping for those things, and they took their time to get the shots, to build their sets, to get the right equipment, to setup the equipment to film it. They took their time in getting everything done. It didn't just appear out of the blue. That is time, film is time. And time is money. It means that money affords you the time to make a good film and to tell a good story. I have seen movies that were so rushed you could see it in the pictures, but when it comes to the premiere, you will see the best red carpet will start from here to the next street. They set up for the red carpet, the costume, the razzmatazz, the music, everything. The premiere obviously would cost more than the film. So we are losing it as an industry. If we can't put as much effort as we put into making films as we put into other things, then we are losing it. I keep saying it that you cannot rush a film, if you take a shortcut, it will reflect in the film, it's as simple as that. The earlier we understand this we start treating our stories proper.

What project are you working on?

Currently I'm working on "OP", which I've been working on for 2 years now. It's an 8-part series, a Fortress Studios production, which I started in 2023. I wanted to create a new company not just a production company but a studio. So Fortress Studios is a production and distribution company. We distributed films to Prime Video and to Netflix. And then we are also making some amazing films. Our first project was 'Dead Serious' which was a Showmax Original and this one also going to be acquired by Netflix as an Original. "OP" is going to be the biggest series you are going to see out of Africa.

You have been part of some blockbuster movies. Are there secrets to making such movies in Nollywood?

Yes, there are secrets to making movies in Nollywood. Preparation is key; preparation and having the right crew. I think practitioners undermine that a lot. They go for the cheaper alternative. But look the guy that is charging you N4 million knows exactly why they are charging that. And the fact that they are walking away from the project if you are not paying for it means that they know exactly what they are coming to do, and they know that they need that money to achieve it and all that money is worth their time. You walk away from that, going for the next person that is going to take N1 million just a wrong move. You'd rather just not do that project than get the wrong crew. Because the wrong crew they are going to give you the wrong departmental requirement for each production. If you don't get the right makeup, if you don't get the right set design, if you don't get the right props person, if you don't get the right cinematographer; cinematographer is key. Your picture is going to go from looking like this film to looking like that film just because you chose the wrong guy. Get the crew right, preproduction is everything. I'm not even going to talk about production because it feels like you prepare so much for production but we don't know that these other things are the most important.



Mosses Inwang

What type of story do you feel you haven't explored enough and would want to in the coming years?

As a filmmaker, thriller is my go-to genre. And then thriller is a combination of some of the other genres. I'm a thriller person. I love thrillers. Of course, I have done other genres in my career. I don't think I have done enough historical films; I don't think I have done any epics at all. I'm working on one: it's huge. It's going to take a whole year to prepare for. We are still in conversation about doing one. Yes, so look out for that, I'm also working on a historical film as well.

Read full Article online - www.thisdaylive.com

Bright Chimezie Vibes to Davido's 'With You' after Viral Video with 30BG Boss

Ferdinand Ekechukwu

Following the revelation by superstar artiste Davido that veteran Nigerian highlife musician Bright Chimezie inspired his hit song 'With You,' featuring Omah Lay, the Zigima king has taken time out to listen to the waves-making song.

In a now viral video call that surfaced online, Davido was seen speaking with the Zigima sound originator, while acknowledging the impact of his classic 'Because of English'.

"The latest hit I just did with Omah Lay, I used inspiration from your song, 'Because of English'," he had told Chimezie. Because of English was off his album "Because of English" released in 2018.

"I will tell them to play it for you. It's trending everywhere, the whole world." Davido also expressed desire to meet and host the veteran singer in Lagos.



Davido

"I'm still around for a bit, so I was telling them maybe we will get you to come to Lagos so we will meet." Chimezie responded, "Okay, that would be wonderful, that would be nice."



Bright Chimezie

Davido, who praised Chimezie, also asked the veteran to listen to the song, which he described as a global hit.

Following their conversation, Chimezie fulfilled the request as he posted a video capturing him grooving to Davido's song while joyfully displaying his dance moves.

Chimezie also expressed his gratitude to Davido for the acknowledgement, praising the work of art. But not everyone is convinced it was purely out of love and respect.

While fans praised Davido for recognising the legend, critics questioned his motives, claiming he should've first asked for permission for "With You" contained in his new album, 5five.

Davido's song 'With You' has been making waves since its release. A Ghanaian TikToker, Ananzoofficial, did a cover of the song, for which Davido gifted him N8 million.

In 1984, Bright Chimezie introduced his Zigima Movement to the music scene with his debut album, 'Respect Africa'. His sophomore album 'Life of Yesterday,' was released early in 1987 and included songs like 'No True Love', 'Nne m Oma', and 'Message Boy'. In total, he has released eight studio albums in his musical career.


CELEBRATION OF
Life
WITH HUMBLE SUBMISSION TO GOD'S WILL, WE HONOUR AND CELEBRATE THE LIFE OF OUR BELOVED MATRIARCH, OUR MOTHER, SISTER, COUSIN, AUNT, GRANDMOTHER, AND PILLAR OF STRENGTH
AMA-OPU-ORUBO AMBASSADOR
NNE FURO
KURUBO
APRIL 2, 1939 - FEBRUARY 12, 2025
OBSEQUIES
SERVICE OF SONGS
15TH MAY 2025, AT 4PM
Rivers State Ecumenical Centre,
Abonnema Wharf Road,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
FUNERAL SERVICE
17TH MAY 2025, AT 11AM
St. Stephen's Cathedral,
Grand Bonny Kingdom,
Rivers State.
SHE IS SURVIVED BY:
CHILDREN
Colonel Boma Kurubo
Gogo & Ebere Kurubo
Uche & Kalanne (Gigi) Ojukwu
SIBLINGS
Dr. Tati Okereke
Prof. Ndi Okereke-Onyiuke
GRANDCHILDREN
Enyi Ojukwu
Tobenna Ojukwu
Daibi Gogo-Kurubo
Kalada Gogo-Kurubo
Zikora Ojukwu
Chizara Ojukwu
Furo Gogo-Kurubo
NFK
NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN

BOOK REVIEW

Reviving African Storytelling: Somiari- Stewart's Mission to Preserve Folklore

Folalumi Alaran

For centuries, African storytelling has been a powerful medium for teaching values, preserving history, and shaping cultural identity. In an era when oral traditions are fading, veteran journalist-turned-griot - Linda Somiari- Stewart is leading a revival through her thought-provoking books - The Legend of Tari-Ere: The Picky Virgin and Woyingi: God is a Woman.

These works not only celebrate African folklore but also challenge conventional narratives on spirituality, gender, and identity.

Exploring the Divine Feminine in Woyingi: God Is a Woman

In Woyingi: God is a Woman, Stewart delves into the sacred feminine, exploring creation myths that honor female divinity. Rooted in the spiritual traditions of the Ijaw and Kemetic peoples, the book challenges patriarchal narratives by reexamining the balance between masculine and feminine forces in spirituality.

Somiari-Stewart's work is both deeply personal and revolutionary. As an Ijaw woman, she was drawn to the creation story of Woyingi, the female deity who shaped the earth. "Woyingi represents the life-giving force that nurtures and sustains existence. This book is a journey into understanding the sacred feminine as an equal and essential force in the universe," she explains. A glimpse into the novel's opening chapter introduces Ayoba, a young woman who has inherited her grandmother's reverence for the divine feminine:

Ayoba always felt a deep, spiritual connection with the creative force. Her grandmother, Opu-Ayo, had woven intricate tales of a powerful goddess—the mother of all—into Ayoba's mind. These stories were rich in detail and imbued with reverence for the divine being.

Opu-Ayo always told Ayoba that they were directly descended from the divine womb of the creative force, impressing upon her a strong sense of pride and purpose.

Ayoba took a deep breath before recounting her dream to her mother

"In my dream, I found myself in a majestic èleeh—a vast clearing in the heart of a dense forest. It was much larger than our village's èleeh and seemed to hum with an energy that was both eerie and alluring. In one corner, a simple altar adorned with black eggs glinted in the dim light.

"As I approached, I sensed the eggs pulsating with a life force of their own. Then, suddenly, a powerful presence filled the entire space—an unseen yet unmistakable spirit. Its weight bore down on me until my knees buckled, and I fell prostrate to the bare earth," she recounted, still feeling the weight of that unknown entity pressing upon her.

By drawing from historical and mythological figures,

Somiari-Stewart highlights the often-overlooked roles of goddesses and female spiritual figures in African and global traditions. She presents the feminine divine not as a competitor to masculinity but as a complementary force necessary for harmony.

"Our society is imbalanced because it leans too heavily on masculine principles—order, control, and aggression—while neglecting the nurturing, intuitive, and cyclical nature of feminine energy. By reclaiming these lost elements, we can create a more balanced, equitable world," Somiari-Stewart argues.

Beyond spirituality, Woyingi touches on broader themes of gender, power, and societal structure, questioning why



Somiari- Stewart

historical narratives have often erased female divinity and seeking to reintroduce this wisdom into modern discourse.

A Journey Through Spirituality and History

For centuries, the voices of our ancestors have whispered through time, carrying the wisdom of the ages. Woyingi: God is a Woman explores the sacred feminine essence of the Divine, tracing its presence from the creation myths of the Ijaw peoples of Nigeria's Niger Delta to echoes of other great civilisations. It is a journey through history, spirituality, and the unbreakable bond between humanity and the unseen forces shaping our world.

Through rich storytelling and deep reflections, the book challenges the idea that the Divine can be confined to human constructs. It reveals how different cultures, across time and space, have recognised the sacred feminine—not as a replacement for the masculine but as an essential force of creation, wisdom, and sustenance.

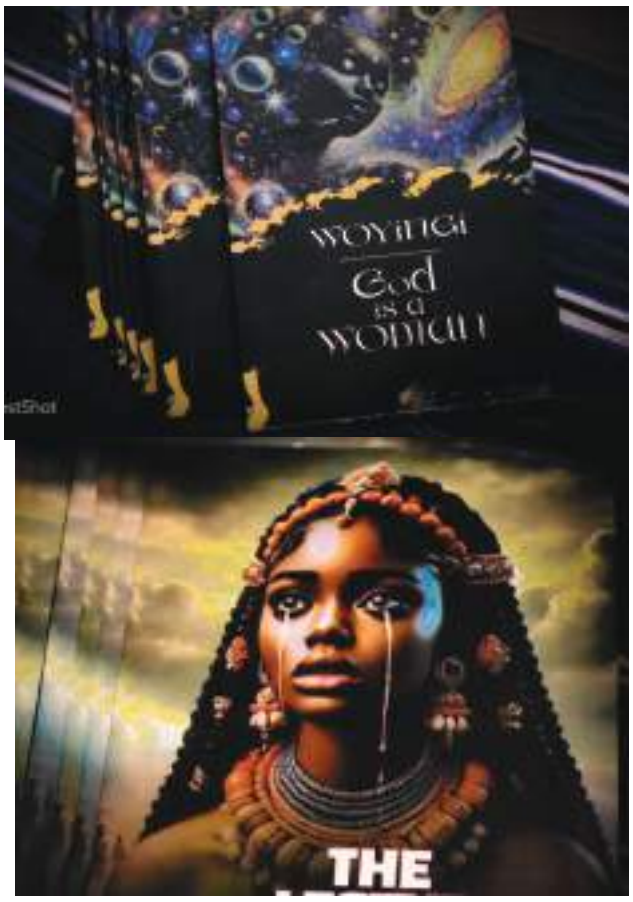
Woyingi: God is a Woman is more than a book; it is an invitation to see the sacred in everything, to embrace the vastness of the Divine beyond labels and limitations. It calls us to walk with wisdom, act with compassion, and honor the heritage that shapes us.

Overcoming Challenges in Storytelling and Spiritual Exploration

Somiari-Stewart's journey in reviving African storytelling has not been without hurdles. Adapting oral traditions into written form required innovative storytelling techniques to maintain the interactive spirit of folktales. Additionally, her exploration of divine femininity in Woyingi met resistance.

"During the writing process, I fell critically ill several times. Close friends and family believed I was treading a dangerous path; they wanted me to stop but I felt an undeniable calling to complete this work," she reveals.

Despite these challenges, Somiari-Stewart remains steadfast in her mission. She sees herself as part of a broader move-



ment of African storytellers reclaiming their narratives. "There is a growing hunger for authentic African stories," she says. "By sharing our myths and philosophies with the world, we preserve our heritage and inspire future generations."

The Legend of Tari-Ere: The Picky Virgin

In The Legend of Tari-Ere: The Picky Virgin, Somiari-Stewart reintroduces readers to the vibrant folklore of the Ijaw people. The novel follows Tari-Ere, a strong-willed young woman known for rejecting numerous suitors. Her journey takes a mystical turn when she becomes entangled with a water god, forcing her to navigate a world beyond human understanding. Through resilience, wisdom, and a humbling confrontation with destiny, Tari-Ere ultimately embraces the value of parental guidance and community wisdom.

Somiari-Stewart's inspiration for the novel stems from childhood memories of hearing this tale from her grandmother. She masterfully weaves traditional Ijaw beliefs—such as reverence for nature, the spiritual realm, and communal living—into the story, making it both a cultural preservation piece and a modern reflection on autonomy and responsibility.

"I wanted to share the rich folklore of the Ijaw people, a treasure trove of wisdom passed down through generations. By blending myth with modernity, the story resonates with contemporary readers while preserving its traditional essence," Stewart explains.

Read full article online - www.thisdaylive.com

Nigeria Will Not Die for Their Comeback Tour

Otega Ogra

There is a particular breed of former power brokers who, having tasted relevance and lost it, now cosplay as revolutionaries, writing elegies and requiems for a country they once helped bleed. They say not every critic deserves an audience, but for this, I'll speak.

I do know one thing, though - you do not get to light the fire and then sermonise over the ashes.

Their weekly essays and media junketing rounds should not be mistaken for rage. It is plain, simple revisionism. They attempt, hard as they try, to masquerade it as patriotism, but it reeks of projection. Yes, Nigeria may be in pain, but it is dishonest, almost wicked, to pretend that the decay began yesterday. And yes, many who should have healed her in the past chose instead to feed off the wound when they had the chance. In fact, some of the loudest mourners were the most efficient architects of the rot. You and I know them, and they know themselves.

I say to those who can hear - Nigeria is not dead, nor is it dying. But it had been bruised! Our Nigeria is now healing. Slowly. Surely. Steadily. This is despite those who once broke her, broke those under her care, and now write poems about the pieces.

Regardless of their diatribes, the Tinubu-Shettima administration is doing the hard, unpopular work of triage and rebuilding. Quietly. Deliberately. Without drama. I know this does not fit the poetic outrage some want to sell, but facts do not need applause. Time will tell, and future generations will hail the architect of this clinical surgery that is being done on our dear nation.

There is a reason these sudden prophets did not cry this loud when they sat in the seat of power. Their silence then was self-preservation, and their noise now is self-relevance.

KOKO OF THE MATTER: I personally do not deny the anger on their keyboards. Neither does my principal, President Bola Tinubu. However, we have chosen to confront this anger and the issues that have led to the malaise directly. We work through it, but we will not be lectured by those who had power and chose vengeance over vision or those who chose self-preservation in office rather than putting the needs of the many over theirs.

I say to this new breed of 'politiprophets': The Nigeria you mock is still home to millions waking up with fire in their bellies daily, building, fighting, and fixing—without noise, applause, or hashtags. It seems easier to curse and post than to craft and build. But if words were enough, Nigeria would be paradise by now.

Our job is not just to describe the decay but to disrupt it. We must bend systems, not just burn them with adjectives. We must enter rooms, not just shout from rooftops. We must rid the nation of its cabals in almost every sector. It is slow, complex, and unflattering. But it is necessary, and the positive results are beginning to show.

Yes, con men trend. But reformers still walk this land, and some lead this administration from top to bottom. You may choose to scroll past them because outrage travels faster than progress, but that doesn't change the positive progress.

I will never defend what deserves condemnation. But I will never declare Nigeria a corpse while millions still fight for its pulse.

To those still fighting for Nigeria in schools, markets, farms,



Ogra

communities, and offices - home and abroad, President Bola Tinubu sees you. Our administration believes in you. And I refuse to sing a funeral song for a country and its beautiful people still breathing, still trying, still rising - against all odds. This is a reckoning.

Finally, those who seek Nigeria's failure in the face of necessary reforms to put her back on the trajectory of sustainable prosperity and make her take her rightful place in the comity of Nations, kindly note that Nigeria will not die for your comeback tour.

Otega 'The Tiger' Ogra, Proudly Nigerian, is the Senior Special Assistant to President Bola Tinubu on Digital Engagement, Strategy, and New Media

EVENTS

Tajudeen Ahmed, Strategy and Finance Executive, clocked 50 years on Monday, April 7, 2025. In commemoration of the milestone, a Medium-Term Economic Outlook, featuring a panel of foremost Nigerian economists and the launch of **Musa Adeleke Ahmed Foundation** (MAAF), in memory of his illustrious father, M.A. Ahmed (1939-1998), held at Shell Zenith Bank Hall, The MUSON Centre, Onikan, Lagos, on Saturday, April 26, 2025. Guests included current and former bank CEOs, captains of industry, top executives in private and public sectors, friends, former colleagues and old schoolmates



L-R: Mr. Eniola Bello, Mr. Tajudeen Ahmed, Mrs. Adeola Azeez, Mr. Frank Aigbogun



L-R: Dr. Waheed Olagunju, Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi, Hon. Fuad Laguda, Bashorun J.K. Randle, Mr. Tajudeen Ahmed, Dr. Olusegun Aganga, Mr. Niyi Adeseun, Mr. Hafiz Bakare, and Mr. Kehinde Durosinmi-Etti



L-R: Mr. Joseph Edgar, Mr. Ike Chioke, Dr. Uche Messiah Olowu, and Mr. Olufemi Awoyemi



L-R: Mr. Niyi Yusuf, Ms. Bisi Adeyemi, Dr. Demola Sogunle



L-R: Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi, Mr. Hafiz Bakare, Mr. Tajudeen Ahmed, Mrs. Fatimah Ahmed, Prince Dapo Adelegan, Mr. Ray Atelly.



L-R: Mrs. Olasumbo Ogunmowo, and Mr. Dayo Ogunmowo



L-R: Mr. Hafiz Bakare, Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi, Hajia Bola Shagaya Dr. Olusegun Aganga, and Dr. Waheed Olagunju



L-R: Dr. Adesegun Akin-Olugbade, and Mr. Ola Belgore



L-R: Mr. Kunle Olagunju, Hon. Justice Abdullahi Adam Al-Ilory and Mr. Kunle I. Adebisi



L-R: Some members of MAAF Board of Trustees: Hon. Fuad Laguda, Dr. Waheed Olagunju (Chairman)



L-R: Mr. Boason Omofaye (Moderator) and panelists: Dr. Muda Yusuf, Dr. Tope Oshikoya, Dr. Ogho Okiti, Otunba Opeyemi Agbaje, Dr. Biodun Adedipe and Dr. Ayo Teriba



L-R: Mr. Dalu Ajene and Mr. Kehinde Durosinmi-Etti

ANALYSIS

As CBN Activates Measures to Sustain FX Inflows

The Central Bank of Nigeria'S GovernorCOMMA Olayemi Cardoso has continued to establish strong measures to attract more dollars into the economy and reduce the negative impact of ongoing crude oil prices drop on domestic economy, writes **Oluchi Chibuzor**

Global oil prices recently fell sharply but are currently trading slightly above $60 per barrel. For an oil-dependent economy like Nigeria's, the decline in crude oil prices is never cheering news.

With the pessimistic projection of The Wall Street Journal that Brent could end 2025 below $50 per barrel, Nigerian policymakers have their work cut out for them.

At $50 per barrel and a production level of 1.5 million barrel per day (mbpd), Nigeria's oil revenue will be 10 per cent below its fiscal breakeven point. The fiscal deficit could rise to six to seven per cent of Gross Domestic Product, with a knock-on effect on inflation.

But the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor, Olayemi Cardoso, has, through foresight, activated countermeasures that will ensure that the impact of the oil crisis does not hurt the domestic economy.

The apex bank is taking measures to improve Nigeria's export potential, promoting backward integration principles to reduce import of items that can be produced locally and simplifying dollar remittances to domestic economy for Nigerians in diaspora. Drawing from China's economic strategy, the apex bank said Nigeria's competitive exchange rate can drive export-led growth.

To harness this potential, businesses are expected to adopt export-oriented strategies by targeting sectors with strong export potential such as agriculture, manufacturing and creative industries; implement import-substitution models by strengthening domestic production capabilities and reducing reliance on costly imports; and focus on value addition by shifting from exporting raw materials to processed goods, thereby boosting foreign exchange earnings.

Cardoso said Nigeria's creative sector has potential to attract $25 billion annually to the economy, highlighting the untapped opportunities in Nigeria's expanding creative sector, including music, film, crafts, and digital exports.

He urged businesses to explore international markets, digital platforms, and global tours to increase dollar revenue inflows. Cardoso also recently advised telecom companies to reduce their dependence on imports by producing key components of their inputs locally.

The backward integration proposal for the telecom industry comes at a time when the real sector is in dire need of sustainable growth. The CBN boss gave insights on what the economy stands to gain from backward integration in the telecoms sector.

He spoke in Abuja during a visit by Airtel Africa's management team, led by Group CEO Sunil Taldar. Cardoso stressed that local production would help reduce pressure on the dollar, create jobs, and boost Nigeria's economy.

He said that the massive production of key inputs, which are currently being imported, like SIM cards, cables, and towers, is essential.

He noted that over the past 16 months, the CBN has worked to stabilize the foreign exchange (forex) market, strengthen the Naira, and attract investors. With these improvements, he urged telecom firms to embrace backward integration. In response, Airtel Africa's CEO, Sunil Taldar, praised the CBN's reforms and expressed support for local production, saying it would benefit telecom companies in the long run. He also reaffirmed Airtel's commitment to expanding financial inclusion through technology.

Other analysts also mentioned the renewed interest of Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) in the FX market—driven by improved market confidence, a more efficient FX framework, and strengthening macroeconomic conditions—alongside the CBN's sustained market interventions, is expected to continually support naira stability

Understanding Telecoms Sector

According to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), the total active telephony subscribers increased by 3.2 per cent month/month to 164.93 million in December 2024.

The increase reflects the gradual recovery in the subscriber base following the conclusion of the NIN-SIM linkage program by mobile service providers in September.

Analysing the market share by operators, MTN Nigeria led by 51.4 per cent with 84.61 million subscribers, Airtel Nigeria followed with 34.4 per cent (56.62 million subscribers), Globacom with 12.2 per cent (20.14 million subscribers) and 9mobile with 2.0 per cent (3.28 million subscribers).

At the same time, the total number of internet subscribers rose by two per cent month/month to 139.28 million in December.

Looking ahead, analysts at Cordros Securities, said they expect subscriber base recovery through SIM reactivation initiatives, especially from market leaders – MTN Nigeria and Airtel Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) third quarter 2024 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) report, the Information and Communication sector, is made up of Telecommunications (telecoms) and Information Services; Publishing; Motion Picture, Sound Recording and Music Production; and Broadcasting.



Cardoso

Views from stakeholders

Executive Secretary of the Association of Licenced Telecommunication Operators of Nigeria (ALTON), Gbolahan Awonuga, said that aside telecom operators, other key business owners and entrepreneurs can also invest in the local manufacturing of key components in telecoms operations.

He said: "We have to look inwards and get Nigerian companies to produce these key components in telecom operations locally. Government also has a role to play, by ensuring that key infrastructure especially power is available. We do not want a situation where locally produced inputs, will become more expensive than imported versions".

Awonuga said that the telecom sector plays a key role in banking services, including enabling digital payments and ensuring security of transactions.

He said banking and telecom sectors have more to gain if backward integration thrives in the country adding that government has significant role to play to make the move a success. Research Head, Cowry Asset Management Limited, Charles Abuede, said the CBN governor's call was to discourage the importation of foreign services into Nigeria, especially when efforts can be made to develop such services locally.

"The high demand for foreign exchange by telecom operators has further pressured the naira due to increased demand for the dollar. However, with adequate infrastructure development and a conducive operating environment facilitated by regulators, these challenges can be mitigated," he said.

According to Abuede, "given Nigeria's FX policies, illiquidity in the foreign exchange market, and infrastructure deficits, I think increased investment in the telecom sector would enable operators to embrace backward integration. This would allow them to manufacture key components, such as SIM cards, locally.

As a result, production costs could decline—provided the operating environment remains stable. This will improve profit margins and enhance both top-line and bottom-line growth in the long run".

The CBN under Cardoso has carried out several efforts to improve the functioning of the FX market.

This has led to good results with average daily turnover in the Nigerian Autonomous Foreign Exchange Market increased by 226 per cent in the first half of last year when compared to the same period in 2023.

Foreign portfolio inflows have increased by over 72 percent during this period, while foreign exchange reserves have risen from $32 billion in May 2023 to over $40 billion.

This represents the equivalent of eight months' import cover and marks the highest reserve level in nearly three years. The market has also supported over $9 billion in capital outflows over the past year as investors were able to freely repatriate capital and dividends without the need to wait for several months as experienced in the past.

These results, Cardoso said, reflect improved confidence in the reforms he embarked on.

"In addition, we witnessed a $6 billion current account surplus in the first half of 2024 as a result of the impact of these reforms. Reduction in petroleum product imports supported by improved domestic refining capacity, a growing focus on non-oil exports and higher remittance inflows helped to support the positive current account balance," he said.

Also, an enabling policy environment has led to a doubling of monthly remittances from an average of $300mn in 2023 to nearly $600 million in August 2024.

"We are committed to further integrating the Nigerian diaspora into our financial system, exemplified by the introduction of the non-resident Bank Verification Number registration. We expect our financial institutions to develop products that not only enable the diaspora to support their families but also provide opportunities for savings and investment in Nigeria," he said.

Diaspora remittances inflows to rise

As part of its efforts to boost diaspora remittances and support naira stability, the CBN recently announced the introduction of two new financial products designed to serve Nigerians living abroad.

The Non-Resident Nigerian Ordinary Account and the Non-Resident Nigerian Investment Account was created to streamline remittances, encourage investments, and foster financial inclusion among Nigerians in the diaspora.

It said, "The Central Bank of Nigeria is pleased to inform the general public of the introduction of the Non-Resident Nigerian Ordinary Account and Non-Resident Nigerian Investment Account targeted at Nigerians in diaspora."

The initiative is also expected to provide a secure and efficient platform for managing funds and investing in Nigeria's financial markets.

President, Association of Bureaux De Change Operators of Nigeria, Dr. Aminu Gwadabe, explained that diaspora remittances are a crucial source of foreign exchange for Nigeria, supplementing both foreign direct investment and portfolio investments.

He CBN's initiatives have supported continued growth in these inflows, aligning with the institution's objective of doubling formal remittance receipts within a year.

Gwadabe said remittances in the economy is expected to increase based on CBN's ongoing efforts to bolster public confidence in the foreign exchange market, strengthen a robust and inclusive banking system, and promote price stability, which is essential for sustained economic growth.

In a report: "Diaspora remittances: The power behind Africa's sustainable growth", Regional Vice President of Africa at Western Union, Mohamed Touhami el Ouazzani, said remittances may be measured through the movement of money, but their real impact is measured in lives changed.

He disclosed that in 2023 alone, $90 billion flowed into Africa from its global diaspora, an amount that rivals the Gross Domestic Product of entire nations.

He said that remittances symbolise deep ties that keep communities connected across borders.

"Families with a breadwinner working abroad depend on these funds to provide vital support for day-to-day needs. They also build the foundation for broader financial stability," he said.

"Beyond their immediate impact, remittances are powerful drivers of economic change. They fuel infrastructure development, spur entrepreneurship, and promote financial inclusion – all essential for long-term economic development. Ghana's National Financial Inclusion and Development Strategy (NFIDS) is simplifying access to remittances, while countries like Kenya, Ethiopia and Nigeria are tapping into diaspora bonds to fund infrastructure and other national projects," he added.

For remittances to be truly transformational, it begins with understanding and meeting people's aspirations. Ensuring individuals who strive for more can send and receive funds, regardless of their financial status, is crucial. We must cater to diverse needs.

FEATURE

How Igbo Apprenticeship System Can Unlock Nigeria's Economic Empowerment

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka and **Gideon Arinze** in Enugu

As Nigeria grapples with soaring unemployment, rising poverty levels, and a widening wealth gap, economic experts and cultural historians are turning their attention to a time-tested indigenous model with transformative potential — the Igbo Apprenticeship System.

Rooted in centuries-old traditions of mentorship, trade, and communal upliftment, the system has produced some of Nigeria's most successful entrepreneurs and self-made business leaders.

Now, amid calls for inclusive growth and youth empowerment, there is growing recognition that this grassroots model could serve as a blueprint for scalable, sustainable economic development across the country.

Cosmas Maduka, the founder of the Coscharis Group; Cletus Ibeto, Chairman of the Ibeto Group; Alexander Chika Okafor, founder and Chairman, Chikason Group; Innocent Chukwuma, Chairman of Innoson Motors, are a few of the billionaires from the south-east that went through the apprenticeship system.

The Igbo apprenticeship system, which is also known as Igba Boi, is a system adopted by people from the South-east in setting up mostly the male child in the early days.

It involves mainly mentorship and empowerment. It is a system where a young native and untrained boy joins an established businessman, mainly to learn trade, after which they help their masters gather wealth with the experience garnered, and then they are set up for their own business.

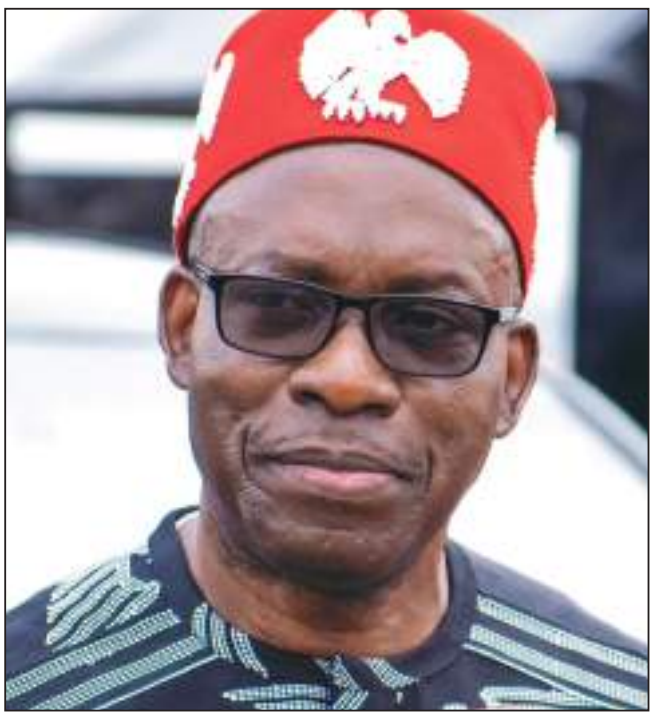
All these happen after a defined period, which includes training, helping the master, and getting empowered.

The system has been known to be very effective, and some people have said that more than half of the successful businessmen in the region went through the system.

The programme most times spans over five years and even stretches to 10 years in most cases or even above, depending on the agreement.

This also determines the enormity of the resources that will be deployed in setting up the apprentice.

At various times, many individuals have acknowledged the role of the system in creating wealth in Igboland, and have also decried the lackluster attitude of youths in embracing the system.



Soludo



Mbah

Despite the success of the system in creating wealth, it later became even despised, with those sent into the system being looked upon as the very dregs of their families.

For example, many saw the idea of sending one's children for Igba Boi instead of being sent to school as a sign of poverty. The boys being sent too were seen as people who were less loved, as the cherished ones were sent to school to get education.

There has been a general consensus that the system was largely responsible for the creation of wealth among the people of the Southeast. But the craving for Western education has also badly eroded the belief in the system. This has led to the attempt to integrate the system into formal education.

While the founder of United Nigeria Airline (UNA), Prof. Obiora Okonkwo, recently endowed a chair in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and also commissioned a research work on the efficacy of the project in wealth creation, the Heroes Foundation, a non-governmental organisation under the Interfact Beverages, makers of Hero brand of beer have also launched a programme that integrated the Igba Boi system into universities across the country, targeting firstly, the formalisation of the skills learnt by the apprentice with certificates and also balancing the need for formal education and apprenticeship by luring others into it.

Speaking with THISDAY, a trader and one of the leaders at Relief Market, Ogbaru, one of the many prominent markets in Onitsha, Chief Azuka Udombua said: "This is the scheme that people like me used to become who I am today. It is true that in those days, those of us who went for Igba Boi used to be seen as outcasts, or those not loved by their families, but it is the same scheme that helped us.

"It was difficult because your boss saw you as someone sold to him, and they could use you for anything. For example, those days, we did not only serve our Oga in his shop, looking for customers and helping to build the business, but you have to wash clothes for the family, fetch water, go for school run, and even help his wife with cooking or any other things she wants you to do.

"This scheme was built for us in the late 90s, it is unfortunate that many people today are not going for Igba Boi, but I cannot blame them. There was a kind of stigma that became associated with it when Western education became the newfound love. Some of us who missed formal education have still used this old age to get degrees."

Another trader, Mr. Ikechukwu Nwabia said: "I agree that it is a means of creating wealth, especially for families that are not financially stable, but the truth is that it is also dehumanising. When I did Igba Boi, I watched my oga's children who were almost my age enjoying themselves, going to school, engaging in other extracurricular activities, but mine was to remain at home and serve people who were my mate, after serving them, you serve their mother in the kitchen and still go to the shop to serve their father.

"It may have been the things that made us tough, but as children, it broke our ego and made us feel like we were inferior. You know how children feel. But the truth is that the scheme is good, but didn't work for everyone. Like myself, it didn't work for me, that was why I couldn't make it, so I quit and went to school when I felt I could, and today I'm who I am."

For him, upon graduation from Secondary School in 2007, Ifeanyi Shedrach informed his parents that he wanted to enrol in the Igbo Apprenticeship System, to learn how to sell men's clothing.

"I have always wanted to learn how to deal in clothing," he said, "And so, when the opportunity arose, I grabbed it."

Shedrach spent 10 years learning the ropes of the business. He was not just taught business skills but also social values such as discipline, hard work, and loyalty. He recalled that the training was practical and immersive, providing him with hands-on experience in sales, negotiation, customer relations, inventory management, and market dynamics.

At the end of the agreed apprenticeship period, Shedrach's master provided him with what is known as a settlement, which came in the form of money to start his own business. He said that although the money wasn't enough, this phase was a reward for loyalty and labour and an investment in his economic independence.

"He gave me N600,000 upon expiration of the 10 years, he recalled. "I was angry, but I took it in good faith and knew it was in the right direction and only needed to be patient."

With the money, Shedrach got a shop inside the same market in 2017, fixed the shop, and bought some goods from Onitsha. Today, he is a major dealer in men's clothes in the market. He stressed that he wouldn't have succeeded if he hadn't been patient from the beginning

No doubt, the Igbo Apprenticeship System has played a crucial role in fostering entrepreneurship and reducing poverty within Igbo communities. It has created a network of self-made businesspeople and contributed significantly to the region's economic resilience. Despite facing modern challenges such as urban migration, formal education preferences, and the need for legal protections, the system continues to adapt and survive.

Uzoma Uzodimma is another shining example of a successful business owner who went through the apprenticeship process.

Although his apprenticeship lasted for only two years, he says it gave him the background and the platform to start and create his own finance.

Uzodimma's journey started in 2016, when he graduated from the University. "I have always wanted to learn a business and so, after graduation, I began to learn interior decoration."

He says learning the ropes of interior decoration wasn't easy but it was worth it, adding that personal extended research from mostly online media also helped to enhance what he learned during the trainings.

Today, Uzodimma is one of the biggest dealers in interior decor in Enugu, with at least three apprentices who are helping to continue the cycle.

Efforts are being made to modernise the system, ensuring its relevance in the 21st century. These modernisation initiatives aim to preserve the strengths of the system—community-based mentorship, practical training, and business empowerment—while addressing its limitations, such as lack of legal protection, outdated methods, and scalability challenges.

Clearly, the Igbo Apprenticeship System stands as a time-tested model of grassroots economic empowerment, community-driven entrepreneurship, and inclusive wealth distribution. By fostering mentorship, practical skill acquisition, and capital support, it equips individuals, particularly youth, with the tools needed to succeed in business and contribute meaningfully to the economy. In a country like Nigeria, where unemployment and inequality remain pressing challenges, adopting and scaling this indigenous system across other regions can stimulate job creation, reduce poverty, and build resilient local economies. Formal recognition, policy support, and integration into national development plans can transform the Igbo Apprenticeship System from a regional tradition into a national strategy for sustainable economic empowerment.

Innovation Across Industries: Micdee's Unmatched Skill in Crafting Impactful Workspaces

In a world where physical spaces have an impact on productivity, shape company culture, and amplify brand identity, Micdee stands out as a design studio that transforms commercial environments into dynamic, functional experiences.

Founded by an architect and powered by a collective of designers, strategists, and innovators, Micdee's work goes beyond aesthetics alone - it crafts spaces that help organisations thrive. With a philosophy rooted in strategy, detail, and purpose, Micdee's work over the years has cut across a diverse range of industries to create environments that inspire action, foster innovation, and leaves a lasting impact.

Micdee's strength lies in its ability to adapt and innovate across various sectors, a testament to the company's versatility. Whether shaping the future of telecom, education, fintech, or energy, the studio demonstrates a deep understanding of how space influences behavior, productivity, and brand perception.

For MTN, Africa's leading telecom brand, Micdee designed an experience center that redefines customer engagement. The space blends cutting-edge technology with intuitive design, creating an interactive environment where visitors connect with the brand in meaningful ways. This project exemplifies Micdee's ability to translate a company's vision into a physical space that resonates with its audience.

In the education sector, Micdee has designed forward-thinking learning environments that prepare students for the future. The JADA hub, a pioneering space for data and AI education, reflects the studio's commitment to fostering talent and innovation. Similarly, their collaboration with Nexford University resulted in a physical community hub that supports global digital learners, bridging the gap between online education and real-world interaction.

The fintech industry has also benefited from Micdee's innovative approach. With Pocket by Abeg, the studio crafted a workspace that mirrors the brand's bold, youthful identity. The design captures the energy of Nigeria's fast-growing fintech sector, creating an environment that fuels creativity and collaboration.

Micdee's work extends to the energy sector, where they partnered with NLNG and Schneider Electric to launch Nigeria's first oil and gas innovation and experience center.

This industry-first facility was designed to foster new ideas in energy, demonstrating Micdee's ability to tackle complex, technical spaces while maintaining a human-centered approach.

What ties these diverse projects together is Micdee's meticulous process and deep understanding of each client's mission, culture, and audience. The studio doesn't believe in one-size-fits-all solutions. Rather, it works closely with its clients to craft unique, impactful, and enduring spaces. From the earliest strategy sessions to the final details of execution, Micdee oversees every element to ensure the space not only looks stunning but performs effectively.

User experience, functionality, and material selection are at the heart of Micdee's design philosophy. The studio stays attuned to trends in architecture, technology, and workplace culture, ensuring that each project is both contemporary and timeless. More than just designing environments, Micdee designs experiences—spaces that inspire, connect, and energize people.

Their cross-industry expertise is made possible because of the company's creative vision and their craftmanship for practical adaptability. Through its work, Micdee certainly proves that design is not just about what you see; it is about what you experience and, ultimately, what you achieve with it. From education to energy, tech to telecom, Micdee isn't just building spaces, it is building the future and they stand out not just for what they create, but for how and why they do so.



CEO Micdee, Michael Awonowo

TRIBUTE

Our Saint, Patricia Okereke Has Transitioned

Emmanuel and Emeka Onwubiko

May 1st 2025, is a landmark date for the family of Late Mazi Cyprian Osonduagwuike Okorieocha Onwubiko of Ndiuche-Etiti Arondizuogu because of the transition to eternal glory of the first daughter of my Parents, Mrs. Patricia Okereke, who bore the name Patricia Onwubiko before she got married to late Mazi Godday Okereke of Ndiuche Ochie-uno.

Patty's passage has brought heavy pains to our hearts as a family. Her departure is one of the most devastating disasters to have happened to us, even as the departure of our Dad was painful, but that of Patricia is uniquely painful because of her very tender age before her departure which is 61. Our Dad left us for the World beyond and for God's kingdom at the ripe age of 90 or thereabout. If you wonder why we are so pained that our eldest sister has transitioned to eternity, it is precisely because of her formidable and unifying roles in our entire extended family.

As aforementioned, we missed her because of the stabilising roles she played in the family. She wasn't the firstborn born but she had this phenomenal charisma and qualitative attributes of a terrific leader that no one else in our family has. A void in the leadership of the family presented a great challenge, but Mrs. Patricia Okereke nee Onwubiko summoned courage to confront and always encourage each of us in our family to fly the flag of peace, unity and collective progress as our motto. She was our second Mother.

As can be attested by all, our late eldest sister Patricia troubled no one and was often very quiet but spoke out loudly when things weren't going on well in our family, especially if there were red flags of internal schism and disunity. She was a peacemaker.

Patricia Okereke's peaceful nature reminds us of Saint Paul's affirmation on Jesus Christ when he noted thus: "He is our peace, who made the two groups one and destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:14). Through His death on the cross, Jesus made peace between us and God—and between people. Peacemaking is not a small part of the gospel—it is at the center of Christ's mission.

Peacemakers, in the words of Saint Paul, are called children of God because they reflect His character. God is a God of peace (Romans 15:33). From creation to new creation, God's work is about healing, restoring, and reconciling. When we work for peace, we act like members of His family. Peacemaking is never easy. It costs us something—comfort, pride, and sometimes even safety.

Jesus, the Prince of Peace, as we know, was crucified. The reality is that true peace often leads us to the cross. As one disciple said, "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." Peacemakers may carry hidden wounds, but they also carry sacred strength. No doubt, peace is a strong quality that cements relationship and togetherness in every family confronting internal conflicts.

The Onwubiko's family of Ndiuche-Etiti, Arondizuogu in Onuimo LGA as followers of Christ, we acknowledge that we are called to healing divisions in the Church, bridging gaps in society.

Since the departure of our Dad over a decade ago, Patricia was the person who made her presence felt around our mother: Mrs. Gladys Caroline Adaudensi Onwubiko. Our Mother is well over 80 and this made the job of often caring for her wellbeing and welfare a huge task which my late eldest sister Mrs. Patricia Okereke bore with equanimity, joy and happiness.

She lived in Aba but once in a short while, our Mother is often transported to stay for few weeks with her for intensive medicare. Patricia Okereke provided succour to our mother and she often provided quality counselling to our mother on how to strictly take her medication as directed by the doctors. She was the teacher, the doctor literally, and the comforter of our mother.

And if you know how profound is my affection for my mother, you will then know how I valued the services that Patricia rendered to our mother. She buys her foodstuffs and importantly, Patricia often buys her OKPOROKO (Stockfish) that is highly valued by my people in Arondizuogu and Aba is one huge market for OKPOROKO imported from Europe.

Patricia practically trained all of us, her younger ones and most importantly, her house was a steady refuge for most of us, her siblings who spend quality times holidaying in Aba.

Her husband often gives us money when we are travelling back after vacationing in his house. Her husband was a twin: two boys. Incidentally, her husband passed on few years back even as his twin brother just died a few weeks back before the transition of our own blood sister.

I have never cried in my life the way I did upon beholding her remains at the Abuja hospital whereby she died at age 61 after a very brief illness. I was inconsolable because losing Patricia is massively painful. She was my most dependable confidant and she provided quality counselling on how to build my home and often insisted that I should love my wife and my children particularly because my wife, Ugochi has this fondness for my mother. Patricia knew how I love our mother so she often told me to love my wife giving the way she cares for our mother. Patricia since we were kids in Aba and Kafanchan just as she stood as a living saint for us. She made sure we her younger ones did our chores and become clean, neat and intelligent children. Our Parents were visionaries to have named her Patricia after that phenomenal Italian Saint Patricia.

Saint Patricia, the niece of Emperor Constantine, was born in Constantinople in the year 30 of the Christian era. Brought up in the imperial court and trained in



Okereke

the Christian religion by a pious lady named Aglaia (now Blessed), she took the vow of virginity at an early age, and to remain faithful to her vow, she fled from her paternal home. With the faithful Aglaia as a companion, she sailed to Rome, where Pope Liberius bestowed upon her the veil of Christ's Bride.

At the death of her father, she returned to Constantinople, where she renounced all her worldly possessions, distributing her wealth to the poor. Patricia then embarked with her companion on a ship bound for the Holy Land in order to visit the places sanctified by Our Lord. During the voyage, they were overtaken by a violent storm that carried the vessel in the opposite direction, as far away as Naples, Italy. There they landed and took refuge on a rock near the bay, afterward called Castel del'ovo. After a few months of penitential life, she fell ill and died a saintly death at the age of 21. Whereas her patron Saint so young, our own living Saint Patricia Okereke died at 61 which to us is considered too young.

She, Saint Patricia, was buried at the Church dedicated to the Martyr Saints Nicandro and Marciano, thereby remaining with her spiritual daughters, the Patrician Sisters. In 1864 the sisters brought her remains to the Monastery of St. Gregorio Armeno when their convent was suppressed.



L-R: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Systems, Mr. Emmanuel Audu, Hon. Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Systems, Ms. Abisola Olusanya and other Management Staff of the Ministry, during an inspection tour of the LACE Project at Igbonla, Epe on Friday



L-R: Managing Director, The Seaside Schools, Agabra, Mrs. Eniola Ogunlade; Students, Kingsley Madubonu; John-Paul Okoshone; Temitope Oyadele, TIMO Nigeria co-coordinator, Mrs. Irene Madubonu and, Somkene Madubonu, representing Nigeria at the Turkic International Mathematical Olympiad (TIMO) held in Antalya, Turkey…recently



L-R: Head of strategy and program officer of NIMC, Dr. Alvan Ikoku; Director, Head Card Service NIMC, Dr. Peter Iwegbu; Managing director and CEO national identity management commission (NIMC), Mrs. Bisoye Coker Odusote; Head of servicom NIMC, Mrs. Florence Oloruntade; Head of Protocol Service Unit, Mrs Amen Peter Odia; during the conference and Introducing the new NIN pre-enrolment Portal in Abuja.. Yesterday KINGSLEY ADEBOYE



Students of Grace Schools, Gbagada, at the formal launch/Unveiling of Heart and Hands Club (A student driven initiative to promote generosity and Community support) in Gbagada, Lagos recently

PERSPECTIVE

Mbah: Tale of Enduring Vision, Grit, Innovative Disruption

Nana Ogbodo

Mario Cuomo, the former Governor of the State of New York in the United States must have had the conventional Nigerian politician in mind when he intoned his now famous saying that politicians usually campaign in poetry and govern in prose.

On campaign trails, politicians are typically bullish and are sarcastically said to live in a bubble. On accession, however, the reality of office soon sets in – and the bluster of old is lost. The ease with which most politicians abandon the beautiful platitudes usually painted during electioneering campaigns when they are baptised by reality in office is quite interesting. This syndrome had become so pervasive such that even as a spokesman, one would remain tongue-in-cheek while pontificating on the promises of your principal.

Governor Peter Mbah's ideas were out of this world, given the parlous state of affairs in the state. He brimmed with uncommon confidence and ideas that were largely novel, even esoteric. He talked about disruptive innovation; he talked about converting the dormant assets; he talked about a quantum leap, exponential growth, and moving Enugu from the pipeline system of governance to a platform module of engagement. He captured all these within his now-famous mantra: "Tomorrow is here" which isn't just another fancy one-liner created to woo voters.

As he explained, "Tomorrow is here" speaks to the urgency of the country's current economic outlook but from an optimistic perspective and not despondency. It is a rallying call to action, spurred by the realization that we can truly shape the social and economic realities of the future through the decisions we make today. It encapsulates our hopes and expectations about the future. It reminds us that our dreams are not Utopian as long as there exists the requisite capacity, willingness, and indeed the courage to take that vision from the realm of contemplation into an actual state of being. Besides the fact that it is an affirmative development proposition, it is essentially an abnegation of complacency.

When we reminded him that these noble dreams could prove so difficult to realise, given that Enugu is about the 5th from the bottom of the federation account revenue receipts log, he baulked at such naivety. He reminded us that Enugu has every endowment that could place it at the top of consideration in the country, especially given our history, location, and the abundance of human resources available in the state. To him, Enugu remained where it was because of a lack of imagination or what he called paralysis of the will! We reminded him that as a sub-national under a party that is not in power at the federal level, such dreams could be scuttled by realpolik. He countered with a reference to Dubai, a sub-national like Enugu, and which has been transformed by the sheer vision and courage of just



Mbah

one man, Sheikh Rasheed bin Saeed Al Maktoum. The rest is now seemingly history!

Two years down the line, Governor Mbah has proven that the difference between ordinary and extraordinary lies in the vision, the passion, the courage, and indeed the ability to inspire those around you. He campaigned in poetry and governs in poetry. His achievements are as breathtaking as they are unending.

Those things we had considered impossible were actually the issues he simply regards as low-hanging fruits. The International Conference Centre, previously regarded as untenable, is now one of the defining monuments in Enugu. Ditto the decrepit and abandoned Presidential Hotel and even the moribund Nike Lake Resort Hotel, which for decades were the defining and iconic landmarks in Enugu.

These assets had diminished all administrations that had delved into reinventing them. But they are now beauties to behold. The sprawling Enugu United Palm Produce Limited (UPPL), the Sunrise Flour Mill, the NIGERGAS, have all been either fully revitalized or in the process of revitalization. Remarkably, the transformation of some of them came through the platform module of engagement, where government's credibility is enough to inspire private partnership and investment! For instance, whereas the International Conference Centre, Hotel Presidential, NIGERGAS, and a few others came through the sole financing effort of government, Sunrise Flour Mill, UPPL are coming back to life through partnerships that brought in huge private sector investments to the tune of N100 billion and N40 billion, respectively.

There are also emerging 260 state-of-the-art Smart Green Schools in much the same way as the 260 Type 2 Primary Health Centres simultaneously in all 260 wards of Enugu State. We now have four ultra-modern transport terminals, while Enugu Air is set to fly with three aircraft for a start.

In two years, Mbah's scorecard is proof that the best way to silence cynics is through remarkable accomplishments. Yet, with some benefit of hindsight, you might be inclined to forgive his skeptics to whom the grand vision he outlined from the outset seemed like the usual theatrics of politics.

There's always a sense of pride recalling the optimism stirred up by his constant reference to the Dubai experience during those early planning days. Like Dubai, which built a global emporium in the desert, Mbah is literally bringing the world to Enugu through a combination of business and leisure. In a few days' time, Enugu Air, the state-owned airline, would make its inaugural flight into the Akanu Ibiam International Airport from Abuja to a water cannon salute and resounding applause. Recalling the entire project list is often a huge challenge. The debate regarding which project may be considered the most significant is no less challenging. No project eclipses the other in terms of significance.

Doing all these simultaneously is by no means driven by a desire to be validated or for public acclaim. Governor Mbah clearly understood that only a quantum leap – occasioned by massive capital and social investments – can sufficiently alter the uninspiring growth trajectory, of which the state had been long accustomed. So, when he talks about "disruptive innovation", he is not merely mouthing political platitudes. He is talking about the mindset that represents a total abnegation of complacency. Mbah's disruptive innovation speaks to the expediency of a radical vision able to harness available resources, agricultural, industrial, and human, to enthrone an economy that is increasingly less-reliant on the monthly federal allocation.

Two years ago, only a few would have believed that land documents could be processed and issued in 72 hours. But that is what currently obtains. The introduction of the Enugu State Geographical Information System has eliminated every red tape and made the process entirely transparent. Such is the power of innovation.

Read full article online - www.thisdaylive.com

MMA2 at 18: Proof of PPP's Magic Wand

Steve Omolale

That the iconic Murtala Mohammed Airport Terminal Two, Ikeja, Lagos, popularly known as MMA2, is still standing solid 18 years after it started operation is a testament to the resilience, innovativeness, tenacity and diehard commitment and belief of its promoter and management that the project could, and has, indeed, revolutionised the country's aviation sector. It is also a strident proof that the private sector holds the ace for development of the Nigerian economy.

As the first successful Public- Private Partnership (PPP) in Nigeria, which came on stream under the former President Olusegun Obasanjo administration in May 2007, MMA2 has undoubtedly changed the narrative and the way many Nigerians hitherto viewed public enterprises. And who can blame them? A situation in which government officials have deliberately grounded many of those enterprises and infrastructure with mindless corruption would naturally make Nigerians wink at their sincerity in managing the facilities.

The brainchild of billionaire businessman and Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Dr. Wale Babalakin, through his Bi-Courtney Aviation Services Limited (BASL), MMA2 came at a time Nigeria was craving for radical upliftment of the country's aviation infrastructure. With the loss of the former domestic terminal at the Murtala Muhammed Airport to a raging inferno, the void created by this and the dearth of other befitting facilities at the terminal was palpable; a national embarrassment sort of. And to save the country from this monumental humiliation, Obasanjo, in his wisdom, needed a competent private company to handle the reconstruction of a befitting domestic terminal. However, the terminal design pushed forward by the government agency responsible for overseeing the reconstruction was what looked like a shed, unbefitting of a country like Nigeria. But, determined to deliver a world-class terminal, BASL, which was called upon as the reserved bidder for the reconstruction when the bid winner could not deliver for over a year after winning the bid, took the gauntlet and mobilised all available resources and expertise at its disposal, including visits by the project team to South Africa, to deliver the multipurpose terminal, under the Design, Build, Operate and Transfer (DBOT) scheme. The terminal has expectedly stood firm for the past 18 years and has become the pride of the nation and cynosure of all eyes, especially for first-time fliers and visitors. It has also proved cynics, who thought nothing good and enduring could ever come out of Nigeria, wrong.

The first flight operation from MMA2 took off on May 7, 2007, amid pomp and colours, joy and excitement, with Chanchangi Airline's Lagos-Kaduna flight.

The aircraft, a Boeing 727 with registration number 5N BEU and flight number NCH 334 left the terminal by 5.15 pm with 70 elated passengers.

And over the years, despite suffering all manner of obstacles in litigations and outright attempts to surreptitiously take over the terminal from its operator, BASL has remained undaunted in its resolve to sustain the facility, although at a huge cost to Babalakin, who has always sought the best hands, both locally and internationally, to manage MMA2 which he considers as a legacy project, providing jobs directly and indirectly for thousands of Nigerians and foreigners alike.

Surely, to keep the one-stop terminal open and lit 24/7, 365 days in a year is no mean task, especially considering the cost of providing electricity and maintaining all the facilities therein and routinely replacing some to meet international standards. It is for this simple reason that faltering individuals have never and can never manage MMA2. For if it had been otherwise, the terminal would have been one ramshackle structure a long time ago.

According to its slogan, "More than a terminal", BASL has taken MMA2 beyond the imagination of stakeholders in the aviation industry. It has, indeed, become an all-rounder facility, providing flying, parking, shopping and other unforgettable experiences to fliers and visitors. However, the refusal of the government to grant MMA2 the permission to commence regional flight operations despite the availability in abundance of all the facilities needed for this is befuddling many aviation stakeholders.

This notwithstanding, and believing in consistently giving back to the society for its unflinching support, the management of the terminal has elevated Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to a high pedestal. Year in year out, while marking its anniversary, it has always supported segments of the society in different ways. And this year, the case is not different as it celebrates the 18th anniversary of MMA2 with a visit to the Bethesda Home and School for the Blind in Lagos with a lot goodies, including financial support, for the school, in what the Chief Operating Officer, Mr. Kola Bamigboye, aptly described as "a moment of reflection, gratitude, and renewed commitment to the values that drive us".

Omolale, a journalist, sent in this piece from Lagos

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•Tourism •Arts&Culture

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Unlocking Opportunities in Nigeria's Tourism Sector

Charles Ajunwa writes that experts and stakeholders who gathered at the National Tourism Summit in Lagos brainstormed on the way forward for Nigeria's tourism sector

Tourism enthusiasts from different walks of life gathered in Lagos last Thursday for the National Tourism Summit, which was organised by the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, Tourism, and Creative Economy in partnership with Koko Beach Hotels and Resorts.

The venue for the stakeHOLDERS' summit, Koko Beach Hotels and Resorts, could only be accessed through the waterways. It takes 35 minutes for 10-seater speedboat and 60 minutes for a 30-seater boat to arrive at the beach nestled along the coastline of the Atlantic Ocean.

Minister of Art, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy, Hannatu Musa Musawa, at 9a.m. arrived at the Wings Towers on the busy Ozumba Mbadiwe Road, Victoria Island, for take-off from the jetty.

Before embarking on the trip, maritime regulatory procedures were observed by the minister, her aides, and other passengers who wore safety jackets before being allowed to enter their boats.

The minister's boat left the jetty at 9:40a.m. There were no traces of the minister and entourage on water shortly after they embarked on the trip. This was not the case with the 30-seater boat as we moved slowly on the water. Over 1,000 beach houses operate on the Lagos coastline.

Lehle Balde, who anchored the summit, described Koko Beach as "one of Nigeria's best-kept secrets, a breathtaking coastline not only intact, quiet, powerful, and risky. Nigeria is not short on beauty or culture. We've got over 850 kilometers of coastline, more than 250 ethnic groups, thousands of festivals, and the kind of music, film, and fashion that the world cannot stop dancing to, watching, and wearing."

"So, how is it possible that tourism still only contributes 3.9 per cent to our economy? From my perspective, that's not enough.

"In just one month, December 2024, Lagos City raised over $71.6 million from tourism, hospitality, and entertainment. Hotels alone pulled in $44 million, and short-term apartments added another $30 million, while we're all partying into the New Year. In 2024, domestic tourism spending in Nigeria reached an astonishing $4.95 trillion, about $7.7 billion, while international visitors spent $491.9 billion.

"By 2029, experts project that Nigeria's tourism market could hit $5.4 billion at a rate of 10.6 per cent per year. So I'd like us to ask ourselves, is tourism capable of transforming Nigeria's economy? I think the answer to that is absolutely. The real question is, when will we give it the attention, the investments, and the innovation that it deserves?" he added.

With this breakdown, Musawa, as she mounted podium, thanked Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Jumoke Oduwole; Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo; and Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, former Minister of Power, Works and Housing, Mr. Babatunde Fashola, former Senate President, Senator Bukola Saraki, owner of Koko Beach Hotels and Resorts and host of 2025 National Tourism Summit, Mr. Richard Shittu, Chairman of Shoprite. Mr. Tayo Amusan, Group CEO, DLM Capital Group, Dr. Sonnie Babatunde Ayere; Chairman, Board of Partners, SIAO, Robert Odiachi; Ogun State Commissioner for Culture and Tourism, Hon. Sesan Abolaji Fagbayi; former Director General, Nigeria Tourism Development Authority (NTDA), Mr. Folarin Coker, former President Nigeria Football Federation, Amaju Pinnick and others for attending the summit.

"Mr. President, from the very beginning, said that he wanted a future for Nigeria, where we can offer the young generation something that is very tangible. In order for us to do that, he is very determined to ensure that we diversify and make the tourism movement first. So, we identified the areas of digital economy, creative economy, blue economy, tourism economy, to ensure that we do that," she added.

Musawa, who gave insight into her ministry's Destination 2030, added, "what I find most important is the landscape from the North, where you have the hills, the desert. I was recently in Ikogosi in Ekiti State, it is so beautiful, the landscape changes.

"I think I have to say that Nigeria is a phenomenon, because no other people in the world who you go to, that you will see the diversity, not only in the people, but the diversity in the landscape. That is the kind of work, the value that we have. What is important for us is to be sure that we open up the potential," she stated.



Minister of Art, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy, Hannatu Musa Musawa (7th from left) flanked by participants at the National Tourism Summit held at Koko Beach Hotels and Resorts, Lagos

According to her, "Economic expansion is the core of what we seek to do. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu wants to open up the economy of Nigeria. He wants to have an economic expansion and economic growth. I think with the tourism sector, I can talk about the low numbers, together with Richard and many other stakeholders, we're doing data mapping to capture what tourism and creative economy can contribute to Nigeria, because it is a lot more than what is being captured. Once we are done with that data mapping, it will give international investors the confidence to know the numbers and where to go. It will give players the ability to know, to be empowered and be led," the minister declared.

The minister who commended Lagos for making an impact in tourism, especially in the 2024 Detty December, said she would work together with the Lagos State government to ensure that the private sector supports the tourism sector.

"One thing that I can say about Nigeria is that the private sector needs to grow its economy and to grow the industry organically in support of the government. Government needs to come in and put in the right capacity, the right platform, the right quality and the right infrastructure in terms of our land and tourism sector.

"As we use our creative agency to export Nigeria to the world, we want to use our tourism to import the world but we have to have access to the infrastructure that needs to be put in place that will allow access to the world. It's something that we have to understand. We have to have access, growth, and make it easy for the international community to access our visas and the information that they need," the minister stated.

Experts and stakeholders at the summit emphasised the need for collaboration among federal and state government ministries and agencies in the present administration's drive to expand the country's Gross Domestic Product.

Fashola, a former governor of Lagos State who delivered the keynote address, called for collaboration between federal and sub-national governments. He said there are 170 tourism assets in Nigeria that should be promoted globally. He also emphasised the need for visa on arrival to promote inbound tourism.

He said as Minister of Power, he ensured that the Koko community was connected to power nine years ago, a move he said helped in the growth of the hospitality business in the coastline beaches of Lagos State.

"I think that the message that will come out of here is that Nigerians in both private and public sector are very deliberate and intentional about driving the opportunities that already exist in the tourism industry. The creatives started without any deliberate design. The hospitality industry is already heading that way," Fashola added.

Saraki, a former governor of Kwara State, who commended Musawa for being present at the summit, called for cooperation among the ministers. He said with Musawa in the saddle, "Nigeria will get it right in the area of tourism."

Oduwole, who was represented by CEO of Tafawa Balewa Square, Mrs. Lucia Shittu, said: "The Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment remains a dedicated partner of the growth and evolution of Nigeria's tourism sector. We recognise tourism not only as a cultural and social asset, but also as a critical driver of economic diversification, foreign exchange earnings, and job creation.

"Our policy framework is firmly rooted in creating an enabling environment for investment, enterprise development, and value addition. All essential to unlocking the full potential of tourism in Nigeria."

"We continue to support tourism value chain through deliberate policies that encourage infrastructure development, promote micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in tourism related sectors, and facilitate access to finance for creative and cultural entrepreneurs. Through the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission, also known as NIPC, the ministry is positioning tourism as a promising frontier for investments encouraging both local and international investors to explore Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, historical landmarks, and ecological diversity," Oduwole added.

Keyamo, who was represented by the Managing Director of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Mrs. Olubunmi Kuku, said his ministry works closely with the Ministry of Tourism, "to provide the necessary infrastructure from an air transport perspective to help us deliver tourism to Nigeria."

According to him, public-private partnerships are the only way to accelerate the growth that is needed in the tourism sector.

"In the Ministry of Aviation, we have created an enabling process, we have included incentives for investors to open up our markets, and indeed, we continue to welcome our critical stakeholders.

"But I do want to say that the last strategic area which we have focused on is really about the people. There is absolutely no way we can create an environment that wants to build on the tourism sector without focusing on customer centricity. That is a critical area that we're working on as it comes to driving the change around cultural accreditation of our people, how we engage, and how we make sure that the tourism sector becomes a critical area for the future of Nigeria's growth."

Minister of Interior, Tunji-Ojo and Comptroller General of Nigeria Immigration Service, Kemi Nanna Nandap, represented by Assistant Comptroller General of Immigration Zone A Lagos, Mrs. M.E.Onidede, thanked Musawa for recognising the strategic importance of cross-sector collaboration in positioning Nigeria as a prime tourism destination.

"We are fully aligned with His Excellency, President Bola Tinubu's economic diversification agenda, and we remain committed to promoting initiatives that enhance Nigeria's global image abroad. Through reforms, which most of us recently have seen and have heard on the news, through the reforms that have been made on visa arrival processes, there is a digitisation of entry clearance system," Tunji-Ojo said.

Lagos State Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Benson-Awoyinka, who voiced support for the gathering, said, "It's good for us to know where we are, where we're going, what needs to be done. And the most important thing is that it's actually being driven by the players in the industry, and practitioners as well.

"We've all come here and we have seen the potential. We've seen what Lagos can be like. We're a tourist destination now. International events are now happening in Lagos. So tourism is where it's finally supposed to be."

Owner of Koko Beach Hotels and Resorts, Shittu, who went round ensuring the summit ended smoothly as planned said he invested over N20 billion in the project so far.

As it is now, we've probably expended well over N20 billion. The whole project itself is like a $40-$50 million project. So it's still a long way to go. As it is today, we're only like 12 per cent complete," he added.

"The reason why we brought everybody here is to be able to show what potential Lagos and Nigeria as a whole do have.

"Tourism could bring as much revenue to the country, as much as oil and gas, if we harness it properly. If we're very intentional about what we're doing, successful countries like Dubai, Morocco, Mexico, didn't get there by not being intentional. It was not by accident. Some people came up with a plan, they got the funding, they had the strategy, and they moved with it. And now the world is going there and taking all their money there to spend there, which we can be doing exactly the same work. At the end of the day, it's the same sand and sea. It's just what you build and create around it that's important. That was created by human beings all over the world.

"I don't see why we cannot do the same, achieve the same, and use that to increase our GDP. The whole idea behind this summit is to be able to highlight the deficiencies and the gaps in the infrastructure and in the tourism ecosystem, so that we can try and find solutions, infrastructure, power, and things that can make it happen.

"In three months, we can open up this corridor. You already have over a thousand beach houses at the beach. So what do you need? Power. That's all. Once people can refrigerate their food, they don't have to be carrying coolers and diesel back and forth. Then they will stay the night here comfortably. After that, maybe just three, four restaurants, supermarkets, pharmacies. That's it. You've created an ecosystem. You've created a lot of new clients. This is one of many. We intend to keep it up so that we can really realise a lot of our potential opportunities for the country," Shittu added.

BACKPAGE CONTINUATION

FRANK CONVERSATION WITH A GEN-Z

Then a quipped again: "Could it be that the problem is not technology itself, but the progressive disappearance of real human interactions, as well as its replacement by digital alternatives, which are profoundly inadequate at the end of the day?"

"Maybe", I said. They still have physical and emotional exchanges. But please note that "Tell me about it", and "Trending" things, general gossip and anything that shines for a moment dominate today's social intercourse. The world is now more of "Fast-Food" generation in everything, wherein instant pleasures and immediate gratification come first. And it is often all ephemeral and anchored on nothing lasting".

"Yes, we do not just want things, many things, but we want them here and now", he said. "We are largely consumption-driven. We create media content, not out of a desire to spread enlightenment, drive any lasting purpose or achieve any clear results beyond making people laugh, or display something shocking or outrageous. We scurry from one distraction to another, in search of something more exciting".

"And that is how days, weeks and months fly by", I said. A job becomes boring after a few months, because it doesn't create the opportunity for "making impact". It's as if life should be one "wow" after another, and it is not just tiring, but wearying. Sad.

My young friend was quiet for quite some time before saying: "My generation can be described as more materially comfortable and more harassed. Look at startups, Fin tech, the epidemic of young entrepreneurs and much more. But it is all richer, emptier, less indicative of wisdom. We are a very opinionated lot". Then he fell silent again.

Anon, he continued: "Do you know that one of the very interesting discoveries of the Harvard study mentioned earlier is that more Gen-Z's are suffering from a sense of purposelessness? I replied: "It has always been a strongly held view amongst members of my generation, that money cannot buy happiness". He made to speak, and then kept quiet again.

Finally he said: "We feel more empty than most of you older folks. I see my peers anchoring everything they say on quotations from one motivational speaker or the other. They are all talking about leadership and influencing others. Meanwhile, a motivational speak is not God. Why should his personal opinion be taken as Ultimate Truth, why? Most religious leaders are simply glorified liars and crooks, as far as some of us are concerned".

It was my turn to be silent and say nothing. The young man spoke from the depth of his soul, and was most probably also trying to further digest his own statement. "Did the book you mentioned not say anything about the way out for Gen-Z's?" I asked.

"It speaks of three things one can do", he replied. The first is to do everything possible to have real relationships that involve face to face exchanges, play and real laughter. He also suggested that Gen-Z's should cultivate their inner life, seek some form of spirituality and look for meaning beyond everyday events".

The existential nightmare of being lonely in the midst of a happy crowd is the issue here. What can Gen-Z's, and the rest of us by the way, do about the occasional inexplicable emptiness; of desire to return to genuine friendships, to simplicity, to the ability to play and laugh honestly?

This generation of roughly those born between 1997 and 2012, is immersed in a complex mix of very dynamic social, economic, technological, and cultural influences. Information and technology, overload, constant self-vaporization and comparison with others, the pressure to trying to create a wonderful online life that only exists online, with photoshopped images and curated narratives.

Depression and confusion abound everywhere, with the older generation being more judgmental than understanding towards Gen-Z's. They need help, but are not getting it from an equally confounded older generation. So, they turn to online Apps on how to settle a quarrel, how to think and even what to think. And that makes it worse, as they download and deploy whatever bunkum anyone puts out there as sure knowledge.

Gen-Z's walked into a budding world of smartphones, social media, digital convergence, and endless connection and entertainment; requiring them to be perpetually "on", in order not to miss anything. This fact alone is a major misfortune for any human being. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat often highlight the best moments of people's lives, leading to unrealistic standards, the desire to out-fake other people's fake reality, in an endless/ pointless competition that only fuels feelings of inadequacy in some people.

Are there Gen-Z's who are cheerful victims of sleep denial and unconscious patients of Disrupted Sleep and a dwindling Attention Span? Their excessive screen time, particularly at night, affects sleep quality, impairs concentration, induces internal restlessness and contributes to mental fatigue and the desire for "something exciting" when awake.

In the end, many are battling with Identity Struggles. Experimenting with drugs and insane adventures is part of the consequences. Those who zoom off to explore complex identity issues around gender, sexuality, race and much more are all victims of the same malaise. The adventures and exploration accentuates their vulnerability, throws them into the clutches of internet and social media highwaymen who boldly offer their conjectures and unverified opinions as knowledge.

Some Gen-Z's go into activism and soon suffer Activism Fatigue. Many of them quickly burnout and develop an even greater sense of hopelessness. Being also among the first to hunt for, and get, information on Global Crises, like wars, refugee crises, climate issues and threats to democracy, they have everything needed to maintain the illusion of involvement. Nearly every single one of them will be only satisfied with being the best, getting the first position, being number one. This, the Pressure to Excel, and the search for Credential Inflation, take over from rationality. And because they lack any Clear Paths before them, inner fragmentation and non-linear paths create illusory worlds, which can be exciting - but only because they only exists in the imagination.

We concluded our conversation, the Gen-Z and me, by quietly agreeing that we are all in a uniquely challenging era. The digital saturation, global instability, economic pressure, and a heightened awareness of systemic problems are symptoms of a much deeper crisis of humanity. Yes, a lot of Gen-Z's are quite creative, resilient, informed, and socially engaged. They are not simply crumbling before every pressure, no! They are actively struggling, adapting, resisting, and even leading in some ways.

Hear the last words of my Gen-Z friend at the end of our conversation: "You know " we" don't give up. I won't go down. If I must, oh you can be sure that I will go down fighting -and it would be one hell of a fight.

Yes, they won't go down at all. They shouldn't go down. They need help, guidance, discipline and humility.

MONETARY POLICY NOT CURE-ALL

their transmission effects on Nigeria's macroeconomic stability.

In the domestic economy, the committee will evaluate a complex matrix of inflation data, exchange rate pressures, credit growth, fiscal dynamics, and output trends before concluding.

For instance, Thursday's announcement by the National Bureau of Statistics that Nigeria's headline inflation rate slightly dropped to 23.71 percent in April 2025, down from 24.23 percent in March, will be one of the major considerations at the meeting. According to the bureau, the movement in April 2025 headline inflation rate showed a decrease of 0.52 percent compared to the March 2025 headline inflation rate.

This broader analytical lens ensures that monetary policy responses are not reactive but strategic, anchored in both short-term realities and long-term objectives.

While analysts may zero in on a single variable, such as headline inflation or the exchange rate, the MPC's mandate requires balancing multiple and sometimes conflicting goals: price stability, economic growth, and financial system soundness. Understanding this context helps temper expectations and underscores the importance of patience, coordination, and structural alignment in achieving real macroeconomic stability.

The uncomfortable truth is that Nigeria's inflation is largely cost-push, not demand-pull. This means it is driven by factors outside the control of interest rate policy: insecurity in food-producing regions that intensified recently and has seen many farmers abandon their farmlands, poor transportation networks, heavy import dependency, energy price volatility, and rising cost of living. Raising interest rates in this context is like using a thermostat to fix a broken engine.

What we face as a nation is a structural economic disorder. No amount of fine-tuning of monetary policy alone can mask the fact that our factories run on diesel generators, our farmers face armed conflict rather than market competition, our imports outstrip local production and the rising cost of living, which is suffocating the common man.

Behind every overburdened central bank lies an underperforming fiscal authority. Nigeria's fiscal space remains narrow, constrained not only by low revenues but also by misaligned priorities. This imbalance makes it impossible to stimulate long-term growth. Without productive capital spending, we are simply recycling poverty through borrowed consumption. Already, the World Bank has described the key assumptions of 2.1 million barrels per day oil production and $75 per barrel price in the country's 2025 budget as overambitious, given the current production level of 1.6mbpd and about $65pb price in the international market. The multilateral institution has also pointed out that the pace of growth in Nigeria needs to be accelerated further to meet its $1 trillion economy aspiration by 2030, deliver poverty reduction and shared prosperity. All these require hard work from the fiscal authorities, with policy support from the monetary side of the economy.

In most developed economies, fiscal policy sets the tone for economic direction, with monetary policy providing supportive alignment. But unfortunately, in Nigeria, the reverse is the norm. Monetary policy often takes the lead, while fiscal policy lags in coherence, responsiveness, and execution.

This imbalance mirrors the central argument in Mohamed El-Erian's book, "The Only Game in Town", where he describes how central banks are forced to operate beyond their traditional mandates in the absence of decisive fiscal leadership. According to El-Erian, since the 2008 global financial crisis, global central banks ventured, not by choice, but by necessity, ever deeper into the unfamiliar and tricky terrain of unconventional monetary policies and heavily intervened in the functioning of markets. He also revealed in the book that during the 2008 financial crisis, in the US, a myriad of emergency funding windows were opened to enable cash to be injected into the financial system, and from virtually all directions. We saw this in Nigeria, with past CBN Governors venturing into development finance, agriculture funding, and interventionist credit schemes —areas that rightly belong to fiscal authorities. It not only blurs institutional roles but also weakens the accountability and efficiency of policy outcomes. A monetary authority overstretched into fiscal space becomes vulnerable to politicisation and operational fatigue,

This, however, is one of the areas we must commend Cardoso for, as he has maintained his stance on orthodox monetary policy, which clearly has increased transparency in the apex bank's operation. This was evident in its consolidated and separate financial statements for the year ended December 2024, which also revealed that the CBN Group's year-on-year losses declined to N680.62 billion in the year under review compared to N1.16 trillion in 2023. The CBN also recorded significant growth in its operating income in 2024, as it climbed to N15.23 trillion in 2024, from N5.89 trillion in the preceding year.

Likewise, the banking sector posted significant growth in its total operating income for its subsidiaries, as it rose by 41.3 per cent to N15.1 trillion in 2024, from N5.91 trillion in 2023. Also, the group posted a profit after tax (PAT) of N38.8 billion, indicating a recovery from N1.15 trillion loss in 2023.

This is commendable as confidence is earned by transparency, not defended by rhetoric. Investors, both local and foreign, require predictability and fairness, a path Cardoso has chosen to follow.

From the foregoing, there is a need to strengthen fiscal policy activities in Nigeria to promote sustainable economic growth, address challenges like debt, and improve the country's fiscal standing. A proactive fiscal policy can help stabilise growth, create a more predictable business climate, and facilitate increased investment in infrastructure and social services.

Just as importantly, Nigeria's trade policy must be realigned to support macroeconomic goals. The country needs a trade strategy that is coherent, predictable, growth-oriented and aligns with the complexities in the global trade environment. Policymakers must target policies and programmes that encourage local production, reduce structural import dependence, and enhance the country's competitiveness in both the regional and global markets.

Ultimately, we must demystify the role of monetary policy. It is not a magic wand. Monetary policy will always have a role, but it cannot drive a car with no engine. Until Nigeria confronts its structural and institutional weaknesses, the central bank's best efforts will amount to managing decline rather than engineering growth.

AUTO WORLD

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NADDC DG, Stakeholders Applaud FG's 'Nigeria First' Policy



An assembly plant

The Director General of the National Automotive Design and Development Council (NADDC), Oluwemimo Joseph Osanipin, has described the 'Nigeria First' policy announced last week by the federal government as an initiative that will drive patronage for the auto manufacturing plants in Nigeria.

The director general is optimistic that the policy initiated by the Bola Tinubu-led administration will impact positively on the operations of the local auto plants and on the rest of the industry.

The Renewed Hope Nigeria First policy, announced on Monday, May 5, 2025, mandates all federal ministries, departments and agencies to give absolute priority to Nigerian goods, services and know-how when spending public funds.

Reacting to the news in an interview, Osanipin stated: "Yes, we are happy, especially in the auto sector. This is the kind of strategic and high-powered decision that will help to improve the patronage of locally assembled vehicles.

"Coming from Mr President, nothing beats this in terms of supporting local manufacturers. So, we at the NADDC, we have seen it, and we are happy."

He said that following the announcement, the NADDC has updated its list of auto manufacturers in the country which contains their brands, products and other details.

The Council's report which has always been with the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) - the Federal Government agency responsible for regulating and overseeing public procurement processes - would soon be submitted to the appropriate government quarters.

BPP is saddled with very important roles in the implementation of the 'Nigeria First' Initiative.

"The report on the auto plants (and their products) being with the BPP is important, so that whoever is interested to work with the bureau will know the locally assembled vehicles that are available.

"The report with BPP, shows the auto brands that are available in Nigeria. It clearly shows that Company A has so so brand and vehicles; they have this pick-up, they have this and that vehicles."

Osanipin is also excited that the 'Nigeria First' policy directs Federal Government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) to ensure full compliance in their procurements.

According to the DG, it is a remarkable improvement on the Executive Orders 5 and 3 before it, because, whereas the Executive Orders emphasised on 40 percent of the products to be purchased bring produced in Nigeria, the new policy insists on 100 percent, except where they are not available locally.

The 'Nigeria First' policy empowers the BPP to ensure that all (100 percent) government procurements are made in Nigeria, but could approve patronage of imported products where there are no local alternatives.

The Director General said the Council is eagerly looking forward to the commencement of implementation, saying: "The BPP is expected to issue a guideline on the implementation, and we at the NADDC are eagerly waiting for the guideline.

"President Tinubu has done his own, which is paving the way for all us, Osanipin remarked. "It is now left for us to come up with how it is going to be operational. We are very happy that the whole country is aware and Nigerians are ready for this. We will push it and let Nigerians know the types of vehicles available."

Volkswagen Polo Marks 50 Years, Successful Worldwide

"Small on the outside. Big on the inside." This was the slogan used by Volkswagen 50 years ago to advertise its latest product at the time, the Polo. When the small car came on the market in early May 1975, nobody expected that the extremely compact two-door vehicle would become a bestseller – nationally and internationally, over five decades, in six generations, with several prestigious awards, with more than 20 million units sold and as a pioneer in the compact car segment.

Polo stands for affordable entry-level mobility. When the first new Polos were on sale at dealerships, they were part of a new Volkswagen model family that took over the streets in the early 1970s, the automaker said in a statement.

In the spring of 1975, the angular small car followed the Passat (1973) and Golf (1974) of the then still young water-cooled model generation, which succeeded the legendary VW Beetle. Throughout six model generations, it is clear that the overall concept – consisting of a fair price-performance ratio, high utility value, pioneering technology for the small car class and, of course, its attractive design – is still popular today and has made the model a bestseller. In addition, the Polo has succeeded in shaping the compact car segment for decades. Recognition from national and international trade media includes awards such as Car of the Year 2010, World Car of the Year 2010 and World Urban Car 2018.



The Volkswagen Polo generations

Trendsetter and serial winner. What began as a simple two-door vehicle in 1975 has been perfected and expanded in many facets over five decades: in a total of six generations, as a hatchback Polo, as a coupé, as a sporty G40 or GTI01, as a colourful Harlequin, as an estate, as a notchback with the name Derby, as a CrossPolo with a striking off-road look, as an efficient Polo BlueMotion and, of course, as an extremely dynamic Polo R WRC, which was crowned with four World Championship titles in the World Rally Championship from 2013 to 2016.

Democratising innovation. Each generation of the Polo has offered more space and comfort, more efficient engines and innovative safety features. New features such as front and side airbags, power steering, belt tensioners and ABS were introduced and made sure the Polo remained successful.

TIPS OF THE WEEK

What are the Symptoms of Bad Driveshaft?

A driveshaft, also known as a propeller shaft, is a critical component in the drivetrain of most vehicles. It plays a vital role in transferring power from the engine to the wheels, enabling the car to move. A faulty driveshaft can lead to a range of issues, from annoying vibrations to serious mechanical failures that compromise the safety and drivability of your vehicle. Understanding the symptoms of a bad driveshaft can help you identify problems early, allowing you to seek repairs before things get worse. In this blog, we'll delve into the common signs of a failing driveshaft and what you should do if you experience these symptoms.

Unusual Vibrations and Shuddering

One of the most common and noticeable symptoms of a bad driveshaft is unusual vibrations or shuddering felt throughout the vehicle. While vibrations can be caused by various issues such as unbalanced tyres or misaligned wheels, a faulty driveshaft is often a primary culprit. When the driveshaft is damaged or the universal joints (U-joints) are worn out, the shaft can become imbalanced, causing the car to vibrate excessively. These vibrations are typically felt under the floor of the vehicle and can intensify when accelerating. In some cases, the vibration may start mildly but become more severe over time, indicating that the damage is progressing. Ignoring this symptom can lead to further damage to other components of the drivetrain, including the differential and transmission. If you feel unusual vibrations, it's essential to get your vehicle inspected by a qualified mechanic as soon as possible.

Clunking or Knocking Noises

Strange noises, particularly clunking or knocking sounds, are another tell-tale sign of a failing driveshaft. These noises often occur when shifting gears or when accelerating and decelerating. The clunking sound is usually caused by excessive play in the driveshaft's U-joints or a worn-out centre bearing. When these components wear out, they can no longer hold the driveshaft securely in place, leading to abnormal movements and resulting noise. The noise can also be caused by a loose or damaged driveshaft yoke, which can affect the overall stability of the driveshaft assembly. It's crucial not to ignore these sounds as they often indicate that the driveshaft is on the verge of failure. Continuing to drive with a clunking driveshaft can cause additional damage to the transmission and differential, potentially leading to costly repairs.

Difficulty Turning or Steering

A faulty driveshaft can make it challenging to steer the vehicle, especially when making turns. This issue arises because the driveshaft is responsible for transferring rotational force to the wheels, enabling them to turn correctly. If the driveshaft or its components are worn or damaged, it can hinder the proper function of the steering system. The most common sign of this issue is a noticeable resistance when turning the steering wheel, accompanied by grinding or clicking noises. This problem is particularly dangerous as it can affect your ability to control the vehicle, posing a significant safety risk. If you experience difficulty steering, it's essential to have your driveshaft inspected immediately to avoid potential accidents.

Squeaking or Squealing Sounds

Squeaking or squealing sounds are another common symptom of a bad driveshaft. These noises often occur when the vehicle is moving, especially at low speeds. The squeaking sound usually indicates that the U-joints are dry or lack proper lubrication. Over time, the grease that lubricates the U-joints can dry out or become contaminated, leading to increased friction and noise. In some cases, the squealing may only be noticeable when the car is in motion, while in others, it might persist even when the vehicle is idle. This symptom is often a precursor to more severe problems, such as complete U-joint failure, which can lead to the driveshaft detaching from the vehicle. If you hear squeaking or squealing noises, it's a good idea to have your vehicle inspected and serviced to prevent further damage.

(Driveshaft UK)



WILL OFFSIDE RULE CHANGE?



Tolu Arokodare

What, Where Next?

GLOBAL SOCCER

Tolu Arokodare
What, Where Next?

With just few weeks to the end of the football season in Europe, to say that Tolu Arokodare has enjoyed a breakout campaign would just be stating the obvious. With 29-goal involvements-22 goals and seven assists, in 43 matches, it did not come as a surprise that he was crowned the winner of the 2025 Ebony Shoe, awarded to the best player with African roots in Belgium's Jupiler Pro League. With that in the bag, the super Eagles striker is turning attention to winning the league's Golden Boot. In spite of his achievements on the field of play, his next destination is the big question, as three Bundesliga and several Premier League clubs are lining up for his signature, with Genk already searching for a replacement for the Eagles striker

Super Eagles forward, Tolu Arokodare, was on Monday crowned the winner of the 2025 Ebony Shoe, awarded to the best player with African roots in Belgium's Jupiler Pro League.

Arokodare becomes the sixth Nigerian player to win the award, following in the footsteps of Daniel Amokachi, Victor Ikpeba, Godwin Okpara, Celestine Babayaro and Paul Onuachu.

The 24-year-old KRC Genk striker succeeds Cercle Brugge's Kevin Denkey and held off stiff competition from teammate Zakaria El Ouahdi, Union SG's Noah Sadiki and Promise David, and Club Brugge's midfielder Raphael Onyedika.

Arokodare's stellar performances this season earned him the prestigious accolade.

Across all competitions, he has registered 22 goals and seven assists, underlining his importance to Genk's attack.

His consistency and match-winning contributions proved decisive in securing the award.

Speaking to Sporza after receiving the trophy, Arokodare expressed pride in the recognition. "It's a big pat on the back for me, a confirmation that I've played a special season. This is my award for those good performances," he said.

Although Arokodare previously won the Striker of the Year award, he admitted the Ebony Shoe carries even more weight.

"Yes, this is definitely my biggest prize so far. Although I hope that even bigger prizes are coming," he added.

The Nigerian forward also reflected on what the award means for his career.

"There were a lot of good players nominated, so to come out as the winner is special. I'm proud of myself, the club, my family, my friends, and the fans in Genk. This is not just for me; it's for Nigeria too.

"I want to keep going up and that can be in any competition. If I keep working hard, I will get the chances I deserve. But I am happy that my name is in the history books," he concluded.

Meanwhile, Arokodare is reportedly on the brink of leaving Belgian side, Racing Genk, following a standout season in the Jupiler Pro League.

According to Het Laatste Nieuws, the Nigerian striker and Genk have reached a gentleman's agreement that will allow him to depart during the upcoming summer transfer window.



Arokodare outjumped Standard Liege defender to head pass the goalkeeper

Arokodare's form has attracted serious interest from several European heavyweights, including Bundesliga teams Borussia Dortmund, Bayern Munich and Stuttgart, while multiple Premier League clubs are also said to be monitoring the 24-year-old closely.

With 20 league goals, he currently sits second on the Belgian top-flight scoring chart, just one behind Sint-Truidense's Adriano Bertaccini, with two games remaining to potentially claim the Golden Boot.

Meanwhile, Borussia Dortmund are the latest club to signify interest in the KRC Genk forward, following his impressive displays in the Belgian Jupiler League this season, in which he has scored 29 goals and registered seven assists for the Smurfs.

Dortmund are planning to bolster their strike force to complement the efforts of Serhou Guirassy, and the hierarchy sees Arokodare as suitable for the club's attacking profile.

Arokodare, who joined Genk from French side Amiens in January 2023 is currently contracted to be at the club until the summer of 2027, though the Belgian outfit is reportedly open to selling the striker with the right valuation.

It remains to be seen where Arokodare will be playing next season, although he has admitted that a move to the Premier League is a dream he hopes to realise.

Interestingly, Arokodare is setting his sights on finishing the season as top scorer in the Belgian Jupiler Pro League.

The KRC Genk forward is currently second on the goalscorers' chart with 20 goals, just one behind Sint-Truiden's Adriano Bertaccini, who leads with 21.

His goals helped Genk top the regular season standings before their campaign stumbled in the championship play-offs.

While acknowledging that the team has hit a rough patch in recent games, but is confident that their overall quality and performance throughout the season will not be defined by recent results.

"Individually, I think I've had a pretty good season, better than last year, but I still believe I can do more.

"There are two games left, and I'm going to push for the Golden Boot. That's the goal," he said.

He also paid tribute to his teammates, highlighting their collective effort in making the season a success.

"As a team, we've had a solid season overall. The last few matches haven't been great, but that doesn't take away from the hard work and quality we've shown. It doesn't define who we are," he said.

GLOBAL SOCCER



Taiwo Awoniyi in goalpost incident that led to induced coma

Awoniyi's Goalpost Incident Set to Change Premier League's Offside Rule

Referees in the English Premier League are set to review the competition's offside laws following Taiwo Awoniyi's recent situation.

The 27-year-old suffered a ruptured intestine in Forest's 2-2 draw against Leicester City. Anthony Elanga was already offside when he played a through ball into Awoniyi's path, and as is the rule with offside situations, the assistant referee kept his flag down until the sequence of play elapsed.

However, this action led to a life-threatening situation for Awoniyi, and now, the Players' union representatives will talk to football lawmakers over the injury scare of the former Union Berlin striker.

Awoniyi was placed in an induced coma to aid his recovery from emergency abdominal surgery after his collision on Sunday.

According to the Mirror, The Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) will raise concerns and try to learn lessons from any mistakes made over the incident.

The PFA will push the PGMOL (Professional Game Match Officials Limited, the body responsible for the overseeing match officials in Professional English Football), and also law makers–IFAB, to review the current system and it is understood both parties are willing to listen and review the set-up.

The PFA has been in constant touch with Awoniyi's family, they have made his health and recovery their utmost priority as well as liaising with Forest as a club, but now want to balance how linesmen should approach scenarios that led to the current condition of the Nottingham Forest striker.

Awoniyi's club and national teammate, Ola Aina, revealed the club staff and players have been concerned about the welfare of the 2013 U-17 FIFA World Cup winner. Aina also advocated for a change in how linesmen approach clear offside situations.

"Taiwo is a very chilled guy. He doesn't like to get in the way. He goes about his own business but he can have fun as well. He has been in a couple of my videos but I know he doesn't like the cameras too much so I try not to put them in his face. I respect that about him. I have sent him a message of course. The whole team has.

AEK Athens Monitoring S'Eagles Striker, Dessers' Situation at Rangers

13-time Greek champions AEK Athens have reportedly set their sights on Cyriel Dessers as they seek to bolster their attacking options ahead of the summer transfer window.

Dessers, who joined Scottish side Rangers from Italian club Cremonese for €5 million in 2023, has enjoyed an impressive season, notching 28 goals and seven assists in 54 appearances across all competitions.

Despite criticism from sections of the Rangers fanbase earlier in the season, the Nigerian international has emerged as

SUMMER TRANSFER

a key figure under manager Barry Ferguson.

The 30-year-old came close to an exit in January, amid interest from clubs in Spain and Italy, but opted to stay at Ibrox and fight for his place.

His commitment paid off as he led the line admirably, even though Rangers ultimately ended the season without silverware.

Now, with a change in ownership at Rangers and the likelihood of a new head coach arriving in the summer, uncertainty looms over Dessers' future at the club.

AEK Athens are said to be monitoring the striker's situation closely as they look to reinforce their forward line.

AEK are in the market for a new striker following the February sale of Trinidad and Tobago forward Levi Garcia to Spartak Moscow for a club-record €20 million.

With only Frantzdy Pierrot available as a natural centre-forward, AEK are prioritizing the signing of a proven goal-scorer ahead of next season.

Ex-Champ, Froch, Backs Fury to Beat Joshua in an Eventual Match-up

Ex-world champion, Carl Froch, has encouraged Tyson Fury to arrange a bout with Anthony Joshua, stating it would be a routine victory for the Gypsy King.

Fury, 37, stepped away from boxing following his second loss to Oleksandr Usyk, but has frequently hinted at a comeback. In late April, Fury shared a video of himself training with long-time coach Sugarhill Steward, sparking speculation that a return to the ring was on the cards.

With Daniel Dubois set to take on Usyk for the undisputed world championship in July, Joshua's promoter Eddie Hearn, recently revealed that Joshua will undergo keyhole surgery on his elbow, side-lining him for four to six weeks. The Olympic gold medallist and two-time world champion hasn't fought since his knockout defeat by Dubois at Wembley Stadium last September. Reflecting on that match, Froch believes Fury would easily triumph over Joshua if they were to face off.

On the Froch on Fighting podcast, the two-time WBC super-middleweight champion said: "Fury, if he comes out of retirement, the only fight really that's going to be interesting for the fans, the only fight that I want to see personally is if he fights Anthony Joshua. It's not that I'm mega interested and if it doesn't happen that I'm going to be annoyed or feel like I've missed out on something, because I won't do.



L-R: Oladotun Ojuolape Kayode (Do2dtun) Entertainer and Media Personality, Michael Ehindero Managing Director, Pernord Ricard Nigeria; Okoeguale Ehizojie (Ehiz Dadaboy) Entertainer and Media Personality; Efa Iwara Nollywood Actor and Sulaiman Pooja Adebayo (Pooja Media) Entertainer and Sports Photojournalist; at the Chivas Regal Watch Party in Lagos, Nigeria recently.



Ndidi

Ola Aina, Salah, Iwobi Represent the Lights of Africa in EPL

With the English Premier League season in its final bend this weekend, Super Eagles defensive midfielder, Wilfred Ndidi, in an interview via Showmax, reflected on Leicester City's disastrous season but was delighted with the performance of some of his teammates in the National team alongside Egyptian Mohammed Salah

The most prominent news from Leicester City is the departure of club icon Jamie Vardy at the end of this season. Could you reflect on your experience sharing the dressing room and the pitch with a player widely regarded as one of the Premier League's greatest ever strikers?

It's been an honour. It's been a pleasure to be a teammate with Jamie Vardy. Even after football, you'd be like, oh, I play with Jamie Vardy. I feel like it's a privilege and a pleasure to play alongside him. And he's been amazing for years. He's been an amazing guy, a family man, so he's mentally strong. I think he's one of the strongest guys I've seen mentally in the head.

He's strong. I admire him. It's been a couple of great, great years with him. Ups and downs, but he's still Jamie Vardy.

Jamie's on-camera persona suggests a pretty lively character. Is this consistent with his off-field demeanour within the squad?

Oh, yeah, the way he is on-camera and how he expresses himself, he's the same guy. You have to be on your toes when he's just around. There might be something coming up, and you drop your guard, Vards might just scare you or something. He's annoying in a good way; he just keeps the whole mood alive.

He's that guy, and he tries to imitate things and make it fun. Even trying to learn Pidgin, Nigerian - he learns the words, and then uses it on the Nigerian guys around with me, he just speaks, and they'll be like, oh, what's he say? It's Jamie Vardy! So, he's a great guy, he's a great, great guy.

This season has presented significant challenges for Leicester City. How would you analyse the key factors of the campaign, and what constructive takeaways can you and your teammates carry forward?

I feel like we gave up too quickly when it comes to games. As soon as we concede one goal, the heads go down. I think that shouldn't happen going forward. I think that's my take on things: we should look forward to going forward, you know.

Personally, looking back at the season, is there a particular Leicester City match that stands out as your most memorable? And what made that specific game so significant for you?

I would say the Crystal Palace game away. We drew 2-2, and I got two assists. I was muted the whole game, like, muted before the game. I didn't speak to anyone. I didn't want to speak to anyone. I was just going through some things, and then I went in the game, and I had two assists. That was a good game.

Which Premier League team's overall performance and approach have impressed you the most throughout this season?

I would say Nottingham Forest. They just stick to the basics and just get the goals, defend, get the goals, and that's what they need.

Considering the individual battles you've faced, which Premier League player has posed the most significant challenge for you this season?

I can't think of a game where I felt a challenge. I'll just say the last game against Wolves. Matthias Cunha. He's a good player. He was everywhere. He was doing his thing.

From a tactical perspective, which Premier League team has been the most formidable opponent to compete against this season?

I would say Manchester City away. It was a difficult game. We tried as much as we could to get close to the ball, but we were not getting the ball. It was difficult because they were moving the ball fast, and the positioning was great.

Looking ahead, would you say that an immediate return to the Premier League is now the primary and unequivocal objective for Leicester City?

Of course. But first, we have to learn from this. If we don't learn from this, we're just wasting our time. We just have to learn from this season.

Yakubu, Enebeli Shine at IGP Squash Finals, Commend Quadri, Jadesola

Sixteen-year-old Yusuf Quadri, a junior champion, shocked the crowd by defeating senior top seeded player, Lanre Abdulrahman in the men's final of the IGP Squash Contenders Invitational Classics on Thursday in Lagos.

The epic five-round action-packed game ended 11/5, 11/13, 11/9, 6/11 and 7/13 in favour of Quadri.

Top seed Olatunji Jadesola also impressed, overpowering Modupe Faniyi in four sets to clinch the women's singles title with a scoreline 11/7, 7/11, 11/5 and 11/4.

Assistant Commissioner of Police Abubakar Yakubu praised the event, calling it a showcase of squash excellence and a platform for youth development. "We saw the best of squash. The players showed real class, and every moment was truly exciting," Yakubu said after the finals.

Yakubu, who is also Police Sports Secretary, said the police are committed to nurturing young talents through structured competitions.

"This is our first edition in Lagos. We definitely look forward to hosting more events like this," he added confidently.

CSP Charity Enebeli, the Chairman, Nigeria Police Squash, described the tournament as successful and commended the athletes' sportsmanship throughout the competition.

"This is the first time we are having this tournament in Lagos and we're amazed by the turnout and zeal of these players.

"The Nigeria Police force remain focused and dedicated to producing the best squash players to ever grace the courts. Currently we have some of our officers in top five best-player positions in the country.

BACK PAGE LEAD PHOTOGRAPH



MBAH RECEIVES ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE TROPHY IN ENUGU…

L-R: Commissioner for Culture and Tourism, Enugu State, Ugochi Madueke; Commissioner for Youth and Sports Development, Lloyd Ekweremadu; Director, Marketing and Innovations, Guinness Nigeria, Yinka Bakare; Governor of Enugu State, Dr. Peter Mbah; Director, Corporate Relations, Guinness Nigeria, Rotimi Odusola; Head of Marketing, Guinness Nigeria, Ramanathan Sollayepan; Head of Division, South-East Region, Adesoji Opeyemi; General Manager, Rangers International Football Club of Enugu, Amobi Ezeaku; and the Chairman, Enugu State Football Association, Tony Ugwu, during the showcase of the English Premier League trophy to Mbah by Guiness Nigeria at Government House, Enugu…yesterday

OKEY IKECHUKWU

EDIFYING ELUCIDATIONS

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Frank Conversation With a Gen-Z

He is one of those Arthur Brooks says belongs to a demographic group that can best be described as unhappy. This is despite the fact that his generation has been described as living in an age of wealth, wellness and wonders created and sustained by contemporary science and technology. Arthur's claim is grounded in his Harvard University backed findings. Asked if he agreed with the Harvard teacher's presumably presumptuous claim, my young friend said that the man had a point. So, our conversation began.

"Well, yes my generation of young people can be described as a sad one. It is true that we are a highly connected generation, with science and tech at our Beck and call. We are the most connected virtually, but we are also probably the most fundamentally alone in our little corners and trying very hard to pretend that all is well. Genuine, face to face cheerful laughter is replaced with either an emoji face or "LOL". So, Gen-Z's can be said to have created unreal alternative comrades in their play and laughter".

He paused, then said he had been following a lot of literature on Gen-Z issues and has also been monitoring what he called "the really human content" of his generation's socialization templates and practices. "I find it worrisome", he muttered quietly. Then he referred to the Global Flourishing Study, a research project that collected data from more than 200,000 people across 22 different countries. He said that he agreed with the findings, especially the submission that inner loneliness, a lack of purpose and a deep sense of hopelessness outside digital reality are the constant companions of many Gen-Z's.

The United States has been one of the countries where young people's well-being has declined the most in recent decades, according to the World Happiness Report. Not because life has suddenly become harder out there, but because you have a digitally well-connected world of young people who are also victims of emotional barrenness at the same time. They try to hide this, even from themselves, without knowing it. By forming relationships that are actually more vacuous than smoke, they try to reassure themselves that all is well.

But all is not well. "What does it mean, for instance, to say that someone has ten thousand followers on Facebook, Instagram, etc.?" I asked him. "Yes, what does it mean?" I continued. "And where is the fellow in question going to that they are following him? Yet, the person with more following is deemed superior, deemed more important and seen as someone to be envied by those with fewer followers. Is this not altogether absurd?".

He smiled and agreed that it was really absurd. Then he said: "To think that someone would envy a person whose superiority is solidly established by a meaningless number?" He laughed.

Then I added: "People will just be strutting about talking of "likes" and "followers", without pausing to note that some of the followers under reference may be mentally unstable, idlers who are always on their back in some dingy, unswept space fiddling endlessly with their phones".

"That is why I sometimes wonder if technology has failed the Gen-Z's".

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OBINNA CHIMA

READING THE TEA LEAVES

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Monetary Policy Not Cure-all

The 300th meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has been scheduled to hold, between Monday and Tuesday, in Abuja. This will be the second MPC meeting for the year and the eighth since the Olayemi Cardoso-led CBN was constituted.

The MPC is the highest policy making committee of the CBN with the mandate of reviewing economic and financial conditions in the economy; determining appropriate stance of policy in the short to medium term; reviewing regularly, the CBN's monetary policy framework and adopt changes when necessary, as well as communicate monetary/financial policy decisions effectively to the public and ensure the credibility of the model of transmission mechanism



Cardoso

of monetary policy.

As expected, economics and financial market analysts have already begun projecting outcomes and policy shifts ahead of the meeting. From speculations on interest rate adjustments to forecasts on liquidity management, this flurry of commentary has become a familiar ritual in the lead-up to each meeting. While such anticipatory analysis reflects the importance of the MPC's decisions to the financial markets and broader economy, it is crucial to understand that the committee's deliberations are far more comprehensive than surface-level predictions often suggest. Likewise, the belief by some Nigerians that monetary policy alone can cure all that ails the economy is a misconception that warrants a closer look. Let us be clear: monetary policy is important. But it is not omnipotent, and treating it as such not only misrepresents its role but also distracts policymakers, especially from the other arm of the federal government, and from the urgent structural reforms the country desperately needs.

So far, the Cardoso-led CBN has clung onto orthodox monetary policy and has deployed a full suite of conventional tools — raising the Monetary Policy Rate, adjusting cash reserve ratios, and tinkering with the foreign exchange framework.

The MPC does not make decisions in isolation, in response to emotions or market sentiments. Its framework and decisions are rooted in careful assessment of both global and domestic developments.

Globally, factors such as the ongoing conversation around reciprocal tariffs, which appears to be simmering down, interest rate directions in advanced economies, commodity price trends—especially crude oil and geopolitical risks are thoroughly examined for

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